

## **Gestión: ambivalence and temporalities of kinship and politics in the Colombian Amazon**

Daniela Castellanos<sup>1</sup> and Cristian Erazo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Departamento de Estudios Sociales, Universidad Icesi, Cali, Colombia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6057-9793>*

<sup>2</sup>*Centro de Estudios Interdisciplinarios, Jurídicos, Sociales y Humanistas, Universidad Icesi. <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4721-0788>*

Contact: Daniela Castellanos [dcastellanos@icesi.edu.co](mailto:dcastellanos@icesi.edu.co)

**This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Ethnos* on December 2021, available online:  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/00141844.2021.2009535>.**

## **Gestión: ambivalence and temporalities of kinship and politics in the Colombian Amazon**

In the city of Mocoa in the Colombian Amazon, indigenous leaders capture desired resources for their communities using skilful navigation and engagement in the diverse institutional landscape of this bureaucratic centre of the Putumayo region. Interactions between these leaders and multiple political actors are locally known as *gestión*. In this article, we explore this ethnographic category by analysing the ways in which *gestión* interweaves kinship, politics and temporality. Describing *gestión* in the lives of two cousins, two Inga women who are both experienced leaders, we argue that it entails generating and fostering friendships and alliances by means of kinship networks and practices, which are central to capturing resources and maintaining relationships among ethnic leaders and communities, where mistrust is part of political dynamics and family life. We also show how leaders incorporate the temporalities of *gestión* into their lives through kinship notions to become powerful political agents in Mocoa.

Keywords: kinship, politics, time, indigenous leaders, Putumayo.

### **Introduction**

This article explores the interplay among kinship and friendship bonds, local political dynamics and temporalities through an ethnographic account of *gestión* in the lives of Rosa and Maria, two indigenous women who are relatives to each other and both experienced leaders in Mocoa, the capital city of the Putumayo region of Colombia's Western Amazon. *Gestión* is the Spanish term commonly used to describe the ways in which community leaders capture valuable collective resources and is closely tied to the way Rosa and Maria describe their role as leaders: *hacemos gestión*, 'we do *gestión*'.

By following the ways in which Rosa and Maria perform *gestión* on a daily basis using ethnographic tools, this article pursues these three goals: first, to establish the ways in which leaders pursue and acquire the resources needed for communitarian activities, owing to their

skilful navigation among and interactions with actors and communities involved in local and regional politics; second, to explore how *gestión* travels between the intimate worlds of kin and kith networks and political actors and third, to observe how indigenous leaders further their positions of power as intermediaries between communities and state or non-state agents in a context that is saturated with varying social initiatives and intervention programmes. Our analysis contributes to the growing literature on indigenous leadership, clientelism and local state actors by focusing on the ways in which skilful manoeuvring in politics entails intimacies of kinship and self-fashioning, embracing bureaucratic temporalities.

Scholars working on political leadership among indigenous communities in the Amazon have called attention to the ways in which indigenous leaders search for and secure different kinds of resources (e.g. those enabling adaptation to urban environments, elaboration of bureaucratic documents or application of local and international legislation regarding ethnic rights) for their collectives by building growing networks with multiple others like state agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other organisations (Allard & Walker 2016; Buitron 2020; Chaves & Hoyos 2011; Del Cairo 2010; Veber & Virtanen 2017). The *gestión* making of Rosa and Maria falls in well with these studies. They often seek out food or money for specific activities and community projects or address formal requests called *oficios* to local or regional political and administrative authorities. However, their *gestión* also deals with their networks, created through close and affective bonds of kinship and friendship and then transformed into a driving force behind the pursuit and gain of desired goals. This last aspect has been insufficiently explored in the literature.

Kinship and friendship have been examined as key aspects of everyday clientelist operations in Latin America, related not only to electoral politics but also to everyday

experiences and the dealings of low-income dwellers with politicians, brokers and state bureaucracy (e.g. Auyero 2001; Eiró & Koster 2019; Lazar 2004). Although this literature highlights indigenous leaders' agency as they navigate asymmetrical relations with politicians or the acts of reciprocity between these actors, it does not explore different levels of the coproduction of kinship and politics by which this agency is shaped (Thelen & Alber 2018). Insofar as Rosa and Maria make instrumental use of kinship and friendship networks to access powerful political actors, their practices are not perceived by other actors in those networks as clientelist, nor can they be reduced to forms of clientelism. There is much more in this. In fact, it is part of their being good leaders that they can intertwine the intimate and public use of kinship. With this word, we refer not only to the idioms that kinship gives to both women as a cultural repertoire to name and relate to others who are seen as powerful (something present in the patronage relations of *compadrazgo*). Crucially, we highlight the performative dimension of kinship, through which it is permanently actualised by means of the practices and vehicles of intimate bonding, such as commensality (Carsten 2010).

We conceive *gestión* as relatedness, a term coined in new kinship studies to describe how 'people articulate and engage in relationships that are important to them in everyday life' (Carsten 2010: 600), focusing on the ways that kinship is made, performed and transformed through daily experiences and practices (Carsten 2000, 2004, 2013; Miller 2007). Seeing Rosa and Maria's *gestión* as relatedness allows us to follow out a network of significant and affective bonds made of kinship and friendship practices, through which they create closeness with political and institutional actors to achieve gains for their communities and for themselves. However, the intimate layer of *gestión* is not only a matter of bonding but also of mistrust between leaders and collectives. Moreover, *gestión* is also a means of self-fashioning (Tuckett

2018) in compliance with temporalities or social experiences of time (Lazar 2014), derived from NGOs and state interventions and lived through idioms of kinship. By embracing these temporalities, Maria and Rosa have, over the course of years, transformed themselves into key political agents.

To develop our arguments, we explore two scenarios: Maria's first major *gestión* as *gobernadora* of the Resguardo Inga Condagua<sup>1</sup> and Rosa's leadership of Iuiwai Wasi, Condagua's handicraft association.<sup>2</sup> These examples here present two sides of the ambivalence of *gestión* seen as relatedness, with the former touching upon the conviviality and intimacies through which political alliances are enmeshed with kinship and friendship and the later describing the mistrust brought to family and the temporalities of this interplay of kinship, politics and life trajectories. Before we turn to these examples, let us introduce Rosa and Maria's background at the local and regional scales of Mocoa and Putumayo.

### **Rosa, Maria and Mocoa's landscape of interventions**

Rosa (in her mid-forties) and Maria (in her mid-thirties) were born in the Resguardo Inga Condagua,<sup>3</sup> located in Mocoa's northern rural zone, next to the Caquetá River, one of the longest rivers in the Colombian Western Amazon and marking a natural frontier between the regions of Putumayo and Cauca. Rosa and Maria are experienced leaders and cousins. They have had leadership roles both inside and outside of their ethnic community. In Condagua, they are

---

<sup>1</sup> In Colombia, *resguardos* are territories where indigenous communities have collective property rights to own and dwell in these lands following their traditional lifestyle and an autonomous government headed by political leaders called *gobernadores* (Decree 2164 of 1995).

<sup>2</sup> In the Inga language, *Iuiwai Wasi* means 'house of thinking'.

<sup>3</sup> The Resguardo Inga Condagua is one of the six resguardos of Mocoa that belong to Inga people, the largest ethnic group in Putumayo with a long-standing presence in Southwestern Colombia (Sichra 2009).

acknowledged as heads of *Iuiái Wasi*, a handicraft association created in 2005 and legalised in 2012, now composed of 18 women and 2 men from Condagua. Additionally, between 2018 and 2019, Maria was *gobernadora* of the Resguardo Inga Condagua. Outside of this community, Maria has been recognised as an outstanding community leader of one of the main cash transfer programmes of the Colombian state, *Familias en Acción* (Families in Action), working in low-income neighbourhoods of Mocoa, and Rosa has earned a place representing Putumayo's artisans in national fairs due to her hard work and the successful relationship she developed with *Artesanías de Colombia* (Handicrafts of Colombia), a large organisation linked to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism of Colombia.

Rosa and Maria are members of a generation of young and middle-aged indigenous leaders who have gained sophisticated skill in navigating the bureaucratic and political systems of the Colombian state to guarantee their rights as ethnic minorities and to gain valuable resources for their communities. This was produced by at least two interrelated phenomena that can be dated to the 1990s.

First, due to the recognition of ethnic autonomy in the 1991 Colombian Constitution, a space was opened to communities to channel economic resources that had previously been allocated by bureaucrats in the capital city of Bogotá. As Chaves and Hoyos (2011) show in detail, through this decentralisation, indigenous leaders became key actors in the administration of public resources. For a decade, leaders encountered a friendly bureaucratic system that allowed them to decide how to invest money in their *resguardos* according to their *costumbres propias* (own customs). At the beginning of the 2000s, however, new regulations required greater vigilance on leaders' actions and had greater technical requirements. To avoid losing access to these goods, therefore, leaders contacted friends in political positions and at state agencies for

capacity building workshops to improve the capacity for successfully handling the bureaucracy. Since that time, the notion of the *gestión* as a means of gaining resources through the navigation of bureaucratic settings and interactions with political actors has become more common among indigenous communities and leaders.

Second, as the seat of the regional government, Mocoa received 20,520 displaced people over the first decade of the twenty-first century due to the long-term armed conflict that grew in different areas of the Putumayo region since the 1990s (Sánchez 2012). Today, most of those living in Mocoa's low-income rural and urban zones are indigenous, poor and victims of forced displacement.<sup>4</sup> Over the last several decades, these populations have been targets of schemes of social intervention financed and implemented by state agencies and NGOs, including humanitarian and psychosocial assistance, development projects, coca-substitution programmes and conditional cash transfers (Ramírez 2010, 2015). In this scenario, multiple agents, subjects and forms of intervention made *gestión* a basic task of many community leaders. Indeed, within this setup, indigenous and mestizo leaders occupy an ambivalent position. They are not only beneficiaries of state and NGOs programmes and projects but also intermediary agents between communities and external actors, funnelling resources into their collectives via social interventions.

Rosa and Maria exemplify these social and political processes, as they have been not only objects of interventions but are also part of a group of indigenous leaders seeking to acquire

---

<sup>4</sup> Nowadays, 25,101 victims of war dwell in Mocoa, which is more than half of the city's current population: 48,422 people (PDT 2020).

resources in the local political arena.<sup>5</sup> They entered the world of *gestión* through an intervention rooted in U.S.-Colombia anti-drug social policy<sup>6</sup> implemented in Condagua in 2005 by means of productive projects offered in exchange for coca eradication under a programme called *Familias Guardabosques* (Forest-Guard Families).

During this period, Maria and Rosa enrolled in a craftwork project. Over the course of a year, they were part of a group of 78 people who attended workshops for handicraft manufacture and commercialisation, led by the advisers of Artesanías de Colombia. Rosa considered this project to be ‘ideal’ because she earned \$600,000 COP (approx. \$155 USD) every two months for applying the knowledge and skills she had been developing since her childhood (her parents taught her how to make Inga crafts, such as natural fibre bags and seed necklaces). However, Maria, who grew up outside of Condagua in an urban setting, had no previous knowledge of handicrafts related to her indigenous cultural heritage. However, she found her vocation as an ethnic artisan through a craft apprenticeship.

Through *Familias Guardabosques*, the people of Condagua gathered and created a group of artisans interested in transforming handicrafts into a stable source of income. The state programme supported them with craft tools and materials, funds for attending their first local

---

<sup>5</sup> In Mocoa live 10,057 indigenous people enrolled in 10 resguardos and 16 *cabildos* of 7 ethnic groups (PDT 2020). Both resguardos and cabildos are legally recognised organizations, but cabildos, unlike resguardos, lack a territory of their own. This high number of organizations has to do not only with indigenous people displaced from their native territories due to armed conflict and settled in Mocoa, but also with a *reindianization* process in which peasants and other individuals who no longer identified themselves as indigenous recomposed their identities and formed cabildos to access benefits and ethnic rights derived from the 1991 Colombian Constitution, such as subsidized health service and education for indigenous people (Chaves & Zambrano 2006). All of these organizations have leaders who make *gestión* in Mocoa.

<sup>6</sup> Between the 1990s and the 2000s, coca paste became Putumayo’s major exportation and the region registered 40% of the nation’s illicit coca cultivation (Tate 2015). For this reason and since the 1990s, Putumayo became a centre of coca-substitution programs and militarized eradication implemented with funds of the U.S.-Colombia antidrug policy called *Plan Colombia* (Plan Colombia).



craft fairs and workshops on design, finance and customer service. Additionally, it opened a space for people to take on leadership. In the programme, leaders were responsible not only for relating to institutional actors and looking for opportunities to sell handicrafts but also for travelling to local and national fairs as representatives of Condagua's artisans. Maria took this position between 2006 and 2011. In 2012, Rosa took the lead, and she is in the position at the present. Both built relationships with institutions and political actors to put *Iuiwai Wasi* on the map of organisations capable of supporting their activities as artisans, as well as a range of contacts and social networks stretched across many social spaces through which they moved, either to sell products or gain resources for the associations. By doing this for several years, they incorporated the making of *gestión* into their everyday lives.

### **Maria's first *gestión* as *gobernadora* for the Carnaval**

On New Year's Eve 2018, several friends and relatives gathered at Maria's house to celebrate the end of the year. Beginning in the early morning, Maria, some of her relatives and us began to cook for the night: we were going to have *maitu kusado* (fish grilled wrapped in the leaves of a local plant called *sirindango*), a speciality of Inga food in Putumayo, usually served on special occasions. The occasion was in fact special, as a major guest was expected in Maria's house that evening: Juan, the head of OPIAC, *Organización Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Amazonía Colombiana* (National Organisation of Indigenous People of the Colombian Amazon), a regional indigenous organisation in Colombia's southwest that enjoys power and prestige. Around 8:00 p.m. that evening, a large white car appeared in the narrow streets of Palermo Sur, the social housing neighbourhood where Maria had lived since 2005. Juan and his wife had arrived.

Maria, dressed in jeans, a yellow blouse and heels, rushed out to greet her special guests. The rest of us stayed in the living room, observing. Juan and his wife were welcomed and offered the best plastic chairs there, next to the plastic table set especially for the occasion, began to eat their *maitus*, surrounded by Maria's kin and friends. They mainly spoke to Jairo, Maria's partner at that time. Jairo and Juan, who were close friends from politics, had known each other since 2015, when Jairo was *gobernador* of the Resguardo Inga Mocoa, and Juan was already OPIAC's director. Maria did not speak, but she paid close attention to her guests' words and movements.

'Maria will be the next *gobernadora* of Condagua', said Jairo solemnly to Juan after they finished their meal. Juan stood up and congratulated her; looking at her, he said, 'If you need something for the Carnaval [one of the most important annual rituals of Inga people], just tell me. But don't tell other *gobernadores*, because I can't give to everybody'. Maria thanked Juan for his support and walked him and his wife to their car. Coming back inside her house, Maria effusively said to us: 'this is how alliances are made: with a *maitu*!' That night Maria was utterly happy because she had successfully participated in her first *gestión* as *gobernadora* for the Carnaval.

Among Inga communities of Upper and Middle regions of Putumayo, the Carnaval is the most important festival in the ritual calendar. Traditionally celebrated a few days before Lent, it centres on forgiving past offences and conflicts, meeting with those who are returning to the community from different places of the country and visiting and receiving visits from other families or neighbouring Inga communities (Pinzón, Suárez & Garay 2004). A key aspect of this tradition is offering visitors generous portions of food and drink, mostly beef and *chicha* (a fermented maize drink). Additionally, the Carnaval is a central political event. Because indigenous leaders of *resguardos* are commonly elected in December, and the Carnaval takes

place annually at the beginning of the year, this event is the first occasion where newly elected leaders can prove their worth, in particular, how good they are in making *gestión*.

As the Carnaval features abundant eating and drinking that lasts for at least three days, the job of organising the event entails a large expenditure of work and money from the *gobernadores*. People in that role thus often depend on *gestión* to capture the resources they will need to deploy for the Carnaval. However, many decades earlier, as elder indigenous leaders report, ‘all the food and chicha for the Carnaval was provided by the community’. Therefore, there was no need for *gestión*. Among the indigenous communities of Putumayo, the notion of using *gestión* as a way of gaining valuable resources began in the 1990s, after the transfer of political and economic power to indigenous *resguardos* as a result of the 1991 Constitution. In the newly proclaimed multicultural nation, the centrality of the Carnaval was reinforced as an ethnic institution, through which Inga people displayed their cultural diversity. In addition, the relative freedom felt by *gobernadores* to invest resources following their own customs made this event a prominent means of securing funding via public resources (Chaves & Hoyos 2011). Since then, working with the state, NGOs and politicians became an important way for leaders to capture funds for communitarian activities and events.

Shortly after her election in December, Maria had recognised that the forthcoming Carnaval would be the lens through which Condagua’s community would assess her role and capacity for *gestión* as *gobernadora*. ‘This event defines whether people will follow me or not. It shows whether a *gobernador* is useful or not’, she said to us. She also knew that food was the foremost criterion through which she would be scrutinised. Around 200 people were expected to join the three-day Carnaval, including natives of Condagua and visitors from some neighbouring Inga communities. This large number of people made Maria responsible for securing a

sufficiently large amount of food and drinks for all. Because she received a *resguardo* without having any money saved, she was entirely dependent on making *gestión* to complete this task.

Following the guidance of her partner, Jairo, a former *gobernador* who had successfully organised the Carnaval of another Inga community in 2015, Maria focused on her *gestión* early in December. Like her, other newly elected leaders were also in need of and looking for funding and resources. Maria focused on two modes of finding economic support and food supplies. First, using kinship and friend networks, she contacted and met with people in powerful economic and political positions, such as indigenous and mestizo politicians and business owners. Second, she wrote and delivered *oficios* addressed to local state institutions, NGOs, commercial shops and companies in Mocoa and nearby cities.

This twofold strategy for *gestión* is common among indigenous leaders in Mocoa. It reflects how these leaders develop and embody state practices and particular skills to navigate local bureaucracies and, more generally, the local political arena. As Chaves and Hoyos (2011) argue, by adjusting their capacity to changes in public policy regarding the transfer and management of state resources since the 1990s, these leaders acquire a *bureaucratic competence* and became state-like actors in places where the state is otherwise absent. This describes the practical know-how needed to take part in state networks and fields through capacity-building workshops and the young indigenous professionals qualified for these procedures. Beyond mastering writing and delivering *oficios*, Maria nurtured relationships with local politicians, bureaucrats and community leaders, in ways that often overlooked institutional norms. The case of Juan and Maria's alliance on New Year's Eve is an example of this.

Although this interplay between bureaucratic competence and making personal bonds to capture desirable resources in Putumayo has previously been documented (Chaves & Hoyos 2011), little attention has been paid to the ways in which those relationships are created, lived and negotiated in everyday life, not only in this region but in other Amazonian societies as well. Indeed, many anthropological analyses of present-day indigenous leadership in the Amazon find that seeking and funnelling resources into communities is a key feature of the work of indigenous political leaders (Buitron 2020; Del Cairo 2010; Veber & Virtanen 2017). However, most studies of this type focus on leaders' abilities and their acquired know-how for engage with various actors, such as states, NGOs or researchers, following technical and bureaucratic procedures (Allard & Walker 2016; Murtagh 2016). Instead of emphasising the making of *gestión* as an outcome of leaders' accumulated skills, we focus on their daily relationships with state agents and other political actors as alternative channels for accessing resources in ways not limited to the legal frames of government.

Previous studies on clientelism and urban leadership in the context of poverty in Latin America and elsewhere have stressed the importance of leaders' and brokers' actions to build personal bonds to successfully deal with bureaucracy (Anand 2011; Anand & Rademacher 2011; Auyero 2001; Eisenstadt & Roniger 1984; Eiró & Koster 2019; Lazar 2004). Recognising the importance of this perspective, the opening vignette presented in this section is telling: Maria's *gestión* demonstrated an intimate and affective experience of sociality with Juan, a powerful person in Putumayo's political scene. Maria sought and obtained crucial resources for the Carnival thanks to her invitation of Juan to her home and to sharing a *maitu* with him and his wife during a celebration to which she otherwise only invited her close family and friends. Her political alliance with Juan was, therefore, born of commensality in an intimate space. This was

part of her *gestión* strategy, in which she targeted political institutions and actors to strengthen her leadership inside Condagua's *resguardo* by obtaining valuable resources.

As an Inga, Juan was familiar with the social and political importance of the Carnaval among Inga communities. Moreover, as the director of an influential indigenous organisation (OPIAC) since 2015, Juan was accustomed to being asked by indigenous leaders for OPIAC's economic support as part of their *gestión*, so he was aware of leaders' practices of finding resources and the costs of celebrating the festival of the Carnaval. For these reasons, Maria was very happy to receive Juan's help. Indeed, he gave her nearly half of the money that she needed for organising the Carnaval. Juan also attended the Carnaval in Condagua on Maria's invitation. They drank together and shared a great deal of food, reinforcing their alliance during this event, itself intended to strengthen relationships of friendship and kinship with close members of the community and visitors. A few months later, Juan invited Maria to work with him on *gobernanza territorial indígena* (indigenous territorial management), which had been sponsored by international NGOs and developed in partnership with OPIAC within different indigenous communities in Colombia's Amazon. This project, which centred on training local leaders to interact with corporate, state and non-state actors to defend territorial and environmental rights on behalf of indigenous people and lands, expanded Maria's trajectory as leader and her alliance with Juan.

Maria and Juan's relationship can thus be seen as a successful example of something that is of paramount importance in the world of *gestión* as experienced by indigenous leaders of Mocoa. Several leaders emphatically told us that 'having friends is the key to do *gestión*'. Thanks to the friends they had in governing institutions and local politics, they are able to be successful both in acquiring desired goods and in having direct and quick access to these resources, avoiding

obstacles connected with paperwork or waiting in a queue to meet with politicians or bureaucrats. Jairo, Maria's partner, recognised in his recollection of his friendship with the former mayor of Mocoa in 2015: 'I was received in the mayor's office at any hour'. However, the bonds of friendship that support a political dynamic of this type tend to be made and reinforced through practices and experiences that occur in informal and intimate places, such as Maria's home on the New Year's Eve celebration or in Condagua's community during Carnaval.

Maria's case showed us how making friends for *gestión* is strongly supported by kinship networks and practices. First, Maria's partner was an effective intermediary, able to join Maria and Juan. Since Jairo was already Juan's friend, and had even received money from him to organise the Carnaval of another Inga community in 2015, he recommended that Maria invite Juan to celebrate New Year's Eve at her house. He invited Juan on behalf of Maria and helped her host Juan and his wife. While Maria cooked and personally offered *maitu* to Juan and his wife, Jairo, who is generally a man of few words, chatted freely with the guests, making them feel comfortable within a house that they were visiting for the first time and around people that had never met until that evening. Additionally, after dinner, Jairo strategically presented the good news of Maria's election as *gobernadora* to Juan. Juan's response was the important moment of the night for Maria, as she joyfully told us later, pleased with a successful *gestión*. Hence, Jairo, a man who had lived with Maria for several years and was considered as part of her family, was able to assist her *gestión* in many ways.

Furthermore, the location where and the mean by which Maria began her alliance with Juan are significant. Sharing food is a key element in social life among Inga communities both within and outside of domestic spaces (Pinzón, Suárez & Garay 2004). As we have shown in the Carnaval, the amount of food shared in either major or minor festivities measures leaders'

*gestión*. Inside houses, the seats placed next to stone stoves, which are still used in many rural Inga houses, are traditionally where families gather to share food and chat about their daily lives. For Maria, this cultural background is influential, as sharing food at home is not only the way in which her close kin (mother, daughters, partner and siblings) celebrate special dates, such as birthdays, Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, but is also a reason to spontaneously meet on weekends.

In light of this, it is clear that Maria employed a meaningful kinship practice and the intimate space of her own home to develop the political dynamics of *gestión*. Specifically, within her house, she forged an *alliance* with a political actor. It is worth considering the term that she used to describe her relationship with Juan. In anthropology, alliances are family relationships made through marriage that often acquire a political significance, as they require the exchange of goods, expected reciprocity and furthering the interests of the new kin (Bloch 2010). Maria and Juan's alliance was not exactly of this kind. However, from Maria's point of view, it actually implied the general meaning of creating a bond for the pursuit of mutual benefit. This instrumental basis, as different ethnographies of kinship and friendship have demonstrated, is not necessarily corrosive but it may be productive of intimate and affective social relations (Guichard 2014; Killick & Desai 2010; Lebner 2012; Mains 2013). Juan's statement in support of Maria is an example of this. He clearly stated that he was willing to help Maria in her pursuit of resources, but he would not do so for all *gobernadores* who were in her position, reflecting a stand in regard to resource distribution driven by his new bond with Maria. Simultaneously, Maria considered the money that he gave her to be a central part of their bond.



### **Rosa and the shadow of *gestión***

The newly built infrastructure of Iuiwai Wasi (two kiosks, one bathroom, one kitchen and a football pitch, standing at the entrance of Condagua) required hard work from all members of the artisans association and their families. They participated as both designers and labourers. However, the success of this infrastructure depended on Rosa's constant *gestión*. At the end of 2015, when we met Rosa, she was already the head of Iuiwai Wasi and was leading fund-raising activities and *mingas* for the construction of the first kiosk. Later, in 2017, Rosa secured additional funding and supplementary resources, such as construction materials, from international NGOs and local politicians to construct a set of kiosks. Their purpose of this new infrastructure, as noted above, was to serve as a touristic centre to promote Inga food and handicrafts made by the members of Iuiwai Wasi and their kin.

Before to the construction of the Inga touristic centre, the artisans of Iuiwai Wasi referred to the location of kiosks as *chuquia*, a Spanish term derived from Quechua used to describe a muddy and smelly land (Alvarez 2009). Removing mud is a principal task in the construction process, as tourists coming from the cities should be able to step out of their vehicles without covering their shoes with dirt. For this purpose, Rosa did a *gestión* that lasted many months. She personally asked Ospina, Mocoa's nonindigenous then-mayor, to loan a bulldozer to Iuiwai Wasi to remove the *chuquia*. Rosa and Ospina had known each other since childhood, as his family used to live in a rural area of Mocoa, near to Condagua, and they usually hired Rosa's parents to look after their plot and harvests. Later, Ospina and Rosa did not see each other for a time because Ospina's family sold their land and went to live in the city. In 2015, when Rosa was Iuiwai Wasi's leader and Ospina was a candidate for Mocoa's mayor, they resumed their bond in order to further their political interests. Indeed, Rosa helped Ospina to gain votes in Condagua for the

local elections, and he, in return, economically supported a festival organised by Rosa that year to collect funds for the construction of the first Iuiwai Wasi's kiosk.

Today, Rosa considers Ospina her friend. 'I know his private number, where he lives and we also chat on WhatsApp', she told us to characterise her relationship with the former mayor. Based on that closeness, Rosa could trust that her request for the bulldozer would be fulfilled. Following the approval by the mayor, she shared the good news with Iuiwai Wasi's members, describing it as a success of her *gestión*. However, months passed and the promised bulldozer never arrived. Rosa's efforts to contact Ospina on the phone were unsuccessful. Additionally, when she tried to catch him at this office, she could not find. Desperate to avoid humiliation in front of her artisans, Rosa confronted Ospina at a public event. Ospina had no other choice but to recognise his omission and reassured Rosa that the bulldozer would come to Condagua in no time. After a few months, the mayor did send construction machines, but not the one that Rosa had requested on behalf of the artisans association.

The delays led to rumours about Rosa that went all over Condagua and reached Maria's home in an urban area of Mocoa. Maria told us of these rumours when we were speaking of Rosa's *gestión*, which she knew as an artisan with Iuiwai Wasi. 'Ospina did not keep his promise because Rosa asked him too many personal favours', she explained to us. In Maria's own terms, that 'personal favours' were 'money for her family'. This rumour implied that Rosa's *gestión* should centre on communal causes rather finding 'personal favours', or at least achieve a balance in not asking for too much for her own family but enough for Iuiwai Wasi. Furthermore, this rumour suggested that Rosa did not put pressure on Ospina for the bulldozer because she was also seeking benefits for her close kin, namely, her parents and siblings. As a result of this rumour, Rosa and her kin began to be called beggars by some among Condagua's artisans.

These rumours about Rosa and her family reflect a common practice in Condagua. After Condagua became a *resguardo* and began to receive public cash transfers in 1993, many *gobernadores* have been accused of stealing or diverting collective goods to their close kin, like children, parents or siblings. Hence, today, *gobernadores* and community leaders in general are usually thought capable of funnelling resources into the community and prone to keep a significant part of these goods for themselves and their immediate relatives. The people of Condagua frequently complain and mock these ambivalent features of leaders with comments like ‘When a *gobernador* gives five thousand pesos, he has already taken ten thousand’. In addition to this, accusations of misuse of resources are often made and spread through rumours that assert that the leaders are prioritising their own and their kin’s interests over those of others.

This is what we call the *shadow of gestión*. In Condagua, a constituent part of *gestión* is rumours of theft and of other types of misuse of community resources. These rumours are used both to make sense of specific events and relationships and to assess and contest power position of leaders (Lazar 2008; Van Vleet 2003). Following Lazar’s (2008) discussion of the use of gossip to accuse self-serving indigenous leaders in El Alto (Bolivia), we propose that, in Condagua, rumours help ground a notion of a common good that allows for the evaluation and sanctioning of leaders who fail to serve the collective interest. Sanctions can be of various kinds. If accusations are proven, then leaders can be sanctioned according to laws of the *resguardo* with a physical punishment, community work or fines.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, leaders who are regarded as unreliable endure criticism and opposition to their participation in collective activities, which this may lead them even to leave the *resguardo* or drastically reduce their presence in community life

---

<sup>7</sup> As autonomous communities under the 1991 Colombian Constitution, indigenous *resguardos* have the right to solve conflicts and impose sanctions according to their own system of laws.

for a while. They are also subjected to constant mistrust, mostly as they are involved in gaining and managing community resources, and this opprobrium is extended to members of their immediate family. For instance, when leaders' children hold a *gestión*, they are suspected of committing the same faults of their parents.

We focus on the shadow of *gestión* as productive element in kinship relations in Condagua. We argue that mistrust caused by rumours of theft and other misuse of resources generates and sustains bonds between kin in two ways. First, that mistrust is diffused among the immediate family of suspected leaders, especially when they occupy or intend to reach positions as community leaders within Condagua. Second, mistrust tends to extend to other relatives who have been long-time partners or rivals in the making of *gestión*. Mistrust is often treated as absence of trust, and thus, it 'is frequently not seen as doing anything but *undo* the positive work of trust' (emphasis in original, Carey 2017: 2). For instance, trust is usually viewed as a means of creating or sustaining human bonds, while mistrust is considered as corrosive of them. The dominant Western notion of kinship links familiarity and reliability, as it posits trust as a basis of the ties and moral orientation between kin (Beer & Gardner 2015). In this sense, mistrust can undo kinship relations. However, by revisiting the topic of mistrust, recent ethnographies have shown that this builds bonds of its own (Carey 2017; Mühlfried 2018; Utekhin 2018). Following this view, we must treat mistrust as a key part of kinship in the everyday life of Condagua.

In Condagua, rumours of theft and other deviations from proper use of community resources are not ephemeral but can spread rapidly having long-lasting effects. For example, when Maria chose one of her cousins as a *clos* assistant for her one-year government in Condagua, many people reminded her that this woman was the daughter of a previous leader who had stolen millions of Colombian pesos that were part of a project intended to benefit all the

community. According to the rumours we heard, this occurred more than six years ago. Maria was told to reconsider her choice, as this person would likely drive others to cast doubt on her reliability as leader; people knew that this woman would help her in doing *gestión*, and many believed that she would commit the same crime as her father if she had access to collective goods. Maria did not change her mind. She considered it instead as an opportunity for her cousin to clearly demonstrate to Condagua's community that she was not like her father. In Condagua, mistrust is diffuse and enduring. This is why it has such powerful effects in the everyday world of *gestión*.

Another characteristic of mistrust in Condagua is that it is reciprocal, mutually shared and mutually felt, among those who are in competition for the positions of leadership. This kind of rivalry is frequently experienced in Condagua. In this community of 680 inhabitants, most Inga people are related by blood ties, marriage, or *compadrazgo* (godparentage). In daily life, households of Condagua are often divided into a few extended families, distinguished by their last names. Every year, members of these large families compete for the position of head of the *resguardo*. In this scenario, as we mentioned before, triggering mistrust by means of rumours is an effective and common way of assessing and contesting rivals' positions and expectations of power within a community.

Maria and Rosa have a great-grandfather in common, but yet belong to different large families. They are cousins because Maria's grandfather and Rosa's grandmother were siblings. These women have built a relationship in which doing *gestión* is a vehicle of both mutual aid and mutual mistrust. For many years, they have worked together to obtain money and other resources for Iuiwai Wasi's projects and activities. For instance, when Rosa was making *gestión* for the construction of Iuiwai Wasi's kiosks, Maria helped her to obtain 20 kilos of cement and \$500,000

COP (approx. \$139 USD) through her friendship bonds with politicians, who in return asked for the votes of Condagua's artisans in Colombia's 2018 election of local authorities. Additionally, Rosa has relied on Maria to replace her at craft fairs or attend meetings with institutional actors in Mocoa's urban area on several occasions. Nevertheless, Rosa and Maria mistrust each other. Rosa referred to Maria's unreliability by repeating a rumour, like Maria did when she told us about Rosa's relation with Ospina.

One morning, Rosa mentioned that she was feeling overworked because, as the leader of Iuiwai Wasi, she was responsible not only for doing *gestión* but also for manufacturing handicrafts and attending craft fairs to sell products made by all the artisans of Iuiwai Wasi. One solution for Rosa's fatigue would have been to delegate an artisan who would be exclusively dedicated to attending craft fairs and seek potential clients and sales opportunities. 'Maria is ideal for this job because she knows how to sell and do accounting, but she is unreliable', Rosa said, and in support of this, she told us the following. Many years ago, when Maria was leader of Condagua's artisans, she asked the group to attend a meeting at her home in Mocoa. An artisan, one of Rosa's uncles, arrived early and saw some handicrafts that Maria described as having been lost after a craft fair, set out for sale at Maria's house. This enduring rumour states that Maria, who was expected to seek collective profit, had stolen and tried to sell the products of other artisans as if they belonged to her to increase her own gain. Rosa's and Maria's belief in each other's untrustworthiness resemble each other. Supporting both are reports of acts aimed at prioritising the benefits of a close family member or their own benefit over others' through the wrongful uses of community resources.

This clearly shows the ambivalent relationship that Maria and Rosa have, in which kinship is made and actualised in everyday life through working together and mutual mistrust.

Indeed, as Carey put it, mistrust ‘gives rise to social forms of its own’ (2017: 3). In Condagua, mistrust is a counterpart of *gestión*, which generates and shapes kinship, as it is not only diffuse and enduring among leaders’ families but is also shared between the kin who participate in the dynamics of aid and rivalry involved in the making of *gestión*. To this extent, it is a matter of mutuality in the sense of shared experience, as indicated by Sahlins (2013) in his discussion of this concept. However, Sahlins’ notion also stems from and reinforces a long tradition of anthropological thought that equates mutuality in kinship bonds with a positive moral orientation of kin toward each other. Following Aristotle’s definition of close kin and true friends as ‘those who enjoy one another’s goodwill, trust and affection’ (Beer & Gardner 2015: 426), many anthropologists have placed love, care, amity and the like at the heart of kin relations (Stasch 2009). This view links mutuality to relationships in which relatives provide support for and count on each other, and it overlooks the possibility of thinking how mutuality may be lived through mistrust and other phenomena, treated as failures of intimate sociality.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, addressing the shadow of *gestión*, we demonstrated the importance of mistrust in configuring kinship and its influence on politics in Condagua.

### **Temporalities of *gestión***

In Mocoa’s landscape of frequent and multiple social interventions, indigenous communities and their leaders commonly relate to state actors and institutions through state-sponsored projects and programmes. In general, carrying out these interventions takes several months or even a few years of periodic meetings and capacity-building sessions. In present-day indigenous Amazonia,

---

<sup>8</sup> Scholars have shown that rivalry, theft and even physical violence are not failures of kinship, but integral parts of what it is and does in multiple social contexts (see Brightman 2013; Carsten 2013; Lambek 2011; Peletz 2001; Van Vleet 2002).

capacity building is a key strategy of NGOs and state interventions that promote a ground-up approach for conservation and development in areas where people live in poverty or threatened environments. This approach is implemented through training, in which NGO workers or state actors lead participatory activities, such as workshops, intended to recognise and enhance the knowledge and skills of local communities to generate positive changes (Mentore 2017). In Putumayo, since the 1990s, the development agenda has been conditioned by the war on drugs and a neoliberal view of economics that treats poverty as a subjective condition that should be countered with interventions that foster entrepreneurship or with conditional state subsidies, thus disregarding the structural causes of poverty in regions that have historically been considered to be at the violent and less-developed margins of the state (Ramírez 2010).

Since 2005, Condagua's artisans have relied on this scheme of social intervention to gain both training in handicraft manufacture and commercialisation and the necessary resources for their subsistence activities, such as materials and utensils to make products and funds to attend craft fairs. As the leaders of Iuiwai Wasi, Maria and Rosa have been in charge of making *gestión* to funnel capacity-building projects and programmes into the community. In this work, they have attended countless training sessions on topics such as accountability and customer service. Today, despite considering these interventions 'long and tiring', as they have repeatedly noted, Maria and Rosa recognise that adjusting their timetables is a strategic choice for the following reasons. First, after successfully completing these interventions, their association usually receives money and other desired resources. Second, by participating in capacity-building sessions in state projects and programmes, they have acquired valuable skills and knowledge that further their expertise as leaders. For example, they have lost their fear of public speaking while interacting with clients and state actors, acquired the technological ability to search for calls for funding



opportunities on the internet, and are well-prepared to do pricing and sales at craft fairs. Hence, over the course of 16 years, Maria and Rosa have invested a lot of time in training themselves as leaders and making *gestión*. This is why they often stressed to us the importance of having not only friends to do *gestión* with, but also the ‘time to deal with *gestión*’.

Here, we explore the significance of time in the making of *gestión*. Specifically, we argue that, by adopting the institutional timetables of state interventions, Maria and Rosa reinforced their position of power in the local political arena: thanks to their skill as leaders, they were able to become grassroots state actors within their communities. As such, they experienced a long and stable process of *gestión*, in which they used notions of kinship to grasp the emotional and temporal quality of their relationships with communities and state actors. We address these temporal experiences of *gestión* through the concept of *temporalities*, which we understand as the cultural, social and historical ways in which we live, practice and measure time (Davidov & Nelson 2016; Lazar 2014; Munn 1992). Furthermore, we indicate that the temporalities of *gestión* were adopted and practiced by Maria and Rosa as a form of both capital and kinship.

Davidov (2016) proposed the conceptualisation of temporality as cultural capital in her study of development projects realised by NGOs in Ecuador. She argues that these projects foster and are based on the values and practices of time management—for instance, responsibility and planning—that represent modernity and can be considered to be effective means of accomplishing objectives, funding cycles and results presentations. Hence, in these projects, capacity-building sessions can not only transfer and improve abilities but also persuade local communities to incorporate ways of conceiving and managing their time that should lead them to desirable futures. This modern idea of time management can be transformed into a form of capital as resources and recognition become granted to the subjects of intervention ‘who are best

able to manage themselves according to development's institutional timelines' (Davidov 2016: 28). By examining Maria's and Rosa's cases through this lens, we find that embracing the temporalities of the capacity-building scheme of intervention has been influential in their success in gaining both resources and recognition as leaders as well as intermediary positions of power as formal or informal state actors within rural and urban communities.

Since Rosa became Iuiwai Wasi's leader in 2012, she has been doing *gestión* to gain resources and training programmes for Condagua's artisans from state institutions and NGOs. In particular, she has cultivated a stable relationship with Artesanías de Colombia, as this organisation and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism frequently run capacity-building programmes for small business and associations of Colombian ethnic groups who work with traditional crafts. By participating in several programmes of this kind, Rosa and the other artisans of Iuiwai Wasi were able to incorporate specific temporalities into their lives. They were able to follow the gradual development of these interventions, attending workshop after workshop and taking up the knowledge and tools provided by the frontline workers of Artesanías de Colombia. As Iuiwai Wasi's leader, Rosa adopted time management strategies to make the association more efficient in manufacturing and selling handicrafts. For instance, beginning months before a craft fair, she plans and leads the preparation of the catalogue of products.

By embracing these temporalities, Rosa was able to lead the association to a successful completion of these interventions. As a result of this, Iuiwai Wasi acquired sustained support from Artesanías de Colombia, who provided materials, tools and trainings for designing, making and selling handicrafts. Moreover, this organisation also funded the costs of Rosa's participation in national and international craft fairs as representative of Condagua's artisans. In 2017, after Rosa showed to Artesanías de Colombia her skills as leader, artisan and fluent speaker of Inga, she was

hired by this organisation as a community technician. Over the course of six months, she was in charge of leading, recording and writing reports about all capacity-building activities realised by frontline workers of Artesanías de Colombia in Condagua. This work also involved frequent meetings and calls between Rosa and the coordinators, consultants, designers and other functionaries of Artesanías de Colombia and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. Hence, for a while, Rosa was no longer a subject of intervention. Instead, she became a local state actor herself, with the function of mediating between her own community and an organisation ascribed to the state.

Rosa viewed this position as a reward from Artesanías de Colombia for the years in which she had been working efficiently and hard as a community leader, investing time and effort in doing *gestión* and selling Iuiwai Wasi's products without receiving remuneration. Similarly, in December 2017, Rosa was publicly recognised as a representative artisan of the Putumayo region in Expoartesanías, the largest craft fair organised by Artesanías de Colombia. Before a large crowd including the First Lady and the Minister of Commerce, she spoke about Iuiwai Wasi and the influence of Artesanías de Colombia on the development of this association. These experiences, as well as the lasting support provided by this organisation to Condagua's artisans were significant for Rosa. She was in fact grateful to Artesanías de Colombia. Furthermore, she told us that 'this institution is like Iuiwai Wasi's father: we are where we are because of its support'. Although other state institutions and NGOs carried out interventions in Condagua, Rosa only used kinship terms to describe the relationship with Artesanías de Colombia.

Rosa's analogy is quite interesting and helpful for addressing temporalities of *gestión* as experiences that have to do not only with a form of capital, but also with kinship. For her, the relationship of Artesanías de Colombia and Iuiwai Wasi had temporal and emotional qualities that

were similar to those of the relationship between fathers and children in Condagua. In this context, kinship bonds are cultivated over time, which means that they are usually ongoing, more or less permanent and projected onto an open-ended future. Likewise, parents, mainly fathers, are expected to provide material support to their children since their birth and throughout their lives until they are able to provide for themselves. These are also important characteristics of Artesanías de Colombia's intervention in Condagua. Unlike other state and NGO interventions, which typically last for a limited period, several months or a year, this organisation's presence in Condagua began with the beginning of the artisans group, and it has remained through numerous programmes of capacity building realised over the course of more than 15 years. This has led to a particular powerful feeling of gratitude, which Rosa relates to kinship notions.

Like Rosa, Maria is also a state intermediary, although in Maria's case, this position was informal. Between 2016 and 2019, she led Palermo Sur's beneficiary families for Familias en Acción. As with other conditional cash transfers (CCTs) in Latin America, this programme seeks to fight poverty through periodic cash transfers for families that meet conditions intended to improve children's health and education, such as proving frequent school attendance and check-ups by means of records (De Sardan & Piccoli 2018). In general, these are state-sponsored programmes, and governments prefer women to receive the subsidies due to the view that they are more naturally committed to their children's well-being and more reliable than men, which considers them to be more reliable than men, using cash transfers in line with policy goals (Balen & Fotta 2018). Additionally, as CCTs seek to provide social assistance in highly unequal contexts under precarious conditions of health and education services and infrastructure, the lack of personnel is a common problem and is often solved by having women perform grassroots work

without remuneration or any official status (Cookson 2018). In Colombia, women who occupy this position are called *madres líderes* (leader moms).

Maria became a *madre líder* due to her visibility as community leader in Palermo Sur. She was known by her neighbours as an artisan and as someone with experience in making *gestión* due to her work in Iuiwai Wasi. Additionally, she represented Palermo Sur in social interventions of a type common in this neighbourhood due to its condition as a low-income urban zone, built in 2005 with government subsidies, intended for people displaced by armed conflict in Putumayo. As leader mom elected by her neighbours, Maria had to mediate the interaction between the local state actors of Familias en Acción and Palermo Sur's beneficiaries. Specifically, she was in charge of collecting and delivering the records of the beneficiaries' success in fulfilling requirements for subsidies in the programme office, in addition to organising pedagogical activities for beneficiary moms and informing them of payment dates and any news regarding cash transfers.

From Maria's perspective, her work mainly consisted in caring for beneficiary moms, whom she called *mamitas* or mommies, and their families. Instead of simply informing mothers of programme activities, news and payment dates via Facebook or WhatsApp groups, she preferred to visit them at their homes to find out how they were and what they needed, talking with them about their lives and developing confidence ties. Using this information, Maria selected important topics to address in capacity-building workshops and the pedagogical activities organised periodically and implemented by professionals hired by Familias en Acción. Indeed, Maria was responsible for securing food, drinks and chairs for these activities, in addition to communicating the mothers' interests and needs to the programme. In return, she expected active and permanent enrolment from the *mamitas* in programme activities. 'It takes time to visit

*mamitas* and deal with Familias en Acción's bureaucrats, thus I demand *mamitas*' time as well', Maria stated. For example, her rule was to take out of her group of beneficiaries any mother who missed three activities.

For Maria, her relationship with the beneficiary moms of Palermo Sur blended expectations, practices of care and rules, and she associated this particular combination of temporal and emotional qualities with kinship terms. For instance, in Mocoa, the programme's office established that leader moms had to document the participation of their group of beneficiaries in programme activities and to sign the records that proved their compliance with conditions for subsidies; thus, every beneficiary mom must belong to a group directed by a leader mom. If a beneficiary was not a member of any group, she had to request that a leader mom take her into her group. Maria did this with several moms, and she referred to this practice as *adopción* (adoption). For her, adoption meant taking a new beneficiary mom into the relationship of care and demands that she had with other *mamitas*, investing time and efforts in cultivating this type of bond with the new member. Because of this, beneficiaries became 'kind of a family' for Maria.

As community leaders and state intermediaries, Maria and Rosa have navigated in their everyday lives a complex and dynamic context in which, as noted, multiple actors and fronts of social intervention converge. In this context, community leaders like Maria and Rosa have taken up the opportunity of gaining new positions of power as intermediaries between state agencies or NGOs and the communities in which these organisations wish to develop programmes of capacity building. This means that, in Maria's and Rosa's cases, social interventions worked as a

platform to launch and reinforce their careers in local politics (see Auyero 2001).<sup>9</sup> Indeed, we argued that they were granted positions as state intermediaries due to the temporalities that they gradually adopted and transformed into a capital, as well as the relations of gifting and support that they built with different actors to succeed in the making of *gestión* as community leaders. In Maria's case, she developed relationships and a good reputation as community leader that led her to be elected as *gobernadora*. Moreover, we found that, by working as intermediaries between various state actors and communities, Rosa and Maria could develop what normally 'would be impossible in direct interactions between state agencies and citizens' (Thelen, Vetter & Von Benda-Beckmann 2018: 13). They used terms and notions from their kinship worlds to make sense of the temporalities and emotional qualities of these relationships and embraced those temporalities in a way that recalled their own trajectories and lives.

### **Conclusion: the ambivalence of *gestión***

Colombian state anti-drug interventions in the context of multicultural politics propelled Rosa and Maria into the world of *gestión*. Since then, both have managed to move along different scales of institutional-scapes, navigating a complex mesh of state and non-state actors while securing resources for their communities. *Gestión* has become part and parcel of their expertise and their self-embraced way of fashioning their lives.

The *gestión* that Rosa and Maria make, like that for many other indigenous leaders, grants them a practical skill to deal with institutions and political actors in effective ways. They actively seek resources, knowing where to go and whom to contact for special purposes. They also attend

---

<sup>9</sup> Auyero (2001) demonstrates that politicians and grassroots workers involved in social assistance programs in poor neighbourhoods of Argentina were able to launch and reinforce their political positions by gathering and distributing benefits of these programs.

meetings and capacity-building workshops through which they enlarge their networks and capitals.

However, their *gestión* is also performed through the performance of kinship. In fact, they build, sustain and negotiate kinship relations within and outside their proximate worlds, which then become valuable resources that they can draw upon in their everyday actions. As such, *gestión* is relatedness, as it involves the interwoven experiences and practices of friendship and kinship that entangle them with politics. Both Rosa and Maria exemplify the ways in which these relationships are made, performed and transformed over time while they invest time, affects and resources to bond with political and institutional actors.

Rosa and Maria show that the coproduction of kinship and politics does not dwell exclusively on the ways in which state and political actors influence kinship. More importantly, they represent modes of imbrication of intimate and public worlds that these women manage to create and sustain. *Gestión*, therefore, is an ethnographic category that allows us to analytically unpack these practices, travelling between worlds of kin and kith relatedness and local politics. However, more is implied in this. Like kinship, *gestión* is ambivalent too. Kinship is about attachment and disengagement. Likewise, *gestión* in Condagua refers to bonding as well as to theft and suspicion: it has shadows.

We have also argued that *gestión*, like kinship, is made of temporalities. Dealing with institutional and political actors of Mocoa involves specific temporalities that shaped Maria's and Rosa's experiences as leaders. Indeed, as we showed, *gestión* constitutes a timeline of Rosa's and Maria's lives. It consumes much of their times, and it structures their everyday rhythms. It also propels them to search for a particular balances of knowing when to ask and how much to ask for



within the particular entanglements of kinship and bureaucratic networks. Since its first appearance in the lives of these Inga women, they adopted and converted institutional times into a kind of accumulated capital, predisposing them to be community local leaders for many years. In this sense, *gestión* also implies a self-making process in time in which Rosa and Maria learn how to engage bureaucratic and administrative fields of state and acting as state-like actors (initially self-appointed through their positions within their community and previous actions of searching for the state and then becoming crucial for local state agencies as extended hands of discipline and provision of social resources). Although they were recipients of state benefits and targets of intervention, it was only through *gestión* that they became active and powerful agents of brokerage among NGOs, state agencies and various rural and urban communities across the years.

## Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the people of Condagua and Palermo Sur, especially to Rosa, Maria and their families. We also give special thanks to Jan Grill, Tathagatan Ravindran and Pedro Quintín for their helpful comments on previous drafts of this article.

## Declaration of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Funding details

This work was supported by Alianza Icesi-Fundación WWB Colombia, April 2018.

## References

- Allard, Olivier & Walker, Harry. 2016. Paper, Power, and Procedure: Reflections on Amazonian Appropriations of Bureaucracy and Documents. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, 21:402-413.
- Alvarez, Juan. 2009. *Diccionario de peruanismos: el habla castellana del Perú*. Lima: Fondo Editorial Universidad Alas Peruanas.
- Anand, Nikhil. 2011. Pressure: The PoliTechnics of Water Supply in Mumbai. *Cultural Anthropology*, 26:542-564.
- Anand, Nikhil & Rademacher, Anne. 2011. Housing in the Urban Age: Inequality and Aspiration in Mumbai. *Antipode*, 43:1748-1772.
- Auyero, Javier. 2001. *La politica de los pobres. Las prácticas clientelistas del peronismo*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Manantial.

Balen, Maria E. & Fotta, Martin. 2018. Introduction: Rearticulations of rural lives through conditional cash transfers. In *Money from the Government in Latin America: Conditional Cash Transfers Programs and Rural Lives*, edited by Maria E. Balen & Martin Fotta, 1-25. London & New York: Routledge.

Beer, Bettina & Gardner, Don. 2015. Friendship, Anthropology of. In *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioral Sciences, 2nd Edition*, edited by James D. Wright, 425-431. Oxford: Elsevier.

Bloch, Maurice. 2010. Alliance. In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, edited by Alan Barnard y Jonathan Spencer, 32-33. New York: Routledge.

Brightman, Robert. 2013. Hierarchy and conflict in mutual being. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3:259-270.

Buitron, Natalia. 2020. Autonomy, productiveness, and community: the rise of inequality in an Amazonian society. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 26:48-66.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9655.13180>

Carey, Matthew. 2017. *Mistrust: An Ethnographic Theory*. Chicago: Hau Books.

Carsten, Janet. 2000. Introduction: cultures of relatedness. In *Cultures of Relatedness: New Approaches to the Study of Kinship*, edited by Janet Carsten, 1-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

——— 2004. *After Kinship*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

——— 2010. Relatedness. En *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Second edition*, edited by Alan Barnard & Jonathan Spencer, 600-602. London/New York: Routledge.

——— 2013. What kinship does –and how. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 3:245-251.

Chaves, Margarita & Zambrano, Marta. 2006. From blanqueamiento to reindigenización: paradoxes of mestizaje and multiculturalism in contemporary Colombia. *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 80:5-23.

Chaves, Margarita & Hoyos, Juan F. 2011. El estado en las márgenes y las márgenes como estado. Transferencias económicas y gobiernos indígenas en Putumayo. En *La multiculturalidad estatalizada: indígenas, afrodescendientes y configuraciones de estado*, edited by Margarita Chaves, 115-134. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia.

Cookson, Tara P. 2018. *Unjust Conditions: Women's Work and the Hidden Cost of Cash Transfer Programs*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Davidov, Veronica. 2016. Time and the NGOther: Development and temporalities in an Ecuadorian coastal village. *Critique of Anthropology*, 36:27-43.

Davidov, Veronica & Nelson, Ingrid L. 2016. Introduction: It's about time: Temporality as a lens for NGO studies. *Critique of Anthropology*, 36:1-10.

De Sardan, Jean-Pierre O. & Piccoli, Emmanuelle. 2018. Cash Transfers and the Revenge of Contexts: An Introduction. In *Cash Transfer in Context: An Anthropological Perspective*, edited by Jean-Pierre O. de Sardan & Emmanuelle Piccoli, 1-27. New York/Oxford: Berghahn.

Del Cairo, Carlos. 2010. Las encrucijadas del liderazgo político indígena en la Amazonia colombiana. En *Perspectivas antropológicas sobre la Amazonia contemporánea*, edited by Margarita Chaves y Carlos Del Cairo, 189-211. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia y Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana.

Eiró, Flávio & Koster, Martijn. 2019. Facing bureaucratic uncertainty in the Bolsa Família Program: clientelism beyond reciprocity and economic rationality. *Focaal—Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, 85:84-96.

Eisenstadt, Shmuel N. & Roniger, Luis. 1984. *Patrons, clients and friends: interpersonal relations and the structure of trust in society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Guichard, Martine. 2014. Introduction. In *Friendship, Descent and Alliance in Africa: Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by Martine Guichard, Tilo Grätz & Youssouf Diallo, 1-15. New York/London: Berghahn Books.

Killick, Evan & Desai, Amit. 2010. *The Ways of Friendship: Anthropological Perspectives*. New York/London: Berghahn Books.

Lambek, Michael. 2011. Kinship as gift and theft: Acts of succession in Mayotte and Ancient Israel. *American Ethnologist*, 38:2-16.

Lazar, Sian. 2004. Personalist Politics, Clientelism and Citizenship: Local Elections in El Alto, Bolivia. *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 23:228-243.

——— 2008. *El Alto, rebel city: self and citizenship in Andean Bolivia*. Durham & London: Duke University Press.

——— 2014. Historical narrative, mundane political time, and revolutionary moments: coexisting temporalities in the lived experience of social movements. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 20:91-108.

Lebner, Ashley B. 2012. A Christian Politics of Friendship on a Brazilian Frontier. *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 77:496-517.

Mains, Daniel. 2013. Friends and money: Balancing affection and reciprocity among young men in urban Ethiopia. *American Ethnologist*, 40:335-346.

Mentore, Laura. 2017. The virtualism of “capacity building” workshops in indigenous Amazonia: ethnography in the middle grounds. *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, 7:279-307.

Miller, Daniel. 2007. What is a Relationship? Is Kinship Negotiated Experience? *Ethnos: Journal of Anthropology*, 72:535-554.

Mühlfried, Florian. 2018. Introduction: Approximating Mistrust. In *Mistrust: Ethnographic Approximations*, edited by Florian Mühlfried, 7-22. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Munn, Nancy D. 1992. The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21:93-123.

Murtagh, Chantelle. 2016. *Producing leaders: An ethnography of an indigenous organisation in the Peruvian Amazon* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The University of Manchester, UK.

Peletz, Michael G. 2001. Ambivalence in Kinship since the 1940s. In *Relative Values: Reconfiguring Kinship Studies*, edited by Sarah Franklin & Susan McKinnon, 413-444. Durham/London: Duke University Press.

Pinzón, Carlos E., Suárez, Rosa & Garay, Gloria. 2004. *Mundos en red: la cultura popular frente a los retos del siglo XXI*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional.

Plan de Desarrollo Territorial (PDT). 2020. Plan de Desarrollo Territorial 2020-2023. Alcaldía de Mocoa.

Ramírez, María C. 2010. Alternative Development in Putumayo, Colombia. Bringing Back the State through the Creation of Community and ‘Productive Social Capital’? In *Editing Eden: A Reconsideration of Identity, Politics, and Place in Amazonia*, edited by Frank Hutchins & Patrick C. Wilson, 151-190. Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press.

——— 2015. The Idea of the State in Colombia: An Analysis from the Periphery. In *State Theory and Andean Politics: New Approaches to the Study of Rule*, edited by Christopher Krupa & David Nugent, 35-55. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Sahlins, Marshall. 2013. *What Kinship Is –And Is Not*. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press.

Sánchez, Lina M. 2012. *La ciudad-refugio: migración forzada y reconfiguración territorial urbana en Colombia. El caso de Mocoa*. Barranquilla: Editorial Universidad del Norte.

Sichra, Inge. 2009. Colombia andina. In *Atlas sociolingüístico de pueblos indígenas de América Latina*, edited by Inge Sichra, 605-621. Cochabamba: Unicef & FUNPROEIB Andes.

Stasch, Rupert. 2009. *Society of Others: Kinship and Mourning in a West Papuan Place*. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press.

Tate, Winifred. 2015. The Aspirational State: State Effects in Putumayo. In *State Theory and Andean Politics: New Approaches to the Study of Rule*, edited by Christopher Krupa & David Nugent, 234-256. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Thelen, Tatjana & Alber, Erdmute. 2018. Reconnecting State and Kinship: Temporalities, Scales, Classifications. In *Reconnecting State and Kinship*, edited by Tatjana Thelen & Erdmute Alber, 1-35. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Thelen, Tatjana, Vetter, Larissa & Benda-Beckmann, Keebet Von. 2018. Stategraphy: Relational Modes, Boundary Work, and Embeddedness. In *Stategraphy: Toward a Relational Anthropology of the State*, edited by Tatjana Thelen, Larissa Vetter & Keebet Von Benda-Beckmann, 1-19. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Tuckett, Anna. 2018. Ethical brokerage and self-fashioning in Italian immigration bureaucracy. *Critique of Anthropology*, 38:245-264.

Utekhin, Ilya. 2018. Suspicion and Mistrust in Neighbour Relations: A Legacy of the Soviet Mentality? In *Mistrust: Ethnographic Approximations*, edited by Florian Mühlfried, 201-218. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.

Van Vleet, Krista E. 2002. The intimacies of power: rethinking violence and affinity in the Bolivian Andes. *American Ethnologist*, 29:567-601.

——— 2003. Partial theories: on gossip, envy and ethnography in the Andes. *Ethnography*, 4:491-519.



Veber, Hanne & Virtanen, Pirjo K. 2017. Introduction. In *Creating Dialogues: Indigenous Perceptions and Changing Forms of Leadership in Amazonia*, edited by Hanne Veber & Pirjo K. Virtanen, 3-41. Boulder: University Press of Colorado.