



Sofia Colmenares: [00:00:00] I want to thank you for your time for being here today, and for being willing to participate in this series of interviews. I'm sure that because of your very unique experience it will be a very worthy contribution to the series of interviews that I'm completing.

Gwen Burnyeat: It's a great pleasure.

SC: So to start up, for listeners who may not be familiar with your work. Could you share what research and writing you have done, in relation to cacao and chocolate in Colombia?

GB: [00:00:35] Sure, so I first [00:00:38] got to know the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, which is a group of victims of the Colombian armed conflict who live in northwest Colombia in Uraba in 2011. And before I studied them, I was working with them as an employee of Peace brigades International an NGOs and provides unaccompanied [00:00:57], provides unarmed [00:01:00] international accompaniment to human rights defenders at risk around the world. And in that capacity, I was living in Uraba for two years working in several areas one of which was that the Peace Community [00:01:12] and I became very interested in what they did and their life project. [00:01:19] They declared [00:01:26] themselves neutral (?) affect the recording or are we ok.

SC: I think we're okay, yeah.

GB: Yeah. [00:01:33] So they declared themselves neutral to the conflict in 1997. They've been trapped between left-wing Guerrilla, Fighters, right-wing paramilitary forces, and the state Army. And as civilians, they decided to declare their independence to the conflict and request all of the Armed actors not enter their living spaces using a very creative interpretation of international humanitarian law which stipulates that parties to an internal conflict should distinguish between other combatants who are legitimate targets and civilians who are not. And so they were sort of demarcating themselves out a civilian population, only a bit like the use of a red cross sign in a hospital [00:02:12] and the whole international human rights community is really kind of supportive of them and recognize their work as a human rights defender speaking out against crimes committed against them. They could be much older crimes as a Colombian conflict from forced disappearances to massacres to stigmatization, sexual violence a little bit, etcetera.[00:02:36] But always I felt as I was working with them, in the capacity of part of the international community was that everyone was focusing, very narrowly on their demands that the violence cease and that their human rights be respected and and their mind for neutrality. And I suppose you one of those things that was really important, but having spent a lot of time with them on a day to day basis in their everyday lives, I thought that there was a bigger picture and that was their sort of cultural context out of which their political struggle, emerged, and their everyday work was farming cacao. And I decided to retrain as an anthropologist, my



background had been in literature. So I went to the National University of Colombia in Bogota, I did a two-year research degree, a master's course, [00:03:25] in anthropology. I retrained in anthropology and I spent my time between Bogota studying and doing new field work with the Peace Community in Uraba, focusing on their cacao, and focusing on how looking at the everyday work of farming cacao, I could tell their story in a way that kind of seemed to me to, [00:03:48] to put their political struggle in a wider cultural context really. And [00:03:55] so that led to the thesis, which then I translated into English and published as a book and called Chocolate, politics and peace building An ethnography of Peace Community of San José de Apartadó and I also produced a film together with my co-director Pablo Mejia Trujillo, called Chocolate of peace. And so that's, those are the two main things that I've done. I carried on working in Colombia, but no longer on chocolate, but that's, that's my research on chocolate.

SC: You do describe yourself as a chocolate Ambassador. So what responsibilities are actions or you associating with this role, or title?

GB: Where do I do that?

SC: Well, actually, [00:04:39] when we met at the tasting in Harvard.

GB: Oh that was you, I was thinking that was you. Yeah yeah yeah, I was thinking, was that her.

SC: Yes, [00:04:51] so I brought the book with me and you left a note on the first page where you said to a fellow chocolate ambassador.

GB: Ah, how lovely. That's a nice thing to write in someone's book. I must've been inspired that day by all your lovely chocolates. No, I think, I think that chocolate is a very special food because it's sort of, so much symbolic capital associated with it. And it's sort of, it's a sexy food. It's not a potato or a radish. It's sort of, you know, there's a mystique to chocolate not only has it got an extraordinary history that sort of, through which you can really tell the story of the Americas and conquests in pre-columbian indigenous populations, mayans and everything which you probably know much more about than I do. But also, you know the roles it has in our contemporary society is one where it symbolizes romance and things like that. So I think it's got a lot of symbolic capital, but it's also, [00:06:00] you know, its production is one of those commodities like other things, like coffee [00:06:06], or bananas. Where the people who are producing it tend to live in parts of the country, parts of the world that are riven by conflict, [00:06:17] affected by poverty, inequality. And because of this luxury status, as a commodity that it has, we, we import it in the UK, where I live or in America, or wherever else in the global North, and we pay a high price for it because it is sort of this special thing. But I think that quite often people don't really know the stories behind it, and they can't imagine the people's lives, the producers, and what they have to struggle through in the context where they live because many



of these countries are in conflict like Colombia or similar problems, and they also don't know what it takes to produce it. It's a very complex production and I think that I see my role as an anthropologist [00:07:02] to use chocolate to tell the story of the people that we need to care about because they produce food that we put into our bodies, thanks to the bodily efforts that they make where they are. And so I think that's that's what I, that's quite a nice way to describe being a chocolate ambassador.

SC: And as a chocolate ambassador and while you were doing your training in anthropology in Colombia, what role was cacao and chocolate playing in the relationship that you built with the Peace Community?

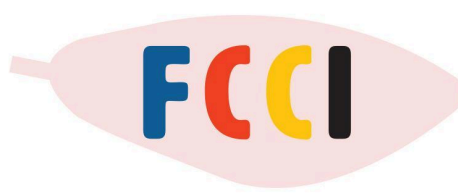
GB: [00:07:43] Yeah, so anthropologists tend to use a method called participant observation, as our kind of primary data collection tool, which basically means going and hanging out with people who are trying to do what they do or at least trying to learn a little bit about what they do from, from doing it ourselves, physically with our own bodies. So, I spent a lot of time learning to farm cacao, all of the different stages, which I described in the book from the kind of the planting to the caring for the trees to pruning and cutting the buds off, opening them, scooping them out, fermenting them, drying them and then, you know, packing them up into into their sacks, that [00:08:29] get shipped off to places. And so, I really [00:08:33] learned a lot about both their expertise and also, the kind of sweat and tears that they put in, you know, the kind of the bodily efforts, very heavy carrying around a big bucket full of cacao pods while you're going up and down really steep slopes, ? the harder to reach pods. So that was one part of it, learning to do all of it, another part of it was because I, you know, felt that I was kind of really in solidarity, with a community of my relationship with them went beyond just sort of studying them. I wanted also to find ways to support their struggle, and so I set up a little relationship between them and a Bogota restaurant called Lapingachos to sell their chocolate because they make cacao and most of it gets exported [00:09:22] to the UK actually well via Rotterdam. [00:09:26] They sell, I don't know how many tons per year now, it was at 900 tons a year when I was working with them, but that's back in 2015, to Lush Cosmetics this multinational british-based company and they make it into cacao butter, which they use as an ingredient in some of their soaps and massage bars and things like that. So it doesn't actually get made into some proper made chocolate or anything at that level of sophistication in their production technologies yet, but they do make it into artisan or table chocolate which is used to make the traditional Colombian hot chocolate breakfast, the traditional Colombian breakfast drink which is hot chocolate. And so this is the restaurant Lapingachos is selling their chocolate. Unfortunately that relationship didn't last after I left Colombia, well the community because [00:10:17] I was always the one bringing



huge boxes of chocolate [00:10:20] on the plane back from above every time I went there. But I also kind of helped out with organizing meetings with Lush and we did organize a couple of events and even a campaign before I started working in the National, I was working with PBI and we did a campaign with Lush Cosmetics. Jointly with PBI. To try to use their obviously huge global reach to bring awareness amongst consumers about the rights situation of the community, which is a kind of nice way of using global consumer chains to do human rights, but I am rather than just relying only on the small power of human rights organizations. [00:11:07] So everything that I did, I was sort of trying to keep chocolate at the center and then, of course, there was the film, but I guess we'll talk about that. We'll talk about that in a minute.

SC: right. You've mentioned all of these events that the community members participated in both nationally and internationally. From your perspective, how did chocolate serve as a tool to enable discussions about peace education during these events?

GB: [00:11:34] Yeah. Well I suppose two separate things. The first thing is that the Peace Community before I ever came along had already gotten an incredibly impressive international network and you know they'd already traveled the world speaking at Washington congress and European parliament and all sorts of audiences around Europe and the Americas, so I didn't kind of invent that. They already had all of that. But what I did with Pablo when we made the film Chocolate of Peace was really thinking initially about Colombian audience, because it was in the context of the Colombian peace process and [00:12:10] I thought it was really important that ordinary Colombians should know more about Peace Community. Because actually, it turns out that they were better known abroad than in their own country, except among their human rights networks in the country among which they're kind of an emblem, an icon. But all of these kind of middle class, Bogotanos that I knew in Bogota they'd never heard of the Peace Community, they'd never dream of going to Uraba. They thought I was crazy to go to Uraba, why are you gonna go there. It's a red zone, it's full of guerillas. And I couldn't understand why they didn't know what was going on in Uraba. And I was always conscious of you know, there was a combat, there was forced disappearance. And no one seemed to care in Bogota, and I thought this is terrible. And it's not because they're terrible people it's because the conflict of the country which has mainly taken place in the rural areas has really divided the Colombians from the urban and rural parts and so Pablo and I decided to make a film to try to build a bridge between those two Colombia's, really. [00:13:21] And partly because we thought it needed to be done and partly because we really felt that at a time in which the whole country was talking about what is peace, we thought that the Peace Community's story would serve as a really important example, not only for people to understand the dimensions of what the human cost of war has



been and what really people have suffered in the countryside in the places where everyone's food is being produced. But also because the Peace Community over 20 years of living with violence in all its dimensions have come up with a really very profound and articulate sense of what peace really means. That's a very complex level which goes far beyond just the silencing of weapons. And we thought that that was something that would inspire the other people in the country to sort of think about what peacebuilding might mean in their lives. Things like relationship with nature, historical memory, solidarity economics, community work ethics. Every week they get together and work on a plantation together, and share the profits, and stuff like that. So, we thought these were very, very useful beautiful stories to tell and, and also to sympathize with the victims of the conflict. So, we made the film and it was released in 2016. Just a few months before the country's reached the final peace agreement with the farc guerilla who they've been negotiating with since 2012 and a final peace agreement was put to a referendum which was rejected by just 50,000 votes in a disinformation campaign, rather similar to the brexit campaign in the UK a few months earlier and the election of Donald Trump in the states, a few months later. [00:15:01]. Terrible Trio, these elections, I think, and but, but nevertheless, I think that going around the film, the country with the film, it was able to see if our people emotionally connect with it and really felt much better able to understand the dimension of the peace process and what it meant when we did that, rather than other things that I did with an organization I belong to just going around the country explaining the six points of the agreement and going into quite rational, explanations about all the different aspects of it and why they were including a peace agreement. Which is much easier to understand when they first of all connected emotionally listening to the voices of the victims and heard their kind of proposals for a more inspired, more hopeful future. But that's also taken far beyond Colombia. And I think that it's been kind of appropriated by all sorts of groups in Germany and Poland, Italy, Japan, America, Canada, Australia, England, and all of these different groups. Really, very, very minimum from Colombian students at universities abroad to human rights organizations that do peace, education in schools. To even actually food science lectures in Boston University, there's an amazing woman there who shows my film every year. I think the fact that shoppers at the center with the story of one among them, the way to get to the answer your question. The fact that chocolate is at the center is really [00:16:36] something that helps people to come together because it's something that everyone shares. It's not you know, you don't. Not everyone shares a story about human rights in Colombia. That's not necessarily going to pull anyone into an event about that, unless they're Colombians and they already have an interest in the conflict, but it's not like chocolate. You know, it's something that everyone can kind of get



behind and quite often I had groups of Colombian students in universities organizing and things to you know, just to get people together and it wasn't really about the film. The film was an excuse to get people together to talk about the peace process and they would make hot chocolate. They would often, you know, have friends send packets of Colombian chocolate over from Bogota or wherever or they had brought some with them when they came to study a year ago and they still had a little bit and they pooled their resources of chocolate and they made some Colombian food. They had like bocadillo, and hot chocolate and empanadas or something like that. And you know, it would be a kind of a more intimate get-together where you can really share ideas that are important about changing the world than it is sort of dry lecture to think. So, I think that the chocolate is really, it's at the heart of why it's been a successful project. I think, because it brings people together.

SC: The film that you directed was titled Chocolate of peace. And in the interviews that I've completed and the past few weeks, I've had conversations with cacao producers in different areas of the country, some of whom have made very impassioned, [00:18:11] I guess [00:18:14] discussions with me, have had very impassioned discussions with me about whether or not it is fair to call chocolate the product of peace as it is now being marketed by the government. So obviously some of them agree and some of them don't based on the experiences that they have personally had. In the case of the film, which was named Chocolate of Peace. What? What? [00:18:40] inspired the decision to give it that title?

GB: I mean I think mainly because they're the Peace Community and it was their chocolate. But then sort of subconsciously it was we realized that we were making a film about these peaceful, about what peace might mean and as a contribution to peace [00:19:06]. As we saw, you know, the everyday work of farming cacao also, as an act of peace, building, really, especially when you look at some of their narratives of the community members about the chocolate, the cacao being organic. And, you know, we contrast in the film, the organic cacao groves with this lush undergrowth and rotten husks and insects and everything and underfoot, with the dry banana plantations in rows, which obviously fumigated with pesticide every morning a little by plane. I used to wake up in Apartado to the noise of the biplane soaring over the plantation. And this contrast is really important because the banana companies in Colombia have been well, Chiquita brands have been held responsible for in an American Court, financing paramilitary groups. So just sort of think the banana is a symbol of what one of the community members calls the agriculture of death, and there's the agriculture of life. And of course, organic is life. It means, you know about life full of life, life, full. And I think [00:20:19] yeah, that that contrast is the reason why I think that when they're farming, even when they're not farming cacao, they are



building peace. They also from, you know, cash crop, cacao is their main cash crop, they also farm subsistence crops corn and avocado and beans and stuff and I think for them working their land is an act of peace building. So I think that's the reason why we call it chocolate of peace but I just want to comment on this question about whether now cacao being that's just a peace crop. And it's quite interesting when I was doing my research 2014-2015 this was when it was being touted as the thing that could be used to [00:20:56] substitute coca crops. Which sounds great. And you know, in theory, it's a good idea, which is a crop that is much better for the environment, you can grow it with other crops, you can do quite well with organic crops even if it's not organic is still kind of far more environmentally friendly than soy or African Palm, which is devastating the Atrato region and some of the Cauca regions of Colombia or sugar cane or things like this, like banana that was being grown as a kind of mono crop. So it can be farmed in a much more environmentally friendly way. For the soil because it's a tree, it's got roots, etc. But it takes ages to grow and have a decent harvest. [00:21:35] And the crop substitution program as it's being implemented by the government of Ivan Duque who went into power after having been one of the main guys, behind the rejection of the peace deal based on all of this misinformation and he used to systematically undermined, most of the implementation of the peace agreement ever since and the implementation of the crop subsidies has been frankly, ridiculous. [00:22:03] And I think the main criticism, I mean I'm not an expert and many, many colleagues have much much more expert on the crop substitution program than I do. But they all say and I quite agree with them that the main problem is, if you don't implement point one of the agreement, which is about rural reform and making serious structural changes to land distribution, wealth distribution and infrastructure, road service, education, healthcare in the Colombian countryside, then asking the Colombian coca growers to stop growing coca [00:22:40] is, you're always going to have to pay them to stop because growing coca is just so much more rentable than anything else. They don't they don't have a road to take that avocados. I mean, the campesinos in some of the veredas of San José de Apartadó don't even take avocados to town. They feed them to the pigs. They are falling off the trees. These things that are super expensive in Europe, but carrying them on a mule to town, takes them eight hours and they don't get enough money for it. So no wonder they grow the coca crops. And so you can't really expect give people some cacao seeds and think that for that reason, they'll be able to start growing coca and I don't think that there's any chance of any crop being a crop of peace unless they implement the peace agreement in all of its entirety. [00:23:30] And you know, that would make some sort of proper structural changes that would help, that would help bring the country towards a more peaceful future. So I think that those who are farming cacao,



[00:23:43] you know, they're people doing interesting projects in Colombia to do with peace building and I think that's fantastic. And you know, really inspirational, and I think that we need to hear about it because I am just so I'm just, it's just so nice to see that, you know, they're coming to fruition. [00:24:00] Good projects, like the FARC members who disarmed and are committed to staying disarmed, to doing amazing things with coffee and reproduction and stuff. So I think any crop can be a peacebuilding crop, so long as it farms in a way that is helping people and empowering local people and giving them a fair profit of their labor and allowing them to do things like have their own land and send their children to school and have decent health care. I think really the major responsibility of peacebuilding lies with the government.

SC: So, if we take a step back now, to consider the history of the area where the Peace Community is and really the history of how cacao arrived there and became a crop in San José de Apartadó, you share some details in your book about how this happens. Could you provide a brief history for people who are not familiar with the story?

GB: Oh gosh you're gonna catch me up cause I can't remember the beginning of it but I know that it starts arriving and during the colonial period but then it kind of disappears. But the important story of the Peace Community is that they had a few crops here in the, when they first settled in the 50s-1960s but it was around the 1970s when I think, is it Fedecacao and Banco Agrario, anyway they get some crops, they do really really well because they got technical support from the Agrarian bank and they form a cooperative under the auspices of Patriotic Union party, which was this leftist party created in the 1980s in the context of previous failed peace processes between the FARC and the government, and the UP and was comprised of some FARC members who went into politics as part of the agreement, but also many other doctors and lawyers, farmers. Just people who believed that this party could be an alternative for the country which had been dominated by Liberal Parties. And, and also allow, the FARC a way to disarm and violence ravaging the countryside and they were very progressive left wing party. And they they were really strong in Uraba and they set up kind of three main pillars, which were education, healthcare and cooperatives. And the cooperatives for different crops in different areas where the fuel for financing the building of houses and stuff. And San José de Apartadó in Uraba had cacao and so they kind of massified it and they did really well and they had this, they had this cooperative called Balsamar, [00:27:06] then in 1996, [00:27:09] all of their members, all of the directors of Balsamar, of the cooperative were massacred. They weren't members of the UP, but they were sympathizers and they were massacred because throughout the late 90s, the wave of paramilitary military violence in the whole region against anything that was left wing or in any way could seem to be associated with the left or with the



guerilla. [00:27:36] And so, this was terrible, the whole town of San José de Apartadó was abandoned, there were completely ghost houses and their, the farmers who were living in the rural settlements around San José de Apartadó, between kind of two hours and two days walk they were obviously terribly worried because they felt that, they were also benefiting from their cooperative, they were selling their power to the cooperative. [00:28:08] But then [00:28:10] then they decided to stay neutral, hoping that that declaration would allow them to stay in their lands, but just a week after this declaration, which was done with kind of international support the Red Cross informed that this was going to happen, a wave of military and paramilitary violence, swept the region driving them all out of their lands, burning their crops [00:28:34] and they all ended up taking refuge in the empty houses in the town of San José de Apartadó, [00:28:40] and there they stayed for a while and they, they felt absolutely trapped. They, they couldn't go out to farm their land, they couldn't go out individually. Because either they would be found by left-wing guerrillas or right-wing paramilitaries or the army and any of them could kill them, but then they realize that they can start going out in groups, that there might be safety in numbers. And so they went to find the cacao plantation nearest, the town, it doesn't matter who they belong to, and, of course, the Army and the paramilitaries hadn't burned the cacao groves because what they really wanted to burn was anything that would be a food crop for the guerilla survive on. So they left a cacao alone [00:29:22] and so they went to the nearby cacao groves, and they would harvest it and dry it. And that way they started to get a little bit more income together, these campesinos. And through these proces they started to go through what I kind of identify as a cultural change rather than the short term logic of protection, which is what they envisioned when they initially declared themselves neutral just simply to carry on living in this area and protect themselves. They started to shift into a much more long term logic, peace building which I call positive peace logic which was much more about working together as an organization, living together, they organized themselves into working groups, into an internal council, they created statutes, they created a hymn, they created kind of principles for their membership and they worked out also, you know, the kind of not only the ways they could survive but also the ways they could look after each other and that they can actually look after each other better together, not just when they went and worked the land but also in, you know, sharing their food, educating the children and so on and so forth, and it really grew from there. And so I think that the founding of the Peace Community is very, a subsequent growth is very much connected to the cacao it's really been at the heart of their struggle, and as they've grown and become more kind of successful and been able to return to some of the settlements, they've been able to kind of establish that relationship with Lush cosmetics which has been a really



important thing for them because they get fair trade certification, organic certification, which enables them to get a better price and it's almost as if they have built the Peace Community in the footprint left by the Balsamar Cooperative and the destruction of the UP party across Colombia, it's almost like the cacao of the Peace Community is kind of reliving carrying or carrying on this flame as it were from that struggle. So I think that that's really important and it's also, it's really allowed them to be much more autonomous [00:31:43] and stay together. Stay connected together as a community because I think that, you know, small-scale farmers living in subsistence farming crops, scuffling around the mountains of the Andes are very vulnerable. And not only to the forces of nature and to the conflict. Not that their voices were not heard nationally or internationally. And so, being together as a community and working in cacao have allowed them to inspire people all over the world to think that a different world is possible to believe in community to believe in peace, to believe in peace building and from the ground up grassroots kind of peacebuilding. I think it's been a very important crop for them/

SC: And the community itself, made up of cacao producers [00:32:38], when the rupture from the state which is perceived, as they founded the Peace Community in 1997. How does this affect their relationship with entities that support cacao producers in Colombia such as Fedecacao?

GB: So they initially did not break that relationship with the state, not until 2005 but I mean that's a different story. I mean well no, it's part of what you're asking, sorry. I think they initially had a relationship with the state, they tried to access justice, they tried to talk to the army, asked the army to stop harassing them. They gradually broke with different institutions because they felt that they were not being treated fairly and they were just getting lies. And in the meantime, the army together with paramilitary forces continued to physically target them in their land. And so they eventually broke up, they broke off with the justice system in 2003 and in the 2005 massacre, in which they killed eight people, including three children one of which was only eight months old, then they officially broke off all relations with the Colombian State [00:33:57]. Initially, before they had their relationship with Lush, they didn't really need much from the state in terms of the cacao because they were selling to Colombian chocolate companies like Nacional and Luker. I mean, they're registered in the Colombian Chamber of Commerce as a non-profit so they can, you know, do their do their business that way. Everything is above board kind of legal terms. [00:34:24] And then when they meet Lush, I think Lush just sort of fits into their world view, and they're able to start exporting that. And I think that they've been able to see most of that was with minimal interaction with the state. I mean, they have to comply with all of the exportation [00:34:42] stuff, laws, paperwork and whatnot. But, but they don't have the, that



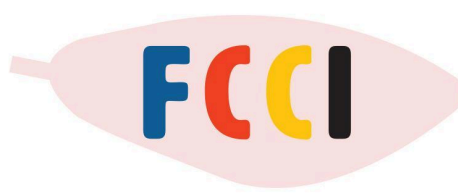
hasn't kind of, I mean. It's hard because they say they are their own state and yet they also do these kind of state granted like pay taxes and and follow export laws, but actually what they recognizes, they're trying to be in as much of a rupture is as possible, given the circumstances [00:35:16] while basically not engaging with the executive branch or the justice system. I don't know if they've ever had any relationship with Fedecacao, I think I did meet with Fedecacao at one point and I can't remember what they said about that. So, I don't know. I don't know how to answer that question. I'm afraid. I don't know. [00:35:42] They're not really part of any kind of national associations. The only associations they really kind of connect with are other communities who are also in similar kind of grassroots peacebuilding processes, so that's more of their kind of point of connection rather than the cacao being the point of connection with others and Colombia.

SC: Got it. You also describe the connection between the community and cacao from multiple different roles and perspectives throughout the book. Including cacao as a political ideal, cacao as the basis for building relationships amongst community members, cacao forming affective bonds with community members and cacao as a crop that allowed the people to return to San José de Apartadó. Can you discuss these different roles and how they have built the perception that the community has of cacao.

GB: Yeah, [00:36:47] so I think that I touched on this before when we talked about the history. Which is that after this 2005 massacre, [00:36:54] which took place in a place called Mulatos, and Resbalosa which are two veredas, two settlements that are eight hours walk from San Jose the town. After a few years, they decided they wanted to try to return to build a new settlement in the place of the massacre to honor those they'd lost. [00:37:19] And when they went back, they found [00:37:24] an abandoned cacao plantation there, and it had been abandoned since before [00:37:32] since the massacre of the Balsamar cooperative.

SC: 1996

GB: Thank you, yes 1996. So they hadn't seen it since then and they found it and of course it had survived because they're trees. You can't leave a banana plantation for that long and expect it to still be there when you come back. But cacao is just a tree, so they got taller. They got more bushy. [00:38:00] And so when they came back they didn't have to start from scratch. They could just start pruning and start clearing out these plantations. And they soon had crops again and so that enabled them to sort of return to this place. There's a nice bit in that part where I tell that story in the book where one of the farmers talked about cacao being a resistant crop, and resistant is a word that they used a lot to describe themselves. Resistencia is a very important word in Spanish, but for them, you know, resistance is all about its visitors against the state, but



also against fight against violence, but also against the kind of capitalist system, which creates these ways of trading, these economic production teams, which creates such injustice in the world ,such as the banana plantations down in Apartado. And they sort of see their work as an external, co-operative group of small scale farmers, trying to build an alternative to that sort of system. [00:39:01] So, I think that they see the cacao with those eyes. They also see it with great affection, but I think you'd find this. I mean, I see this in the farmers anyway with whatever crop, because when you are working something every day you're tending to it. You have to treat it, you know, with lots of love. And I think another nice quote that I have in the book is one of them talking to me about how unlike some crops, cacao is not something that you can farm as if on a factory line. You can't just fly over in a biplane and spray pesticide over it. You have to be there with your hands going tree to tree, touching the tree, touching the cacao, caring for it, checking it over checking if there's a an outgrowth here that needs to be pruned, checking if it's got any pests on it [00:39:55] and handling it. And I think that that creates a kind of tactile closeness. [00:40:02] So it's definitely an affection, special affection to their trees. And then of course, it's the means by which they socialize with each other. And I think that you described this as the creation of affective bonds between them or something they [00:40:18] they work together often in family groups or in working group, but they have set up to work different plantations together [00:40:27] and it's often a space of socialization. I mean they spend hours there and I spent really nice afternoons with them, kind of going from tree to tree and seeing how like the farmers their fathers will teach their sons how to angle the machete to get a particularly far up, pod or how to walk along the side of a very steep mountain, telling them things about the countryside or memories of being a place when something to helicopter going overhead and then sharing a moment with fear together as well, sharing the fear of the conflict all around them. Landmines. It could be nearby as well as, and so they share their every day stories working cacao together and that's the meaning of sociality. That's where community is created. And that's also where the sort of the logic of Peace Community to do with resistance against the state. But also of care for nature, care for each other is reproduced and passed on to younger generations and passed horizontally to other people and reaffirmed as they interact with each other. So I think it means many things to them. It's part of their International solidarity because they sometimes also go to Europe to give speaking tours. Now, they often find themselves in events where my film is being shown. So that the film is shown which is quite nice because it sets the scene, it tells the history of the community, so then the people who've traveled can really focus on their recent or current human rights situation and go into more detail about it, without going to explain the whole history and context of the community. So I think it



means a lot of things to them clearly

SC: and they've built this relationship with cacao for all these years, at what point do they decide to start transforming the cacao into chocolate to make chocopaz?

GB: [00:42:29] I think they've always made chocolate just at home, not for exportation or nothing for sale but just because it's part of the the traditional Colombian countryside, specially in the Antioquia region, when you've got a little bit of extra cacao that you're not selling you just fry it up in a frying pan, and toast it and then grind it in one of the arepa corn grinders and make the little balls, those little balls of chocolate balls they use to make hot chocolate. So they've always made it, but just kind of their own consumption. And then I think there was a project, I think it may have been a German NGO, but I would have to check on my book [00:43:17] that helped them buy more proper equipment to make chocolate on a bigger scale. So they've got a whole kind of little house with all of the big toaster, the big grinder. And, and they started making there. I can't remember what year, you'd have to look in my book for that, I just can't remember but yeah. So they've been making that and then they've been selling that for years before I came along as well, but they would sell it to anyone who came to visit, like [00:44:00] especially international visitors, people like peace brigades international, other NGOs that work with them. And when I had this idea of, you know, in the restaurant and in some little shops that we found, we decided we needed a name and so kind of going with the general theme here we decided to call it Chocopaz and we, someone very kindly designed a little label for us and we just packaged it up and and started selling it. So that's how, that's how that happened. But again, as I say, I don't think that those, I'm not sure if I think the results are out, there are also other friends with the community who carried on bringing their chocolate elsewhere. But I've lost track of whether that's being done.

SC: What does the production of chocolate bars represent to the community members?

GB: [00:44:57] I think it's another way of having their story spread beyond [00:45:05] the channels it's already known in, I was particularly keen for them to sell their chocolate in kind of middle-class neighborhoods in Bogota. Because [00:45:14] as I say, that's the sort of demographic that really doesn't know anything about the Peace Community and really ought to. And so, I think that has been in the years, During the study that was the beginnings of, and I haven't been back to Colombia in a couple of years now, because of covid. There's a growing industry of ethical food and ethically sourced food, all kinds people in Bogota are starting to take more interest in such [00:45:44] things and there are lots of little shops around the place selling food with stories, which is what ultimately we're talking about here, the importance of thinking of the story behind every piece of food that you have and sourcing food that has stories that are



inspiring that are good that you feel that you're doing good by supporting them. And I think that for the community, selling chocolate inside Colombia kind of along those lines, is kind of a way of getting the message out to more people in their own country.

SC: At any point during your visits to the Peace Community. Did you come across food that was prepared with cacao, chocolate or any byproducts of the cacao pod?

GB: [00:46:30] There was often hot chocolate, we drank a hell of a lot hot chocolate. Occasionally we'd do things for fun, like, try out because basically we would make that chocolate as pure chocolate chocolate de mesa, they didn't usually put anything in it, but occasionally they would experiment by putting panela in, they would also sometimes try putting in Chile, [00:46:57] but that was really at the request of the international visitors who had come across things like getting chocolate elsewhere in the world and who were really interested in chocolate to eat. But I think it was very much, a sort of traditional hot chocolate that was their staple. I never saw them use the pods kind of thing, they definitely use the pods as [00:47:19], what's the word. [00:47:21] Compost, they would stack the pots around the old pods around trees. But no, I never saw them use that, they would sometimes just eat the pods as well when they were working. They would occasionally, snacking on both fresh and dry. I remember a nice story when I used to, like, using the dry ones. Actually, when we were packing, their sacks, there was one guy who always used to say it's an aphrodisiac take some home to your husband. [00:47:52] Yeah, no, they didn't really they didn't make anything else with it me. It was very traditional countryside food. And the chocolate was to drink really.

SC: How does the community perceive their own consumption of chocolate?

GB: [00:48:11] I think in that way it's part of their everyday life, part culture. Hot chocolate they love, they love it. There's a nice bit at the beginning of the film. This is the beginning of the film, or the end I can't remember where. Community member were saying I like to eat hot chocolate with bunuelo, with platanito, with patacon, with bread. But basically it's either hot chocolate with water or milk and with various items of food to dip into it. So I think they see it as kind of part of their everyday culture really.

SC: So for their consumption of chocolate, then it's not necessarily related to the political exercise, but more to their traditions and culture then.

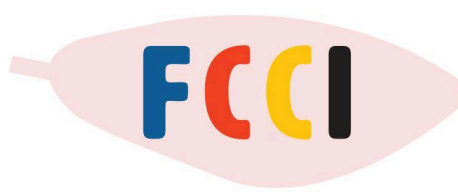
GB: I think their culture is deeply related to their political exercise. I think that's the point that I'm trying to make. The fact that they grow their own food and consume what they grow is political, that is kind of at the heart of how they see their own identity as peace builders and growers have food. So, I think that and they're also deeply proud of the organic cacao in particular, you know, they grow their own food without pesticides. [00:49:32] And they see that as kind of



making a contribution to peace building. And so yeah, they're very proud of consuming their own food, they're also very proud of growing other things in and among the cacao. Some plantations are amazing because you'll go through and they'll grab you a banana from here and weird purple potato from there and mafafa, there was some amazing potato, mafafa I think it was called, all sorts of pineapple and things. And so they have this kind of whole ecosystem and think they're very proud of it being ethical sustainable, ecosystem of food. And they try not to buy things, they try to only buy they own. A lot of them are kind of trying to be as self-sustainable as possible and they'll buy salt, cooking oil and washing up liquid, and that's about it. [00:50:25] And I'll try to do some rest themselves. Drinking their own hot chocolate is certainly part of that.

SC: For people who are interested in researching cacao and chocolate and Colombia. What do you think are some of the more interesting areas to explore?

GB: [00:50:53] I think that's a really good question. I think it would be really interesting to look at those families involved in the crop substitution programs who have been told that they need to grow cacao, or given some [00:50:56] cacao to grow. I think there are some good exercises in which that's been working and I think there are some other places where that maybe hasn't been working as the answers you've had to your other interviews might suggest, I'd be really interested to know more about that. How is the cacao also being used as the kind of marketing strategy to preach peace. And is it working at all? Is it helping some companies to try to be better behaved? I think, looking at the role of corporate social responsibility in Colombia in the conflict is very important, the role of business in the conflict and the private sector has such a huge role in peace it will be interesting to see what are the cacao companies doing to do their bit rather than hindering peace. [00:51:45] It would also be important to look at the environmental side of things and think Colombians are beginning to become more aware that they have an important role to play, their country's important role to play in sort of the struggle to protect the environment and prevent climate change. There's a lot of climate change happening in Colombia already. I think there are studies that show that and it would be important to see, [00:52:10] you know, how that is affecting the cacao industry. And what the cacao industry can do is help and ultimately lobby the government to implement stronger policies to protect the environment, which would be really important. I would really like to see the country with less extractive mining and more cacao if it was done well, if it was done properly and fairly and stuff, so I think there are lots of, lots of important [00:52:37] things to look at that. And also, maybe what about internal consumption because I think [00:52:45] it would be nice for Colombia itself to be more self-sustainable. But there's a huge economic issue, which is the free trade agreements, which means quite shockingly the importation of foodstuffs that Colombia grows



already are cheaper than the stuff growing in Colombia, which completely is insane from an environmental perspective and really bad for your Colombian peasants who are trying to get along in life. So it would be interesting to see what happens. What's happening with the cacao industry as far as that goes and whether it's a good economic income for people.

SC: Yeah. These are actually all the questions that I had for today, but I did want to ask before finishing up if there was anything else you wanted to discuss or a topic that maybe you wanted to develop further upon and the next few minutes.

GB: Now, I think you've done really well to keep me under an hour. I was a big skeptical with the big list of questions but I think we managed to move through them all. I just want to mention that the film is freely available to watch at [Chocolate of Peace . com](http://ChocolateofPeace.com) in Spanish and English and my book is available from Palgrave or Amazon, *Chocolate, Politics and Peacebuilding* and yeah I'm very happy for people to get in touch with me if they wish to do so.

SC: [00:54:09] Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. I'm glad we managed to get through all the questions as you mentioned, and I will be in touch once we have more details, regarding how the interview will be shared with the public.

GB: Fantastic Sofia.