# III. Rationale

As a result of the two peace agreements with illegal armed groups over the last few decades, *memory* and *victim* have become central categories in historical and political discussions, as well as in the production of testimonial works at the beginning of the 21st century. One might say that Colombia is witnessing a “memory boom” in which attention is focused on uncovering the truth about the perpetrators and causes of the armed conflict, and on giving the victims a platform for narrating their experiences. Given the ample testimonial production from these recent decades and the new voices and perspectives that have emerged from the scenes of the memory of conflict, it is not surprising that literary criticism has begun to focus attention on contemporary Colombian testimonial works. Two recent projects stand out for the ways in which they approach contemporary narratives: the aforementioned Eduardo Suárez Gómez’s *La literatura testimonial como memoria de las guerras en Colombia* (2016), and María Ospina Pizano’s *El rompecabezas de la memoria. Literatura, cine y testimonio de comienzos de siglo en Colombia* (2019). Suárez Gómez focuses on two works that represent two different modalities of testimonial discourse: mediated testimony and direct testimony. He studies how these works take as a point of reference the collective memory of previous conflicts in Colombia to make sense of the contemporary experiences. Ospina Pizano considers a larger corpus and suggests interpreting recent testimonial production as more than representations of the armed conflict or records of contemporary history. Instead, she claims that testimonial discourses from the 21st century are interventions in the ways of interpreting the violence of recent decades that do more than merely representing the conflict: they contribute to the construction of a collective memory.

These two critical studies, among others, focus on the construction of memory about the generally traumatic experiences caused by the armed conflict by making emphasis on the events of the conflict. Given that space is a fundamental aspect of how people experience events, and of how they recall, represent, and make sense of those events, studying the representation and discursive construction of spaces where the conflict took place becomes a fundamental part of reconstructing the memory of the Colombian armed conflict. My project aims to insert itself within the ongoing “memory boom” conversation in Colombia, emphasizing a key aspect of Colombian testimonial narratives that has not yet been addressed: the representation, discursive construction, and territorial realities of the geographies of the conflict.

Furthermore, I intend to “locate”Colombian testimonial narratives on the “map”of Latin American testimonial studies, which so far have focused attention primarily on testimonial traditions from Central America and the Southern Cone. Central American studies on testimony have revolved around subalterns’ representation and self-representation, as well as their role in civil wars during the 1980s. In the Southern Cone, critics have studied mainly how testimonies reconstruct the memory of events during the military dictatorships in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Due to the length of the Colombian armed conflict, and its diverse causes and agents, testimonial narratives have tried to account for the realities and spaces in which there is a convergence of several historicities, witnesses, and interpretations. Studies on testimonial narratives must, therefore, pay closer attention to the specificity of Colombian testimonial narratives and how they have responded to the task of representing, remembering, and interpreting such complex realities. A conversation between Colombian and Latin American testimonial narratives is essential, not only to study how the former have shaped the latter, but also because the Colombian case allows us to question the limits, scope, and possibilities of the testimonial genre as a whole.