

Replace One's Place

The Livelihood of Internally Displaced People in Colombia

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Degree of Master of Science (Two Years) in Human Ecology: Culture, Power and
Sustainability
30 ECTS

CPS: International Master's Programme in Human Ecology
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Term: Spring Term 2013

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Examination:	Master´s thesis (two year)

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Abstract:

Colombia is the country with the highest number of internally displaced people worldwide. Rural populations often flee violence provoked by the armed conflict. Also so called “development projects” when multinational corporations invest in infrastructure, usually affect local communities. The World Bank provides an Operational Manual (4.12) for “development induced resettlement” to prevent impoverishment. It puts its focus on reimbursing the assets of livelihood of the resettled population. But does the population suffering of displacement share the same approach of livelihood? Can place be replaced? This thesis analyses the case of El Quimbo, a hydroelectric project in the south of Colombia, which displaces a peasant community. In-depth interviews with affected people show that culture and life projects are strongly related to place and identity. Through the findings a place-based livelihood approach is developed, bringing together the livelihood and the Buen Vivir (good life/well-being) approach.

Keywords: internal displacement, development induced resettlement, livelihood approach, Buen Vivir, place, El Quimbo, Neiva, Colombia.

El Resumen:

Colombia es el país con el número más alto en desplazados internos en el mundo. La población rural huye generalmente por la violencia generada en el conflicto armado. Pero también los llamados “proyectos de desarrollo” de empresas multinacionales que invierten en infraestructura generalmente afectan a comunidades locales. El Banco Mundial ofrece un manual de operaciones (4.12) para los “reasantamientos inducidos por el desarrollo” para evitar el empobrecimiento. El manual pone énfasis en la devolución de los bienes de subsistencia (livelihood) de la población reasentada. Pero, ¿comparte la población afectada por desplazamiento el mismo concepto de subsistencia (livelihood)? ¿Se puede reemplazar el lugar (place)? Entrevistas profundas con personas afectadas enseñan que cultura y proyecto de vida están relacionados fuertemente con lugar e identidad. A través de los resultados un enfoque (approach) de livelihood basado en el concepto de lugar es desarrollado y reúne la teoría de livelihood con la teoría del Buen Vivir.

“The world's most primitive people have few possessions,
but they are not poor. Poverty is not a certain small amount of goods,
nor is it just a relation between means and ends;
above all it is a relation between people.
Poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization.”

(Sahlins 1972, 37; emphasis in original).

“[...] globally consciousness Westerners have escaped results from a privileging
of the global ontology of detachment over the local ontology of engagement.
To the extent that it has been used to legitimate
the disempowerment of local people
in the management of their environments [...]”

(Ingold 2000: 216).

“[...] strategies for preventing displacement and enabling return
should take as a point of departure an understanding of
resisting, returning, and re-placing that is contextual with respect
to local practices, building upon movements for identity, territory, and autonomy
wherever they exist.
These strategies should foster alternative development for livelihood
and food security as a required minimum [...]”

(Escobar 2008: 65f.)

Prologue

It is the 20th of May 2011 in the department of Antioquia in Colombia. I am sitting on a rock next to a dark hole which leads into the mountain. In front of me sits the miner. He tells me how he had been kidnapped by paramilitary groups a couple of month ago; how they nearly killed him. After living 20 years in the middle of armed conflict, the army took control in this little village of gold miners. Now foreigners come to the region, exploring the ground's richness. Soon the company will buy the whole mountain. Yet the miner has never left his home and he will not do so.

From this moment onwards I had one question in mind: how do Colombian people who are affected by displacement relate to place? One year later I came back to Colombia to answer this very question.

I started an internship with the Colombian NGO 'Corporación Casa de la Memoria – Quipu Huasi' in the city of Neiva, Huila. Within three months I was able to understand the regional conflict at a much deeper level. I worked with various local and national social movements and was introduced to affected people and communities.

One day I visited a peasant's community at El Quimbo, a valley on the river Magdalena, now owned by the multinational company Emgesa. Emgesa's aim is to convert the area into a dam reservoir by 2014. However, more and more *campesinos* (peasants) are against the plan which would result in their displacement.

This thesis is about the least powerful and their struggle to defend their culture and territory against the most powerful. It is about the local against the global.

Agradezco a Jorge Quiguanas y María Elvia Quintero por su hospitalidad y por contar su historia y a la resistencia de La Onda por recibirme con confianza y respeto. Agradezco a la familia de Henry Yolanda y a la comunidad de la Gaitana para invitarme a su tierra y enseñarme tanto; a Celso Flores, Lucila Quinayas, Eduardo Murillo y Francisco Barreto por compartir un parte su vida conmigo. También agradezco a mis amigos y amigas de la Corporación Casa de la Memoria por su apoyo y ayuda valiosa durante mi tiempo en Colombia, gracias para ser compañeros tan queridos, abiertos y comprensivos. Sin ustedes este trabajo no hubiera sido posible.

In completing this work, I wish to thank all my brilliant classmates and teachers of the Human Ecology Division – you gave me all my inspiration. Especially I would like to thank my supervisor Pernille Gooch for her valuable feedback.

I would also like to express my gratitude to UPF (Utrikespolitiska Föreningen) Lund and Lund University who made the trip to Colombia possible. Furthermore, I wish to thank Cecilia Fischer and Thomas Van Hare for correcting my English.

Ich danke meiner Familie, die mich immer und bei allem sehr unterstützt, mir den nötigen Rückhalt gibt. Ich möchte auch meinen Großvater Jacob danken, der leider schon gestorben ist, ohne den ich jedoch nie auf die Bedeutung dieses Themas gekommen wäre.

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1. Introduction

“This eviction [desalojo] took normally place, by using the strictest human right protocols.” - Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia.

Sounds of explosions break the silence at the riverside of el río Magdalena in the Department of Huila, South Colombia. A group of *campesinos* (peasants) - women, men and children - hurry downstream, closely followed by armed police forces. Every second another detonation hits the fleeing group and leaves a cloud of smoke. The injured persons jump into the water. A young man is led by his family further away from the explosions; his right eye is bleeding.¹

On the 14th and 15th of February 2012 families were displaced by national armed forces from their territory situated in an area called EL Quimbo to clear the way for a hydroelectric project by the multinational company Emgesa².

The quote above is the reaction of President Santos being confronted with the video by Bladimir Sánchez showing the above scenario (El Tiempo 2012). Santos declares that eviction, or in other words forced displacement, can occur “normally”, and conform to perceived principles of human rights. Emgesa had asked the habitants to sell and leave the land in advance or offered to provide them with a compensation before the told scenario unfolded.

Colombia has a long history of internal displacement and armed conflict. Today it has the highest number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide, together with Sudan (see Appendix 1). The main cause of forced displacement is violence. Often strategic interests are behind this act: for example the land being in the middle of drug trafficking routes, or it bearing valuable ores or other natural resources.

Due to rising international attention on Colombia and on multinational companies, primarily concerning social and ecological issues, the public and the private sector have to decide how they treat displacement. The World Bank provides a policy (‘Operational Manual 4.12’ 2001 [2013]) for resettlement caused by development projects. It focuses on reimbursing the assets of the livelihoods of those displaced.

¹ Based on the documentary: “El video que el Gobierno colombiano no quiere que veamos” by the Journalist Bladimir Sánchez Espitia 2012, accessible on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFv4HG8ALeA> (accessed 10 January 2013).

² El Quimbo is the name of the hydroelectric project of Emgesa in Huila, but the name is generally also used for the area affected by the project. In both senses it is used in this work.

This thesis analyses the livelihood approach of a company causing displacement through a hydroelectric megaproject and compares it with the approach of those affected by displacement. The main question that needs to be answered is: ‘Can place be replaced?’

Alf Hornborg states that the importance of place, the intimate identification with specific landscapes and ecosystems and the significance of ritual “all suggest that sustainability will have to be built on strategies towards a reembedding or recontextualization of human livelihood.” (1998: 29f.).

Therefore, I analyse the theory of livelihood, discuss it with regards to the empirical cases and attempt to create a new approach which is place-based, abolishes the division of assets and integrates the concept of the Latin American Buen Vivir (good life/well-being) approach.

This work analyses people’s perceptions of place and is therefore deeply rooted in the field of Human Ecology. The thesis looks for a livelihood approach which is culturally and environmentally grounded and highlights power relations in order to contribute to a sustainable debate on displacement. The proposed ‘place-based’ livelihood approach can constitute an important contribution to the field of Human Ecology, because it provides a framework for researchers to study the living circumstances of people, communities and environments in their local settings, and how they are influenced by global acts and interests.

The first part of this thesis gives a detailed overview of the situation in Colombia. It is followed by a discussion of different theories of development forced resettlement, as well as a discussion of the livelihood and Buen Vivir approach. After the methodological outline, the findings are presented and discussed relative to the theory.

2. Background: IDPs in Colombia

Today, Colombia uses more hectares of land for mining than for food production³ (UNDP 2011: 97). This fact portrays reality better than a HDI⁴ of 0.71 (UNDP 2012) or the inequality of income, indicated by a Gini Index⁵ of 55.6 (The World Bank 2013). It represents the unequal access to land and resources, the liberal politics of the state, ecological degradation and decreasing food sovereignty. The UNDP (2011) calculated a Gini Index, which measures

³ UNDP speaks about 5.8 millions of hectares under mining titles, and 3.35 million hectares of agricultural use in Colombia 2010 (UNDP 2011: 92, 97).

⁴ HDI, the Human Development Index, is calculated out of the life expectancy, mean years of schooling, and income (GNI per capita). ‘1’ represents the highest human development; ‘0’ the lowest (UNDP 2012)

⁵ A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality (The World Bank 2013).

the degree of concentration of land ownership. The closer to 1, the more concentrated the ownership is (very few land owners), and the closer to zero, the better the land is distributed (many land owners). The Gini Index of landownership for Colombia is 0.85 in 2009. Further, UNDP adjusted the HDI to the Gini Index with the outcome of 0.492 in 2010 (2011: 201-203). These results are alarming.

In the Western media, Colombia is generally represented as a stable democratic nation with a government that engages vividly in the fight against terrorism and drugs. Since the Conservative, Álvaro Uribe, became president in 2002, the Colombian guerrilla forces have been forced back into mountain territory. With this new found ‘stability’, more and more foreign tourists have begun to visit and many industries have begun investing into the country. The online newspaper CNBS even states that if Colombia continues to develop into this direction, it will soon become an “emerging nation” (Lodge 2010). Meanwhile the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) has increased, now totalling 5,454,766 in December 2011⁶ (IDMC 2012).

[...] internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. (Kälin 2000: 2)

Appendix 2 shows the expulsion rates of Colombians in 2008 for each municipality and the number of IDPs in each year from 1997 to 2010. This displacement is caused by the internal armed conflict and by the cultural, social, economic and environmental challenges that Colombia has endured. People find themselves at risk for having a different political view, for raising their voice against injustice, or just because they live in a strategically important area. Forced displacements again enforce existing struggles. This constitutes a cycle of violence that has roots in history, having been passed down from the colonial era. To give an idea of the conflict, I offer this short historic summery, starting in the middle of the 20th century.

In 1948, the Liberal Party dissident and popular lawyer representing the most disadvantaged, Jorge Élicier Gaitán, was killed. At that time, Colombia had already suffered from years of violence between Conservatives and Liberals, and thus the assassination ignited a decade-long

⁶ The data is cumulative since 1985 by CODHES. The government figure shows 3,875,987 in September 2011. It is cumulative since 2000 and does not include intra-urban displacement and people displaced by crop fumigations (IDMC 2012).

civil war. “La Violencia” claimed approximately 250,000 Colombian lives. In 1958, these same two political parties finally agreed on power sharing (Zelik 2000: 54f.). Nonetheless, the repression of particularly the rural population continued. People with political power owned a lot of land and the more they owned the more powerful they became. High levels of corruption and weak social and governmental institutions guaranteed impunity for those convicting crimes (Zelik 2000).

Campesinos and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities⁷ usually were residing on lands without having ever received any official land titles. As a result, people with money interested in the areas did not face many challenges when claiming the land and taking it from the local people. Illegal armed groups (later known as paramilitary organisations) were paid to ensure that the local people were uprooted by using violence, like threats, rapes and murders. Unable to defend themselves, many *campesinos* organised and formed into guerrilla groups. The oldest and most prominent of these groups is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo). This group has its origins in La Violencia and created a (communist) political agenda in the 1960s (Zelik 2000: 57f.). In 1964, another group was formed which was inspired by the Cuban Revolution – the National Liberation Army (ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional). A key difference when compared with the FARC-EP is that many of the members of this latter group were students and intellectuals (ibid.: 59).

During the next 20 years more groups formed, split up or joined together. A huge part of Colombian territory and even entire cities fell under the political control of the guerrilla groups. In 1984, the first peace negotiations between some guerrilla groups and the government led to the creation of the political party, Unión Patriótica (UP), a union of the existing communist party and former *guerrilleros* who laid down their weapons. Nonetheless, this promising step in the direction of democracy was obstructed by the constant killing of UP party members. These murders were carried out by paramilitary organisations, whose number continuously rose over the last decades. Elites (big landowners) and drug cartels saw their property and power as being at risk through the presence of communist thoughts. Thus they paid paramilitary groups to fight the political (and armed) movement⁸ (Zelik 2000: 69f.).

⁷ ‘Campesinos’ are peasants, who work the land for a living at a small scale; indigenous communities are those identifying as the original people of the land from the times prior to the Spanish conquest; afro-Colombian communities are those descended from African slaves having established own territories.

⁸ “Political” refers to a political agenda carried out only through democratic tools (education, election etc.); “armed” means the usage of weapons and force to carry out political agenda.

Since the appearance of these paramilitary groups, the borders between them and legitimate state forces have become difficult to draw. The state forces indirectly support and permit actions of paramilitary forces and use similar strategies to terrify the civil population. The paramilitary's main strategy to gain control over populations is to create fear. Whole communities were massacred (Zelik 2000: 74f.). By the 1990s most of the opposition was eliminated and most of the guerrilla groups had broken apart except the FARC-EP (ibid.).

The paramilitary organisations became more and more important tools to maintain and to strengthen the power of the ruling and economic elites. Today, paramilitary links have been traced back to parliament, to the courts and to multinational corporations, which lead to the creation of a term that has its roots in Colombia alone – parapolitics.

Already in the 1980s the paramilitary served the interests of the drug cartels in the country. The war on drugs, assisted by the US, led to further enmeshment of interests. The national army, themselves involved in illegal businesses, were pushed to act against them. Hence, Zelik (2000: 86) argues that the confrontation was aimed at gaining control, because even once the main leaders died, the amount of drug dealing remained relatively constant. In 1994, Álvaro Uribe became governor in Medellín. At that time the drug cartels got more powerful and the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC: Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia) was created: the paramilitary umbrella organisation with an ultra-right political orientation.

The conflict intensified with the presidency of Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010) and the implementation of Plan Colombia (created in 1998 by the former Colombian president and the Clinton Administration in USA) as a strategy to fight the drug business (and especially since 2002 the terrorists/guerrilla). Violence and the human rights violations increased. To make people believe they were in control of the 'war on terror', army units kidnapped young men living in poor circumstances, dressed them in FARC-EP uniforms and shot them. Thereafter, they claimed victories in battles against the FARC-EP. These extra-judicial killings became known as 'falsos positivos' (Human Rights Watch 2010).

In 2008 the paramilitary groups were officially demobilised. Today, most former members of these groups still organise crimes, but now they are called BACRIM (bandos criminales). The only change that the demobilisation process brought about was a shift in the legal status of the crimes. The groups are no longer considered as part of the internally armed conflict and the demobilisation guaranteed impunity for former crimes.

The criminal prosecution of the relations between government, industry and AUC started in 2006, but few steps have been taken to solve, or even end, the crimes (Human Rights Watch 2010).

To conclude, the civil population suffers the most and has been in the crossfire of the larger battle over power ever since the beginning of the armed conflict

In 2010, Juan Manuel Santos was elected president and became the first to acknowledge that Colombia suffers from internal conflict. Internationally, he appears to work on resolving these problems. Nevertheless the situation for rural communities and people remains precarious. The UNDP wrote in the 2011 Human Development Report:

The rural development model constructed [by the state] is highly inequitable and excluding. It favours innumerable rural conflicts, does not recognise the differences among social actors, and leads to the misuse and destruction of natural resources. It accentuates the vulnerability of rural municipalities in relation to the more urban, and does not allow that convergence is generated between the rural and the urban. Furthermore, it has been based on precarious and deteriorating public institutions that give more space to actions of market forces in a society full of imbalances and inequities. (UNDP 2011: 16; own translation)

The quote mentions another important variable - the market force. With the repression of the FARC-EP, it became more secure for multinational companies to operate in Colombia. The country has immense resources and because of the conflict it is still less exploited than other Latin American countries⁹. Now, the government attempts to attract international investors. The former president Álvaro Uribe and the current president Juan Manuel Santos stated several times that the investors' confidence has priority (Anzola 2012).

Cernea and McDowell (2000: 1) state that the two largest groups of IDP nowadays are “resettlers uprooted by development and refugees fleeing military conflicts or natural calamities”. The statement is from 2000, but the general trend to open up markets worldwide suggests an ongoing intensification of resettlement. This is also true for Colombia, which recently signed a Free Trade Agreement with the European Union (in June 2012).

⁹ For more detailed information see: ‘Investment Climate in Colombia’ (22 May 2012). <http://export.gov/colombia/doingbusinessincolombia/investingincolombia/index.asp> (accessed 28 April 2013)

Development induced, caused or forced displacement is displacement resulting from infrastructure projects, for example new industries, irrigation, transportation highways, power generation and urban developments (Cernea and McDowell 2000:11).

Past history of Colombia and the ongoing trends have a crucial focal point: land. A common story is:

One day they (the paramilitaries) came to my place; they said – either you sell us your farm, or we’ll buy it from your widow. We took all our stuff and we left. They never paid for the land. They gave me some rubber checks . . . My brother went back to our lands a few months ago, he told me the whole county is now planted with oil palm, hundreds of hectares. It is enclosed with fences and there is a ‘private property’ notice. (Displaced farmer interviewed by Grajales in Santa Marta 2009, quoted by Grajales 2011: 771)

In the next part of the thesis I will present and discuss the theory of development forced displacement.

3. Theory of development forced displacement and resettlement

The World Bank, who considers peace to be only possible together with “economic hope”¹⁰, wrote a policy on how to handle involuntary resettlement (‘Operational Manual 4.12’ - Involuntary Resettlement 2001 [2013]). That policy states that, if possible, the displacement of communities should be avoided. Nevertheless, it acknowledges that certain development projects have no alternatives but to cause some displacements. In the latter cases, the general objective is to consult the displaced persons and to assist them “in their efforts to improve their livelihoods and standards of living or at least to restore them, in real terms, to pre-displacement levels or to levels prevailing prior to the beginning of project implementation, whichever is higher” (Paragraph 2).

For the World Bank, the policy covers “direct economic and social impacts”, which are caused by “(i) relocation or loss of shelter; (ii) lost of assets or access to assets; (iii) or loss of income sources or means of livelihood, whether or not the affected persons must move to another location (Paragraph 3).

In order to restore or improve the livelihoods of involuntary resettlers, a resettlement plan or a resettlement policy framework needs to be developed. It should ensure that the displaced

¹⁰ The former president of the World Bank, J.D. Wolfensohn, said 1998 at the annual conference with the IMF: “The rationale for Bank action is a simple one: We will not have peace without economic hope.” (quoted by Cernea and McDowell (2000: 2).

persons are “(i) informed about their options and rights pertaining to resettlement; (ii) consulted on, offered choices among, and provided with technically and economically feasible resettlement alternatives; and (iii) provided prompt and effective compensation at full replacement cost for losses of assets attributable directly to the project.”

Also, it should provide assistance during relocation and “residential housing, or housing sites, or, as required, agricultural sites for which a combination of productive potential, locational advantages, and other factors is at least equivalent to the advantages of the old site.” (Paragraph 6).

Further the report highlights the importance of assisting the most vulnerable populations, including as it regards to age, class, gender and ethnicity. Land-based resettlement strategies are especially important where indigenous populations are affected, which often have “traditional land-based modes of production” (Paragraph 9-10).

In general, land-based resettlement is preferred when the “livelihoods are land-based” (Paragraph 11). The World Bank Policy says:

Whenever replacement land is offered, resettlers are provided with land for which a combination of productive potential, locational advantages, and other factors is at least equivalent to the advantages of the land taken. If land is not the preferred option of the displaced persons, the provision of land would adversely affect the sustainability of a park or protected area, or sufficient land is not available at a reasonable price, non-land-based options built around opportunities for employment or self-employment should be provided in addition to cash compensation for land and other assets lost. (Operational Manuel 4.12 2001 [2013])

Overall, the displaced people (and the host communities receiving them) have to be consulted, informed and provided with assistance and infrastructure before, throughout and after the process (ibid.).

Cernea (2000) researches resettlement projects and the risk of impoverishment that might result and was one of the main advisers of the World Bank on such matters. He developed an “impoverishment risks and reconstruction model” (IRR). His main argument is that most communities become impoverished after displacement and this is because the inputs used by

the ones in charge (usually companies and/or the state) were insufficient and/or wrongly applied¹¹.

He states that while “[d]evelopment will continue, however, to require changes in land use and water use and thus make various degrees of population relocation at times unavoidable” (2000: 12), an “equity compass” (ibid.: 13) should generate benefits for both, national and local economies.

The aim is a socially responsible resettlement, with the lowest possible risk of impoverishment. Cernea’s model consists of eight risks: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalisation, food insecurity, increased morbidity, loss of access to common property resources, and community disarticulation. Hence a reconstruction of livelihood would counteract those through land-based resettlement, reemployment, house reconstruction, social inclusion, improved health care, adequate nutrition, restoration of community assets and services and networks and community rebuilding, respectively (2000: 20ff.).

There is literature that questions and criticises this model. De Wet (2006: 181), for example, suggests seeing the risk of impoverishment rooted in “inherent complexities” rather than in “inadequate inputs”. He criticises both the economic and the technical character of Cernea’s IRR and that the problem is operationalised (ibid.).

Oliver-Smith (2010: 75) takes a political ecology approach to study people’s resistance of resettlement and writes that the “fundamental issue” of the struggle, is “the contestation over rights to a place or to the resources of a place.” He contests the Western concept of development.

In opposition to De Wet and Oliver-Smith I do not look exclusively at involuntary resettlement, why it causes impoverishment, or why people resist it. Rather I focus on the question of whether place can be replaced and attempt to answer it through the analysis and discussion of livelihood.

Cernea and the ‘Operational Manual 4.12’ put their focus on the (re-)establishment of the assets of livelihood for resettled population. In the following chapter, I discuss the approaches of livelihood.

¹¹ Inputs are for example: national legal frameworks and policies, political will, funding, pre-resettlement surveys, planning, consultation, careful implementation and monitoring (De Wet 2006: 181).

4. The Livelihood and Buen Vivir Approach

4.1. The assets of the livelihood approach

The term 'livelihood' comprises by definition the means of securing the necessities of life (*Oxford Dictionary* 2012). The (Sustainable) Livelihood Approach offers a framework (see Figure 1) for researchers investigating the assets of a group of people and their capacity to find strategies to address shocks and changes (see figure 1; DFID 1999).

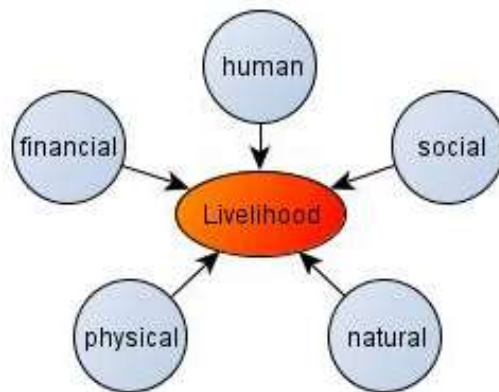


Figure 1: The assets of livelihood approach (own creation)

In order to analyse how people make a living, the Livelihood Approach usually defines five categories of means:

1. **Human capital:** skills, knowledge, health and ability to work
2. **Natural capital:** natural resources such as land, soil, water, forests and fisheries
3. **Financial capital:** financial resources including savings, credit, and income from employment, trade and remittances
4. **Physical capital:** basic infrastructure, such as roads, water & sanitation, schools, ICT, and producer goods, including tools and equipment
5. **Social capital:** social resources including informal networks, membership of formalised groups and relationships of trust that facilitate co-operation

So far, the assets of the approach provide a list that facilitates work for a researcher being interested in the living circumstances of a community. In the case of resettlement, it would be necessary to check the existing assets prior to the displacement and re-establish or compensate them afterwards. I argue that this is a simplification, if not commodification of people's life.

There is also an alternative approach to livelihood, a local perspective of communities in Latin America, which I will present next.

4.2. Buen Vivir and the emphasis of place

In this part I explain the Buen Vivir approach and review the thoughts of two other authors with regard to the importance of place: Arturo Escobar (2008), who assisted Afro-Colombian communities in their struggle for territory at the Colombian Pacific coast, and Tim Ingold (2000), who studied hunter-gatherer communities and their “Perception of the Environment”.

Escobar (2008: 149) uses the concepts of *proyecto de vida* (life project) and *vivir bien* (well-being) as a “qualitative language of development that is culturally grounded.” He criticises the logocentric idea of how people should live. He suggests a concept through which each cultural setting can apply in its own way (ibid.).

Such concept is Buen Vivir. It was developed out of different indigenous concepts during the last decades in Latin America. Eduardo Gudynas (2011: 441) describes it as following:

Buen Vivir therefore embraces the broad notion of well-being and cohabitation with others and Nature. In this regard, the concept is also plural, as there are many different interpretations depending on cultural, historical and ecological setting.

Buen Vivir is not looking for individual well-being, but for harmony within a community and with its environment. Buen Vivir is a translation of different indigenous concepts, for example of the Aymara word: *suma qamaña*.

These ideas come from different cultures but all are presented together at the same level, without hierarchies. They are part of a major set of principles linked to other well-known principles, such as unity, equality, dignity, freedom, solidarity, reciprocity, social and gender equity, social justice, responsibility and so on. (Gudynas 2011: 442f.)

Most of the concepts emerged as attempts to strengthen cultural identities and as decolonial efforts (ibid.: 443). Gudynas writes, that there is no sense in trying to apply these concepts to other regions: “The term Buen Vivir is best understood as an umbrella for a set of different positions.” (ibid.).

Buen Vivir perceives society and nature as inseparable. It is a “harmonious balance between material and spiritual components, which is only possible in the specific context of a community, which is social but also ecological.” (ibid.: 444). Buen Vivir criticises the “omnipresence of capital categories” (like the five assets of the Livelihood Approach) and

highlights that there are “several ways to give value, such as aesthetic, cultural, historical, environmental, spiritual and so on.” (Gudynas 2011.: 445).

Therefore, I use this approach as an alternative view on livelihood and further make note that the core of this approach is the concept of place.

Tim Ingold (2000: 192) says: “Place is the union of symbolic meaning with a delimited block of the earth’s surface. Spatial differentiation implies spatial segmentation. [...] each place embodies the whole at a particular nexus within it, and in this respect is different from every other.”

Further, he explains:

A place owes its character to the experience it affords to those who spend time there –to the sights, sounds and indeed smells that constitute its specific ambience. And these, in turn, depend on the kind of activities in which its inhabitants engage. It is from this relational context of people’s engagement with the world, in the business of dwelling, that each place draws its unique significance. Thus whereas with space, meanings are attached to the world, with the landscape they are gathered from it. (ibid.: 192)

Ingold represents an ontology that can be found in the worldview or cosmology of traditional communities. He argues that hunters-gatherers get to know and learn to care for their environment the same way as they do with people with whom they share their day-to-day life with (2000: 47). Anderson (2000: 116-117, quoted by Ingold 2000: 25) calls it “sentient ecology”. The term describes knowledge that is “based in feeling, consisting in the skills, sensitivities and orientations that have developed through long experience of conducting one’s life in a particular environment. [...] Simply to exist as sentient beings, people must already be situated in a certain environment and committed to the relationships this entails.” (Ingold 2000: 25).

People generate knowledge through involvement that is place-based and fixed upon the special characteristics of their human and non-human environment. This knowledge cannot be formulated in words; it is embodied by the practitioner (ibid.: 162). In Bourdieu’s words: The habitus subsists in practice (1977).

Hence, in Ingold's view culture and nature cannot be seen as separate parts but as one lifeworld¹².

[...] we can no longer think of humans as inhabiting a social world of their own, over and above the world of nature in which the lives of all other living things are contained. Rather, both humans and the animals and plants on which they depend for a livelihood must be regarded as fellow participants in the same world, a world that is at once social and natural. And the forms that all these creatures take are neither given in advance nor imposed from above, but emerged within the context of their mutual involvement in a single, continuous field of relationships. (2000: 87)

Skills and knowledge are created in a "system of relations constituted by the presence of the artisan in his or her environment." For Ingold, embodied skills like speech and writing are not just culturally but also biologically grounded (ibid.: 292).

He concludes: "[...] people do not import their ideas, plans or mental representations into the world, since that very world [...] is the homeland of their thoughts. Only because they already dwell therein can they think the thoughts they do." (ibid.: 186).

Escobar (2008: 59) makes similar assumptions. He states that each territory is connected to "collective ecocultural practices". These practices constitute individual life projects. A life project combines practices which secure the living of all (human and non-human) community members and their future generations based on their environmental and cultural settings (ibid.: 62). It assimilates personal and collective aims and wishes.

"Place-based struggles more generally link body, environment, culture, and economy in all of their diversity. [...] place continues to be an important source of culture and identity [...] there is an embodiment and emplacement to human life that cannot be denied." (2008: 7).

Escobar highlights the connection of a life project and a territory with identity. According to Escobar, identity is an articulation of difference, constructed through everyday practice and through an active engagement with the world. It is dialogic and relational (2008: 203).

"Identity is thus seen in both ways: as anchored in traditional practices and forms of knowledge and as an ever-changing project of cultural and political construction." (ibid.: 226). It is "the result of engagement with cultural worlds; they arise not out of detached

¹² The term is used in the meaning of the experienced world, formulated by Husserl, E. 1954 (1970). *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

deliberation but out of ‘involved experimentation’.” (Spinosa, Flores, and Dreufys 1997: 24, quoted by Escobar 2008: 235).

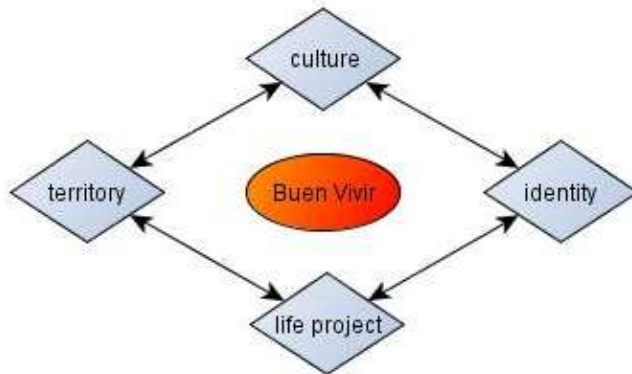


Figure 2: The concepts of Buen Vivir (own creation)

Taking all named concepts together, Buen Vivir would be the interconnectedness of identity, culture, life project and territory (Figure 2) which together form the place and determine the livelihood. If one of the parts is subject to change, then the whole construct will change. Hence, in case of displacement, territory would get lost, and with it culture, the life project and the identity.

To test which approach a displacing company uses and which approach the affected people in Colombia represent, I analyse the compensation policy of Emgesa and their project in El Quimbo. Furthermore, I analyse my conducted in-depth interviews with people resisting the displacement in El Quimbo and with IDPs in Neiva.

In the following section I will present my methodology and afterwards my findings.

5. Methodology

The research was carried out in the Department of Huila in the southern part of Colombia during June, July and August 2012 (see Appendix 3). Huila is a Department that mostly receives displaced people (overall to the capital Neiva), but is also a scene of forced displacement itself. It was therefore an appropriate location for undertaking my field work.

5.1. Double hermeneutics

The first part of my methodology consists of the interpretation and analysis of text material. The second part contains the interpretation and analysis of collected, unstructured and in-depth interviews. In both parts I interpret the words of others. This words have already been

formulated based on interpretation. Therefore, my methodology is double-hermeneutical (Giddens 1993).

Giddens (1993: 170) writes that social sciences always deal with a “universe which is already constituted within frames of meaning by social actors themselves, and reinterprets these within its own theoretical schemes, mediating ordinary and technical language.”

Hence, a criticism of interviews is that at first people explain their situation, and second I interpret their stories. To understand where my interviewees come from in their explanations, I present their background in the ‘findings’ part. To justify my standpoint of interpretation, I briefly explain my background and my position in Colombia.

I am female in her mid-twenties and German. After I got my Bachelor in Geography, I went for six months to Colombia in 2011. During that time, I first volunteered at a non-governmental organisation (NGO) defending the ecosystem of *El Parámo de Santurban* against a gold mining company in the region of Bucaramanga. Second, I was a peace observer in communities at risk of displacement in the region of *Magdalena Medio*. I became fluent in the Spanish language and got to know the political, social and ecological movements in the country. I also learned about the different spheres and views of the complex conflict that was then and remains today an on-going problem.

By the time of my fieldwork and second trip to Colombia I had already studied one year in the Human Ecology Master programme in Lund. I was involved with the Association for Foreign Affairs (Utrikespolitiska föreningen: UPF) at Lund University¹³ and through that forum sought to bring attention to the conflict in Colombia. I and 12 other students built up the contact to Casa de la Memoria in Neiva, Huila. The group visited the NGO during two weeks in June 2012. Afterwards, I continued to work with Casa de la Memoria, doing a three months internship and field work in Colombia. The NGO coordinates, brings together and supports different grass roots movements of the south Colombian region with the help of a national and international network.

¹³ UPF is a student organisation with the purpose “to promote the dissemination of information on international issues and encourage debate on foreign policy.” (www.upflund.se/organsation/, accessed 06.05.13).

5.2. Unstructured and in-depth interviews

In order to find out more about how Colombian IDPs feel affected by displacement I chose to do in-depth (or unstructured) interviews with some people affected by displacement. The method is qualitative and most used in social science. It is best suited for a study on personal experience, social constructions and points of views (Legard, Keegan, Ward 2003: 138). To conduct unstructured interviews, I did not have a list of prepared questions; rather I had some topics I wanted to find out more about. I favoured this very flexible interview approach over a rigid interview design because it allows the researcher to dive deeper into certain issues of high interest. Therefore, it is called an in-depth interview (ibid.: 138).

I asked open questions and tried to avoid any value-laden expressions or formulations. I used the method in a constructive sense. Instead of being a mere asker of questions, I saw myself as an integral part of the view of reality created through the interview and as an “active player in development of data and of meaning” (ibid.: 138). The interviewees should reflect on my questions even if they never thought about them before. I showed affection and shared my opinions, if asked. I was flexible because I understood that the interviewees were also curious about me, where I came from, and what my view on Colombia was. As I appreciated the insights they shared with me about their lives, I was happy to share something myself too. Letting them know that I share their (political) opinion contributed also to more open talks. Furthermore, they seemed to feel more confident in sharing their (political) opinions once they knew about my views.¹⁴

The interview setting was mostly open. Often another member of the family, a neighbour or colleague joined in the interview. They had heard about me and wanted to share their standpoint or simply to attend the meeting. It would have been impolite asking them to leave, and often the interviewee seemed to feel more comfortable in company of others with whom they shared considerable trust. Hence, I did six in-depth interviews but also recorded the voices from other people.

My gender, my light skin, blond hair and blue eyes attract attention, which can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the experiences of those I encountered and interviewed. In the case of the people resisting against the hydroelectric project, my interviewees were more suspicious of me because the only other foreign people they knew were employees of the company, to which they were strongly opposed.

¹⁴ As the background chapter already indicates, opposing the governmental official view can be dangerous in Colombia. Everyone not agreeing is simply marked as communist, which falls in the same category as terrorist.

Hence, it was very important to have a gate opener and key informant for the whole time of my field work. My gate opener was mostly the NGO Casa de la Memoria in Neiva with whom I worked during that time. They had a broad network of contacts, local and national, and presented a lot of these people to me.

My aim was to do in-depth interviews with approximately five persons. I wanted to talk with women and men of different age and ethnicity. The only characteristic everybody should provide was that they had been displaced or were at risk of displacement. I did not make a difference between development induced displacement or displacement by armed actors, because to determine who is pulling the strings in Colombia can prove to be very difficult.

During the interviews I recorded and took notes and pictures. Later on, I transcribed the interviews together with the noted information in their original language, Spanish. The parts I used for the thesis I translated into English. My colleague Albarracín helped me, when I had trouble understanding the recordings. All interviewees agreed on the recording and the publishing of their names in relation to their statements and pictures.

5.2.1. Categories of questions

As the book on “Qualitative Research Practise” (Legard, Keegan, Ward 2003: 144f.) suggests, I used different categories of questions during my interviews in order to create a comfortable atmosphere before diving in deeper. Having this in mind I had four categories of questions.

- Perspectives/opinions of the conflict in Colombia
- Their own story, personal experiences
- Feelings regarding displacement and territory
- Meanings of words and concepts used

The first information most of the interviewees had, was that I am a German/Swedish student doing research on displacement. When I presented myself, I told them that I am a student of Human Ecology and seek to study the effects of displacement upon people in Colombia. Some interviewees started to talk directly after that (mostly about the conflict in general), some had questions for me and some were waiting for me to raise specific questions.

To start more impersonally, we talked about the country’s situation and their point of view on the conflict. This was mostly influenced by their individual work in social movements, if there was such.

After that, I started to ask questions about their personal life. The intention was to get to know them, to understand where they come from in their point of views, and to determine which experiences mattered most in their lives.

Thereafter, I asked more explicitly about their feelings related to their experience of displacement and what they wish for. For example, I asked, “How is it to own land? How does it feel to leave your home? What is your plan/hope for the future?” To finish up, I would talk about any issues which remained unclear and required clarification on the meanings of words and concepts used by the interviewee during the interview.

5.2.2. Limitations

Patriarchal structures dominate Colombian society; and thus I preferred to travel with company, first for security and second for reasons of trust and understanding. Nevertheless, I never felt uncomfortable, not welcomed or not respected. Even when my colleague was not around, I was treated with full respect and dealt with few difficulties which were solved easily by asking for and giving further explanation. The interviews I did in the city of Neiva normally were conducted without any obstacles and on my own. Nevertheless, I have to highlight one restriction I faced in which concerned choosing my interviewees.

Background heterogeneity – My first idea was to restrict my research to farm workers, who have lived on the same lands for generations and thus should evidence greater attachments to place than those who are more urbanized and tend to move from place to place, such as to follow employment opportunities. Such a strategy would have allowed for a certain generalisation of the population group in that area. However, the reality in Colombia is much more complex and it would have excluded all the other cases, from urban displacement to displacement caused by political activism. Instead, I chose to compare the perspectives of affected people in El Quimbo with the experience of people already displaced, regardless of their situation and of the causes of their displacement. The resulting heterogeneity limits possible generalisation, but in order to provide various views on the debate, it is adequate.

All in all the selected interviewees present diversity in ethnicity, but neither in gender nor in age.

Gender bias – The Colombian society is deeply patriarchal. At the same time the dominant nepotistic system results in suggesting people of similar character and standpoint¹⁵. I access

¹⁵ This is my own assessment based on my experience in Colombia. I use nepotism not just in the sense of favouritism regarding family members but regarding similar background, standpoint and character.

the combination of these two factors as the main limitation in finding possible interviewees. Often the contact given to me was male, and this person also usually referred me to other males. Hence, I started to ask to see particularly women. They agreed to find also women who might like to meet me for an interview, but often the women were accompanied by a man and took on a secondary role. Although I tried to direct questions directly to them, they often just agreed with what the men already had said and were less talkative.

Age bias – All interviewees were over 30 years old. A possible explanation might as well be the nepotistic practice. Another explanation could be that young people are usually still more flexible and desire to go to the city. There is nevertheless a huge percentage of youth strongly affected by displacement and its implications.

Having outlined my methodology, I will now describe the hydroelectric project of El Quimbo and discuss the case related to livelihood.

6. The hydroelectric project of EL Quimbo

The hydroelectric megaproject of El Quimbo is located in the southern Department of Huila, on the upper stream of the Magdalena River. Another older dam is operating just 12 kilometres further downstream - Betania. After construction is finished, El Quimbo will be a single-dam reservoir of 8,586 hectares. It will have an installed capacity of 400 megawatts and an average generation of 2,216 gigawatts per hour and annum. The decision to undertake the project took place in 2008. Construction began in 2010 and is expected to be completed by 2014. The total estimated costs are around 837 million US-Dollars. Together with Betania, the energy generated could supply about 8 per cent of the demand of Colombia.¹⁶ The reservoir has a life expectancy of 50 years (Emgesa 2012). The dam would have a maximal length of 55 kilometres at normal operating levels (elevation 720 metres), a maximum width of 4 kilometres and an average width of 1.4 kilometres (Dussán 2012b: 2).

The valley is the most fertile area of the Department of Huila. The local *campesinos* and fishermen have been important contributors to the regional food supply until now. Folk stories recall that these are the lands of the region's first settlers (Dussán, Miller [researcher on the case of El Quimbo], personal interview, 5th July 2012, Neiva). Due to its location and the richness of natural resources, it is also an important strategic area (Olaya Amaya 2003: 52).

¹⁶ Colombia's energy demand is so far satisfied. It already exports around 50% of its national generation. It became public that Emgesa has already contracts with Ecuador and Central American States, who also buy energy from Betania (Dussán, Personal Interview on 5 July 2012. Neiva, Huila)

The plans for hydroelectric project were framed by the ‘2019 - Vision Colombia II Centenario’ (Departamento Nacional de Planeación 2006), whose fundamental focal points are investor confidence and democratic security. The Colombian government contracted the Colombian-Spanish company Emgesa (subsidiary of the Spanish Endesa and majority owned by Italy's ENEL) to undertake the project. Six municipalities of Huila are affected. About 95 per cent of the project area is part of the Protected Forest Reserve of the Amazon and the Colombian Massif. It is inhabited by 300,000 people, of whom 1,537 would be displaced (directly affected). Most of them are linked to eight *veredas*¹⁷, whose annual production of cacao, sorghum, corn and rice is worth of 18.5 million US-Dollars. El Quimbo comprises 842 hectares of riparian forest and arid-tropical fish stocks that are essential for food security, 103 species of birds, 13 species of reptiles and three species of mammals in severe danger: Pacarana, a nocturnal rodent, the grey-handed night monkey and the Neotropical river otter (Dussán 2012a: 1).

6.1. The compensation plan by Emgesa

Emgesa developed a ‘Social Management Plan’ which everyone can access at their homepage (see Emgesa 2012). It points out that through the plan, Emgesa takes into account the social, economic and cultural rights of families, residing in the area of direct influence (AID), and individuals, who derive their income from activities at the AID and are exposed to the following social impacts:

- Impact on employment
- Impact on productive activities
- Loss of physical infrastructure (roads, bridges, aqueducts, water treatment systems, etc.)
- Loss of archaeological patrimony
- Loss of culture and traditions
- Loss of road connectivity, etc.

Emgesa (2012) wants to provide different programmes for those affected. The population resettlement programme offers all families who own up to 50 hectares of land, either collective or individual resettlement, or, if not that, then direct negotiations for the sale of their lands and homes. Families are free to choose which mode they prefer. As part of the programme the families participate in the implementation of the following projects:

- Economic development

¹⁷ A *vereda* is a rural territorial division. Each *vereda* has a centre which connects the different farms of the territorial division.

- Reconstruction of social infrastructure
- Restoring the social fabric
- Accompaniment and permanent consultancy
- Attendance for the vulnerable population, the objects of resettlement
- Mitigation and prevention of food insecurity in the resettlement area

The infrastructure programme targets a reset of all physical infrastructure, resulting in construction projects for wholly or partly affected areas such as bridges, roads, water treatment systems, pipelines, transmission lines of electricity, water intakes and other infrastructure (Emgesa 2012).

A programme to promote fish farming in the reservoir seeks to maintain the sources of employment and levels of agricultural production and fisheries that existed before construction started by developing a fish reservoir.

Furthermore, Emgesa seeks to generate temporary jobs associated with the project's construction phase itself by hiring unskilled labour and delivery services such as transportation, food, lodging, cleaning and security, among others.

In order to protect the cultural heritage of the AID, Emgesa wants to move and restore the chapel of 'St. Joseph of Bethlehem', in the municipality of 'El Agrado'. Also, it seeks to study and preserve the existing archaeological heritage through conducting excavations in areas of archaeological interest.

The restitution project concerning employment targets farm workers and fishermen whose source of income is generated by activities in the AID and who do not own or possess land. The desired outcome is to retain current levels of local employment.

The programme for the restoration of productive activity in the AID is designed to restore employment affected by changes in land use that are required for the project and to maintain rural jobs, thereby optimising the utilisation of productive resources such as labour, land, water and available technology. Each family would receive 5 hectares of own agricultural land. People without agricultural vocation would get included in community projects (Emgesa 2012).

6.2. Voices of the critics - Asoquimbo

'Asoquimbo' is the association for those affected by the El Quimbo hydroelectric project. It is part of the movement for the liberation and defence of 'mother earth'. It serves as the voice of

people living and/or working in the area of El Quimbo, who feel affected, but who are not appropriately compensated. Miller Dussán is a Professor at the University of South Colombia (Universidad Surcolombiana). He did environmental and social impact studies on El Quimbo and is one of the founders of Asoquimbo.

Dussán says: “There are different opinions on who counts as affected. But only the state and the company make the decision.” (personal interview, 5th of July 2012, Neiva).

The people who own land titles had the opportunity to sell their property at a price the company established. If the owners claimed their land had a higher value, the company made clear that it is either that or nothing (ibid.). However, it is important to note that most of the land owners have not even lived there. Usually, so called *mayordomos* (chiefs/manager of the farm) live at the house and manage the *finca* (farm). They get a regular income and live off the crops and animals. Furthermore, farm workers as well as fishermen come to the region when there is work for them. Some farm workers came ten years ago and never left. They started to manage their own piece of land and built a house without ever getting the land title from the state (ibid.).

To consider all these people, the company came for one day and stayed for a couple of hours in the different *veredas* to census the affected people. A lot of workers of the region were not there at that exact time, hence they are not registered for compensation (ibid.). Even for the people registered, Dussán doubts that Emgesa is willing to provide any compensation beyond a small sum of what he calls “hush-money”. As he states, “Workers, who accepted money so far, had to sign a contract that they agree with the project and do not claim any further compensation.” (ibid.).

Besides that, Dussán explains, these are just those who are directly affected. The census lacks the ones who are indirectly affected, but strongly dependent on the local agricultural economy. The whole production chain of the village Gigante would break down. Also, the coffee plantations up the mountains around the valley would fall dry. “Nobody can say what happens to Gigante then.” (ibid.). The company promises to generate a lot of new jobs, but probably not for the local people. Emgesa has started to build up an entire new village close to the traditional centre of Gigante for the project’s workers who are expected to come to the region for the duration of the project. They are new and mistrusted, and with them come prostitutes, drugs and crime (Calderón, Luis, personal Interview, 13th July 2012, Gigante).

Asoquimbo has different objectives: First, to redo the census, this time not limiting it to a short time period, but rather to ensure that the result takes into account the statements of the employers and second, to ensure that the project provides proper compensation that secures future income (own land or long term employment).

For some people, however, even that would be unsatisfactory. Together with Asoquimbo and other local NGOs, they created an alternative: a *reserva campesina agroalimentaria* (a peasant community producing agro-food for the region). They propose that the current *campesinos* and farm workers would keep their lands, which they would own and manage as a community. The agricultural products that they produce could lead therefore to local food autonomy (Dussán, personal interview, 5th July 2012, Neiva).

6.3. Discussion

By comparing the compensation plan of Emgesa with the suggestions made by the World Bank and Cernea, one can conclude that Emgesa is mostly in line with both. When the World Bank talks about land-based livelihood, it means that people live off the income they get from working on a farm. In this sense, the owned hectares can and should be compensated. If alternative land is not available at the necessary valuation, then the compensation can be financial.

In the view of Emgesa, the census in El Quimbo lists all those directly and indirectly affected. The affected people of El Quimbo have been informed about their choices. Programmes for the different social and economic affects have been discussed and developed.

Yet the widely held impression is that Emgesa has the power, to decide, not the affected people. Hence as Asoquimbo criticises how the company fixes the terms of contracts, values of properties, defines who is affected and in which ways, etc.

One strategy that has emerged is that losses in physical, natural and social assets are compensated by increasing the financial assets.¹⁸

Community consultancy and any form of participation are missing, however. Hence, a restoration of livelihood, even in Cernea's terms (2000), will not become reality.

Therefore, the result is that people resist the plans and even reject offers made. Asoquimbo's criticism is mainly of an operational character, as it views the definition of who is affected as

¹⁸ The World Bank and Emgesa seem to be convinced that the human asset is not affected by displacement. Knowledge, skills and competences are seen as attributes linked to the human body and culture limited to social groups and to architecture.

being too limited and considers that the promised compensation is either insufficient or will not be provided.

But Asoquimbo also raises awareness that compensation is unrealisable and tries to promote the idea of a *reserva campesina* as the better alternative.

To find out what matters to the individual affected, I interviewed the people of El Quimbo who are at risk of displacement and people who have already experienced displacement. The findings will be presented in the following section.

7. Findings of the Interviews

7.1. El Quimbo – “We want no money, we want land!”

Casa de la Memoria introduced me to Miller Dussán of Asoquimbo. He gave me all general information about the dam project and the resistance movement. He put me in contact with a person of trust in Gigante (the village close to the affected valley), Luis Calderón. He received me and introduced me to a number of direct victims of the project in the town and in the valley. This developed a chain of trust, which allowed me to enter the guarded *vereda* ‘La Onda’¹⁹. I was also always accompanied by my partner from Casa de la Memoria – Juan Carlos Albarracín Gallego, who was observing the situation on behalf of the NGO. He also made sure I was secure, helped me out with communication issues and contributed to the confidence people had in me, as a foreign young woman.

First I met the former land workers Luis Calderón (45), who is now fixing cars, Alerio Murci (52) and two of his colleagues, who are now providing taxi-service on their motorbikes. We met on the street in Gigante (Picture 1) and sat down in the shadow on the sidewalk. The street was dirty and noisy, but was the most convenient meeting place for the *mototaxistas* because they wanted to continue their work soon after completing the interviews.

¹⁹ The people, who still live in La Onda resist their displacement and therefore started to guard the entrance. Just people of trust are allowed to pass.



Picture 1: Interview with *mototaxistas*. Luis Calderón on the wall to the left, Alerio Murci between both of his colleagues. Taken by: Juan Carlos Albarracín. Gigante, Huila, July 2012.

Murci and Calderón talked mainly; the other had similar background and agreed on what both said. Murci explained that he had learned everything from his father who already worked on the land of El Quimbo.

“The truth is that someone falls back to zero. You were accustomed to do your job and then you have to start newly, at this age. You feel disoriented, lost.”

Murci wants the company to provide him with a piece of land, which he can work on as he is used to doing in order to provide for his family. Luis Calderón (45) doubts that such land is available for them. He says:

“We as campesinos, we know the land, where we have lived and worked all our lives. We know the places and the materials. That is an area with very high production, worked on by many. We have lived in harmony here. All we know is this chain of life. I know your uncle, your dad. Everyone can speak openly... the social communication is beautiful. [...] We would like to save this historic area. The vereda was the first settlement here; it was called ‘San Antonio de la Onda’. That is our culture. In addition, here are descendants of the territory; families who have lived here for generations. That is what we care for and what we do not want to lose.”

Calderón highlights the “beautiful human quality” of the community. All the people have capacities, which they have not studied, and which cannot be studied. He adds: “We want our land, our home [casa]; all that is our life.” (personal interview, 13th of July, Gigante).

After the talk, the *mototaxistas* brought us to La Onda (Picture 2). Albarracín and I entered the guarded *vereda* and stayed overnight at the *finca* of Don Jorge Quiguanas (57) and his wife María Elvia Quintero (63).



Picture 2: View on the *vereda* La Onda at El Quimbo. The valley is going to be flooded. Right corner: the guarded entrance. “Todos para siempre a luchar” (All to fight forever). Taken by the author. Gigante, Huila, July 2012.

At the *finca* (see mental map of Appendix 4 and Picture 3), there was an old white house with a big terrace and a lot of orchids hanging around. In the backyard they kept chickens and other fowl. The house was surrounded by tropic trees and a little water rill. Crossing it, we reached a forest of cacao, banana and orange trees. I call it a forest and not plantation, because the trees grew naturally; where and how they wanted. Quiguanas showed me around, cutting here and there a ripe cacao fruit from the trees (Picture 4).



Picture 3: Quiguanas, Quintero and their dog in front of the house. **Picture 4:** Quiguanas opens a ripe cacao fruit. Taken by the author. Gigante, Huila. July 2012.

Although Quiguanas and his family have lived and worked at the *finca* for over eight years, he is not the owner. He is *mayordomo*, which means, that he manages the *finca* on the behalf of the owner, who lives in the city. The owner sold the property already to the company. At the time of the interview, the family was still allowed to stay on the *finca*.

Both were very hospitable and quiet. Quiguanas sat down with me and my colleague at the terrace, while Quintero kept on doing house work, while listening to us. I had to ask more detailed questions, because the answers were kept short and sometimes they did not really understand what I wanted to know, so my colleague helped out.

Quiguanas told that everything had started with a lot of hope. People from the company had come and said that the family would receive a property of five hectares of their own. Quiguanas felt very content:

“When you own nothing, five hectares and a house are everything you can wish for.”

But soon after he had signed a contract, Emgesa made clear that there is no land that could be provided for them. As compensation, Quiguanas could participate in a six month course for

agricultural education. For each month of participation he would receive around 300 US-Dollars. But Quiguanas decided to resist:

“Land is the only sustenance that God gave us. The poor remain at the land, because we survive with the land. [...] My life project is to work on the land. Stick with the routine. I need at least a little finca. Someone who is unemployed cannot pay the rent. He ends up on the streets. That complicates things.”

For him the most important issue is to have land that he can work with. It should be good soil to cultivate cacao, because he is good with cacao, and it should be in a warm climate, because he cannot handle the cold. The best approach for him is the idea of the *reserva campesina agloalimentaria*. He could stay with his family and neighbours and would have a secure future.

“All the work we have spent on this land, everything we built up would not be lost.”

Quiguanas and his wife, Maria E. Quintero, feel sad when they think that it will take just one wave of water to destroy their home.

“Our life was very rich here; if they take us away, we are left with nothing. [...] They will destroy what we most love. That is very hard,” says Maria Quintero (personal interview, 13th of July 2012, Gigante).

At the guarded entrance, the day after, I was also able to speak with some of the gate keepers. It was raining and around twenty people were hiding under a roof, listening to me and my questions. Rafael Perdomo (66) was a fisherman at La Onda and is now guarding the *vereda*. He always fishes during the night time and thus was not counted in the census. But for Perdomo the fight is about more:

“I am known here, I am respected as a fisherman. I know when and where to fish and how much each fish is worth. I do not need to sell to the market. The people here buy it, because they know me and my fish.”

He doubts that he could find another fishing area, mainly because there would be other fishermen, and he will not put himself into the territory of strangers. To leave the region is out of question:

“I have been here all my life.”

Alvero Quintero (54), farm worker and now also resisting, adds:

“We are from La Onda, neither from Gigante nor from other places. Each of us has their place and their relationships with others; here we know the geography. [...] If they take us away, they will take our life away.” (personal interview, 14th July 2012, Gigante).

7.2. La Gaitana, Tierradentro – “I am territory.”

Due to meetings with Casa de la Memoria, I got to know CRIHU – Consejo Regional Indígena de Huila (Regional Board of Indigenous in Huila) and one of its representatives Henry Yolanda. He explained to me all of the work the board does and told me about the indigenous groups of the region. He invited me and my colleague to his house in the *resguardo indígena* ‘La Gaitana’ close to La Plata in Huila (Picture 5 and 6).



Picture 5: Map of the *resguardo*, made by the school²⁰. **Picture 6:** The way to school at ‘El Libanon’ for the children of Henry Yolanda. Taken by the author. La Plata, Huila. August 2012.

A *resguardo* is a community owned territory with some level of autonomy and self-regulation for the indigenous habitants. For our visit, Yolanda organised a village gathering at the *vereda*

²⁰ The roads leading into the territory look like highways on the map. In reality they are barely accessible by horse. The images are randomly selected, but of significance are the river system and the locations of the different *veredas*. El Libanon is the Northwest one.

El Libanon with nearly all of the families (of the *vereda*) attending. I presented my purpose and asked the people if someone would like to talk to me about their history and territory. I sat down with the local school teacher, Yanet Basto (32) and two elders, Aurilio Basto (65) and María Antonia Fernandez (52). My purpose was to find out how they relate to the land after their family settled down in the mountains over 80 years ago and how they relate to the place nowadays.

We sat down in the class room of their own rural school (Picture 7). The school was located at the main hill top of the El Libanon.



Picture 7: At the school of El Libanon with María Antonia Fernandez (far left) and her daughter-in-law, Aurilio Basto and his daughter Yanet Basto (right). Taken by Juan Carlos Albarracín. La Plata, Huila. August 2012.

The land of La Gaitana became a *resguardo indigena* in 1988. The first families came to the mountains in the 1930s. Their ethnicity was ‘Nasa’. Some years later, a number of families arrived from the ‘Misak’ ethnic group. All left their traditional lands in the South because they did not have enough food nor enough land anymore. Today, the community has more than 1,000 inhabitants and a system of own primary schools, teaching the language of the

Misak. Aurilio Basto is 65 years old and is of the first generation to be born on this land. He says:

“The earth is our mother. Without her, there is no place to be human, there is nothing. We share with her everything, water, sun. There is no bad; we all live with her. We need to take care of it and we get harmony and balance.”

But he does not see that people care anymore; there is too much conflict. In the house that his father built he is in conflict with nobody and nothing. If that should change one day, he would find another territory he could live with.

“Any land gives me food; where there is water, I live. [...] Each person is territory. Wherever I go, that is my territory.”

His daughter, Yanet Basto is one of the two local schoolteachers. She said: “My culture is my identity.”

And Aurillo Basto adds: “Our culture is here. I am from here, like the stones and the water.” (personal interview, 3rd of August 2012, La Plata).

7.3. Displaced to Neiva

After these visits I talked with four different displaced people in the city of Neiva, which are all active in different movements and associations. I got to know them due to my work at the NGO. Neiva is the capital of Huila with hot, dry climate around the year. It is located along the River Magdalena, which crossed Colombia until the Caribbean coast. In 2013, it is estimated, that 318,187 people live in the urban agglomeration (DANE 2011). The districts at the riversides are the most poor and faster growing parts of the city. The sheds are frequently flooded and are provided with electricity in irregular intervals. Most displaced people from the south of Colombia find their new home here (personal interview with leaders of community, visit in July 2012).

7.3.1. “Colombians like to work. They are proud of their cocoa and cows.”

I met Celso Antonio Flores (56), part of Andas – Asociación Nacional de Ayuda Solidaria, NGO for the rights of displaced people. Flores was a quieter, very kind personality (Picture 8). He shared with me everything I wanted to know. Still he liked to get a copy of what I recorded.

We talked at the office of Casa de la Memoria. We drank *tinto* (Colombian black coffee) while he told me of his dream of land.



Picture 8: Me and Celso Flores waiting for our lunch at a Restaurant in Neiva. Taken by Albarrecín. July 2012.

Flores grew up in the countryside of Caquetá. With 16 years of age (in 1981) he left to start working as a farm worker in Cartagena de Chaira. He worked on cacao plantations and his dream was to purchase some hectares of agricultural land of his own. The area was controlled by guerrillas (M-19). The majority of the local people had to cultivate coca in order to survive.²¹ At the year 1998 the region became a demilitarised zone (zona de distension), due to the peace negotiations between FARC and state. Flores, who by that time had acquired his own property, started to look for agricultural alternatives for the region. Together with an Italian friend he initiated the campaign “No to coca – yes to cacao and caoutchouc!” Flores says that the programme was well received. With some funding from Italy, they started projects to build up the infrastructure in the region. But in 2002 the peace process failed and the state military entered the zone.

“They fumigated all our [including non-illicit] cultivation; they did not even stop for schools and houses. They abused us; called us terrorists; that we got everything only through illegal drug trade. They took everything away and left us in chaos.”

Soon after the military, paramilitary groups arrived. Leaders disappeared. The Italian colleague received death threats and left the country. Flores was forced to leave his land soon after.

²¹ Guerrilla groups often force peasants to cultivate coca for their own benefit. Some peasants also choose to cultivate coca because it is an easy growing plant with a relatively stable sales market.

“I left my dream I had at the vereda Buena Vista. Hectares of caoutchouc and fish ... such loss destabilise someone, makes you impotent. You do not know to whom you can talk to ... just distrust left.”

When being displaced in the city, he and his wife, accompanied by her mother and one grandson, got stigmatised as guerrillas. After living some weeks in tents on the side of streets, his daughter, who already started a family, organised a little house for them. Flores has to start selling fruits on the streets.

“You feel very shameful, when you cannot provide for your family. On the streets, it is like begging, and with luck you get enough money to get yourself a lunch.”

For him, city life is no alternative to the countryside.

“At the countryside you know where your food comes from. It is without chemicals and hormones. The kids learn to work and do not hang out on the streets unattended. [...] But the worst thing is, that I cannot be a leader in the city, because I have to work so much.”

Flores tried to get listed as a victim, but on the paper the property in Cartagena de Chaira is still his. Left without health security or any security for the future, Flores became part of the national NGO ‘Andas’.

“It is a way to fight for a better future, not for me, but for all of us.”

Some month ago he acquired 10 hectares of land, at the *vereda*, where he grew up once.

“Someone never loses hope to get once again the chance to start the life project anew. [...] My life project is to have some hectares of caoutchouc, 7 hectares of pasture for cattle to sell milk, poultries for eggs, chickens to sell, some pigs and other alternative crops to sustain. That is the pension of someone.”

He chose to go back to the village where his father lived, because it is always easier to get accepted in a community you are related with.

“You need to trust your neighbours, and you need to be able to confide in them. If you want to plant maize, you just ask and they give you some seeds. You will interchange milk with eggs. You help each other out. [...] My place is there, where I can live and where I can help.”

What he expects from the state is that the problems of victims get more acknowledged, that it helps resolving the crimes and provides support for people to find their way back to their former life. But he does not believe that the government wants that:

“The ones in power want to keep their power. They have no interest in people who are independent and organise themselves.” (personal interview, 16th of July 2012, Neiva).

7.3.2. “My dream is my identity”

Next, I interviewed Lucila Quinayas (53), who has built up her own little coffee shop. I got to know Quinayas at the market, selling coffee to me. She was curious about me and we started talking. I visited her a couple of times and we talked about coffee, politics (she is part of the communist party) and Germany. Finally I met her at her house, where she lives with both her grown-up children and where she also manufactures and sells the coffee beans (Picture 9 and 10). It smelled like coffee everywhere and people were coming and going – to buy something or just to say hallo. Hence, she was always on her feet, but never forgot about me and found easily back into the topic.



Picture 9: Lucila Quinayas is showing her mill in the backyard. **Picture 10:** The entrance to shop and house of the Quinayas family. Taken by the author. Neiva, August 2012.

Quinayas is an indigenous surname. But she has never been raised within indigenous traditions. Her grandfather came in 1900 from Cauca to the South of Huila, because of a famine. Quinayas grew up with ten siblings and soon had to provide for herself. She financed

her education through working in factories overnight. In the 1980s she became part of the 'Unión Patriótica'. As it was a communist party, members became subject to political persecution just after its formation in 1985 (see background chapter). After Lucila Quinayas changed her home two times and left the country once, she came back to Huila about 15 years ago and settled down in Neiva.

“My husband fled to Bucaramanga, where he is still living. But I did not feel comfortable there and I am independent. I remembered that the coffee of my childhood, which came directly from the mountains, was a lot better, than the coffee you can get today in our supermarkets.”

Quinayas started to build up her own little coffee manufactory. She got in contact with the little organic coffee farmers in the area where she grew up and made a deal. Today she produces, together with her two children; their family name 'Quinayas' became a brand.

“The first time in my life, this name serves for something, it sounds indigenous, traditional. Colombians and tourists are looking for regional organic coffee.”

Now even the local government works with her together to promote tourism in the area. Quinayas cannot imagine going somewhere else.

“To start was really hard. The industry does not like people to sell and promote their own coffee. But when we refined the beans, people on the street got attracted by the smell. They started to ask for coffee. Now we have reconnaissance, for what we do, for our compliance. People know and respect us, which is most important. We have networks of producers and clients here.”

She identifies herself with what she has accomplished: “My identity is my dream, the work I have done to fulfil it; where I came from and where I am going to.” (personal interview, 21st of August 2012, Neiva).

7.3.3. “I continue to do my thing.”

Third I got to know Eduardo Murillo (57), part of Afrohuila – NGO representing the Afro-Colombian population in Huila. I invited him to a bakery in our neighbourhood, as we both lived close by. We sat down outside. The green residential area was quiet and just a few other people passed. He was very open to share all his knowledge and at the same time very interested in Human Ecology and my life.

Eduardo Murillo (57) lived with his family in Medellín. As a psychologist he worked in a project for re-socialisation of the youth in the poor commune 'Popular Uno'.

“In 1991 not one car drove up there. Every commune was controlled by its own drug dealer group. One street was Popular Uno the next Popular Dos. If you pass, you get killed.”

When Álvaro Uribe became governor of Antioquia (capital: Medellín) he helped to establish the so-called 'Asociaciones Convivir'. The private militia group soon became Colombia's nucleus of the right-wing paramilitaries. They also took over control in Popular Uno.

“They didn't like my work. They said if I didn't leave the city, they would kill me and my family. I had 72 hours, but I stayed. After two days my brother-in-law was murdered.”

He was 19 years old. Murillo's family broke apart and he fled alone. After trying to find employment in different cities, he came to Neiva.

“As a *negro* you get discriminated everywhere. Racism is deeply integrated in this society, which you cannot even call like that. And look where it brought us to.”

The displacement affected him deeply:

“I lost family, friends and culture. I had to leave my medium, my materials. I ended up on the streets. I had to start anew. A person who loses its way of life, begins again on unknown territory. That is much more difficult and the government does not help. You lose self-respect.”

Murillo is now active in the Association of Afro-Colombians in Huila – 'Afrohuila'. He likes to get professional in gender-issues. “I continue to do my thing, without ever grabbing an arm or to do an underpaid job. That makes me proud and happy.” (personal interview, 22nd of August 2012, Neiva).

7.3.4. “The fight for land is a fight for existence!”

Francisco Barreto (61) was a farm worker and became a leading unionist. We also met in the Office of Casa de la Memoria. He is a small, lively and always smiling man.

Francisco Barreto grew up in the so called *zona roja* (the most conflictive area of Colombia); he never got to know his father. In Caquetá he married and became active in *campesino* movements.

“We mobilised against the injustice and violence. Then they forced me and my family to leave.”

Since that moment, Barreto has never spent much time in one place because of security issues. He received threats at a daily basis and the danger intensified when he got elected into the union directorate 14 years ago. He was forced to leave Colombia twice.

“I was in Moscow in 1983 and some years ago in Spain.”

In 2002, he came back to Bogotá. During the first time he had to live hidden with a bodyguard. After a period he came back to Neiva where he finally met with his family. The countryside was still too dangerous.

“Since two years I am pensioned. But still ... yesterday while my wife was alone at home, two armed men entered our house. She hid and after they looked around, they left again.”

The neighbours saw the men as well, but nobody could recognise them.

“It is a mental trauma you get. Thinking about change is dangerous. My whole family got very nervous. My wife is sick ... from the panic, the permanent shock and fear.”

In relation to displacement, he says: “It's frustrating; you move in obligation to defend your life. We are no tourists; we are displaced because of violence. My children could not study in the corresponding time. I could never think of having an own house, to settle down.”

He feels that with every move his identity decreased. “If you stay in one place, you can develop yourself better, your goal. You can develop your proyecto de vida. For example I could have become Senator or something else. But if you move, you have to start over at zero.”

But Barreto never thought about ending the fight, not even now as pensioner. “It is not about me, it is about life. Land is not another commodity; it is the right for existence. Everything is happening upon the territory. The conflict was developed there. The war destroys land and nature. Hence the fight for land, air, water and food is priority.” (personal interview, 23rd of August 2012, Neiva).

After having presented my findings I will make a final comment on my method, before I discuss the results.

7.4. Additional notes

Some important issues might have remained unclear. I analyse the case of El Quimbo, which is a development induced resettlement, and different cases of Colombians displaced by violence, never having received any compensation. How can I compare both of them?

My objective is to find out how livelihood and place is conceived by affected people. I talked with people facing the undefeatable loss of place and with people who had already experienced that loss. If the outcome is the same, and I am just interested in the outcome, there is no need to make a difference between the causes. The people of La Onda will soon find themselves in a similar situation as the cases of Neiva experienced. There is a chance that they find new territories, like the case of La Gaitana, but neither through the assistance of the company Emgesa, nor the state. Of course it would have been interesting to study a community which had been resettled by the private or the public sector, as well, and to analyse their experience. Unfortunately I have not heard of such a case, neither had my contacts in Colombia. The attention on and the debate of development induced resettlement is new in Colombia, as is taking responsibility for the displacement.

Before I discuss my findings I acknowledge that of course not all impacts mentioned came from the actual displacement, but for example from political persecution. Nevertheless the displacement on its own plays already an important role, which I want to put emphasis on.

7.5. Discussion

“A lot people know that they do not have security to be someone (*ser alguien*), because they do not have the security to keep their property and home.” (Pécaut 2003: 40; own translation).

The quote above represents well the general feeling my interviewees expressed. Starting to talk with the people of El Quimbo about compensation, it soon became clear that no one puts a lot of value to money. The most important thing was to be able to continue your life project: Securing the future and fulfil the own dream. The life project is a big part of their identity; it is connected to land and mostly place-based. People worked hard and see themselves and what they have accomplished in their surroundings. The dam will erase all of it.

The interviewees show ambitions to adjust their life project to the new situation, but at an older age and with a family it is hard to start new in a total different area. Farm workers are asking for some land to continue in their profession, somewhere they can apply their knowledge. Other important attributes are trust, confidence and respect. People look around

and see what they have created over years with effort and they are proud of it. Knowledge, skills, respect and the history of the first settlement created a very localised culture, which is an important part of the identity.

All that allude to a sentient ecology as by Ingold (2000: 25) described. It is knowledge and skills embedded in feelings developed through experiences, nothing written down and not easily applicable to other ecological and cultural settings.

A displacement would change the settings. And because of that the people resist the displacement. They do not see alternatives for themselves somewhere else. It is far more than satisfying single assets of livelihood. A powerful expression was that with losing their territory they lose their life.

For the indigenous community the *resguardo* provides fertile land and local seeds which nourish them and gives them space to develop their culture in harmony. That is all they need. Having lived all his life far off in the mountains, Aurilio Basto feels that the culture belongs to the environment (the stones and the water). His approach shows strong similarities with Buen Vivir.

Nevertheless if the circumstances would change one day, Basto does not doubt being able to make a living somewhere else, to make some other land the territory of his family, like his parents did it before him.

Celso Flores also found a new piece of land. Getting displaced took away not only the crops, the house and the social network, but moreover destroyed all his achievements and plans, his self-respect and confidence in others. It took away his position of being a known leader and a *campesino* who always helps out if he can. In the city he had to focus on earning money to sustain his family. But even if he would have received compensation, in form of money, house or new education, Flores would not have given up his old life project, his identity. Hence, he looked for an adequate community and land, to start again. The characteristics he chose to select the property were security and respect within the community and fertile land suited for his agricultural knowledge.

Flores identity is connected to his *proyecto de vida*. And as Escobar (2008) assumes, his life project is based on specific ecocultural practices. It is not just about securing own needs but to assist the construction of community well-being.

Lucila Quinayas and Eduardo Murillo also identify themselves with their life projects. After moving around a lot and losing part of their families, both were able to start again in Neiva. Their advantage was to come to Neiva at a younger age with a life project still in construction and with higher school education. Quinayas built up her own coffee business, which is based upon her relations in Huila and Murillo could find another way to be socially active. Both identities are created through their experiences and knowledge “as an ever-changing project of cultural and political construction.” (Escobar 2008: 226). While Quinayas Café could not be relocated, Murillo stays less settled.

For Barreto, who suffered persecution all his life, it is not a fight for getting a proper compensation, a set of goods, but a fight for stopping the conflict and the displacement causes. He felt he had never been able to fully develop himself, because of the constant change of place.

All the people I talked to are willing to start again in a new environment, in an environment they could choose and they could get access to. But mostly this access is not provided and the people forced to leave are usually forced to stay in an area they did not choose and where they do not necessarily feel comfortable. Quinayas chose Neiva and was able to build up her dream. Flores had not much choice and cannot wait to leave again.

The ability to start afresh depends on a lot of circumstances, for example on age and education. But overall it is not a question of willingness but of access and possibility. What most interviewees expected from the government or the company is support in the path to establish this.

Financial compensation is a commodification of a lost life. It is not land that needs to be provided it is territory, territory of identities and that get more and more lost through displacement.

The interviews showed signs of both approaches – livelihood and Buen Vivir. At the one hand it is about natural, social, physical assets etc. but there is also a big emphasis on life project and identity in strong relation to territory and culture.

Putting this together I propose a place-based livelihood approach (see figure 3).

8. The place-based livelihood approach

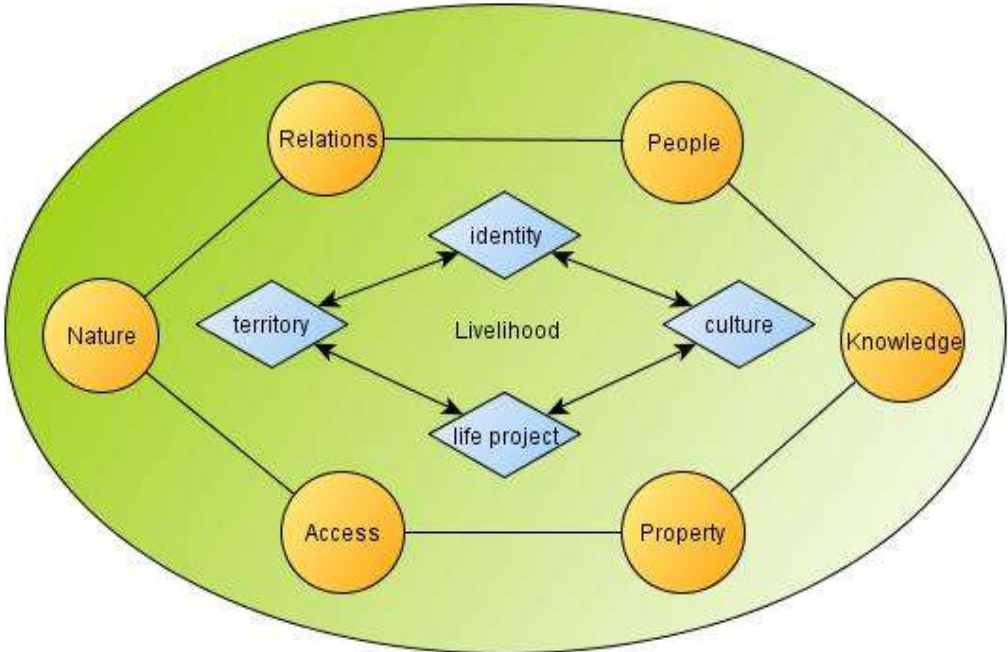


Figure 3: place-based livelihood (own creation)

“Place-based” differs from the World Bank’s definition of “land-based” in the way that it is not about the commodity of land, but about place specific criteria, wherever this place is.

In difference to the livelihood approach I do not use five assets but six categories which should not be seen apart but interrelated and interdependent. “People” includes all human beings and communities. It is about trust, confidence and security, about respect, interchange and power relations.

“Nature” should be seen as all non-human environment; natural and artificial; rivers and streets. The category “Relations” shall highlight the bond between society and nature; it is about harmony, equality, sharing and caring.

“Knowledge” is everything from skills till understanding and making sense of the world within the environment. “Property” is the belonging of the people and communities, what they have built and invested in (in financial or labour terms).

And “access” means at the one hand access to resources, infrastructure and services and on the other hand implements the access to power: the control over what to eat, the power to claim a crime, the power to be a leader, the power to defend territory.

The Buen Vivir concepts represent the core of the approach. The four concepts are built on the interrelation of the former categories specific to their place.

Additional arrows could be added to the figure 3 that enter and leave the local livelihood. These arrows would visualise the connection to and the influences of the global, which cannot be denied nor ignored.

I do not claim that this approach is complete and that it can be applied exactly like that everywhere. I want it to be seen more as a framework which needs to be adjusted for every situation and culture - it is in all terms place-based.

This framework can help to identify ‘external’ changes and their affects at the local scale. In the case of El Quimbo I show that the change in land use, coming from an external entity (Emgesa) signifies huge change for the community and the ecosystem at La Onda.

9. Conclusion

The most serious problem of the IDPs in Colombia is their lack of power and stigmatisation. Few non-affected people know of the life the IDPs had before their displacement. By taking their land away from them they have lost their control, self-respect and voice. The resettlement plan by Emgesa will have similar results, even if it intends to do better.

Cernea’s risks of impoverishment are limited in loss of assets: landlessness, joblessness etc. But people also experience impoverishment in terms of culture and identity, the same way as the territory impoverishes through displacement. A change of usage and cohabitation which brings a displacement (especially development induced) along, changes the balance of an ecosystem. A new external usage would create a total new ecosystem. In the case of El Quimbo a fertile and diverse tropical valley will become a huge lake.

Livelihood for those interviewed is always place-based. Even though they can start again, a displacement always signifies a great loss in culture and identity. Hence, place can never be replaced.

Furthermore displacement creates disharmony and enforces cultural and social clashes in host communities. The resulting conflicts are at the same time social, ecological, cultural, political, and, within a history of violence, mostly armed. Like Chapter 2 describes, conflict again leads into displacement.

The only solution will be that the state admits its responsibility, starts to control foreign investments and advances the security of Colombian territories in dialogue with all beings.

If a displacement had occurred the state has the obligation to assist IDPs to find new living circumstances according to their preferences.

The study can contribute to the debate of resettlement in giving an understanding on the feelings of the IDPs and their idea of livelihood. It illuminates the missing parts, most importantly the place itself. It shows that compensation can never and should never legitimise forced displacement.

The place-based livelihood approach can be basis for further studies of Human Ecology on the vulnerability of internally displaced people or communities in general. Another further research could focus on the governmentality of displacement.

Epilogue

At the 16th of January 2013 representatives of Emgesa, the government and police enter the house of Moisés Sánchez (59), who for all his life has been *campesino* in El Quimbo. Without providing compensation they ask Sánchez and his two sons to take their goods and leave the territory. Sánchez sits at his veranda his eyes shadowed by his *sombrero*. He refuses to sign papers, he does not leave. People start to empty his house, taking his belongings and the cattle to a boat at the river. Sánchez lies down in front of his house. After the representatives have left, police men come to grab him and carry him away. Until the last moment Sánchez is trying to resist them. Finally he gets up on his own feet, adjusts his hat and leaves the place.

Sánchez says: “Expatriation [destierro] is one step previous to death.”²²

More than one year after the first forced displacement at the riverside of El Quimbo, Emgesa continues to work on the dam construction and Asoquimbo continues to resist the project.

One achievement of Asoquimbo was that Emgesa had to renew its census of affected last year, which is now open and continuing. Miller Dussán states that until now over 10,000 people have been registered, although most of them keep being ignored. Just few have received alternative land, which lead into further displacement.

²² The story is published at <http://www.quimbo.com.co/2013/01/moises-sanchez-me-sacaron-como-un.html> (accessed 26 April 2013) together with an audio of Sánchez' testimony. The pictures are at <http://www.quimbo.com.co/2013/01/campesino-desalojado-por-emgesa-endesa.html> (accessed 26 April 2013).

Asoquimbo works today closely together with ‘El Movimiento Colombiano en Defensa de los Territorios y Afectados por Represas ¡Ríos Vivos!’ (The Colombian Movement for the Defense of Territory and for those affected by dams ‘Living rivers!’). Their agenda includes other dam projects of the region, which are planned by Emerald Energy and Hydrochina. Both non-profit associations do own investigations on the environmental impacts of the dams, which show the gravity of change the dams will bring in contrast with the rather positive results of the environmental impact studies of the companies.²³

There is still hope but not much evidences for a change of politics; El Quimbo will be flooded by 2014.

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²³ Based on an e-mail message from Miller Dussán to the author on the 12th of March 2013.

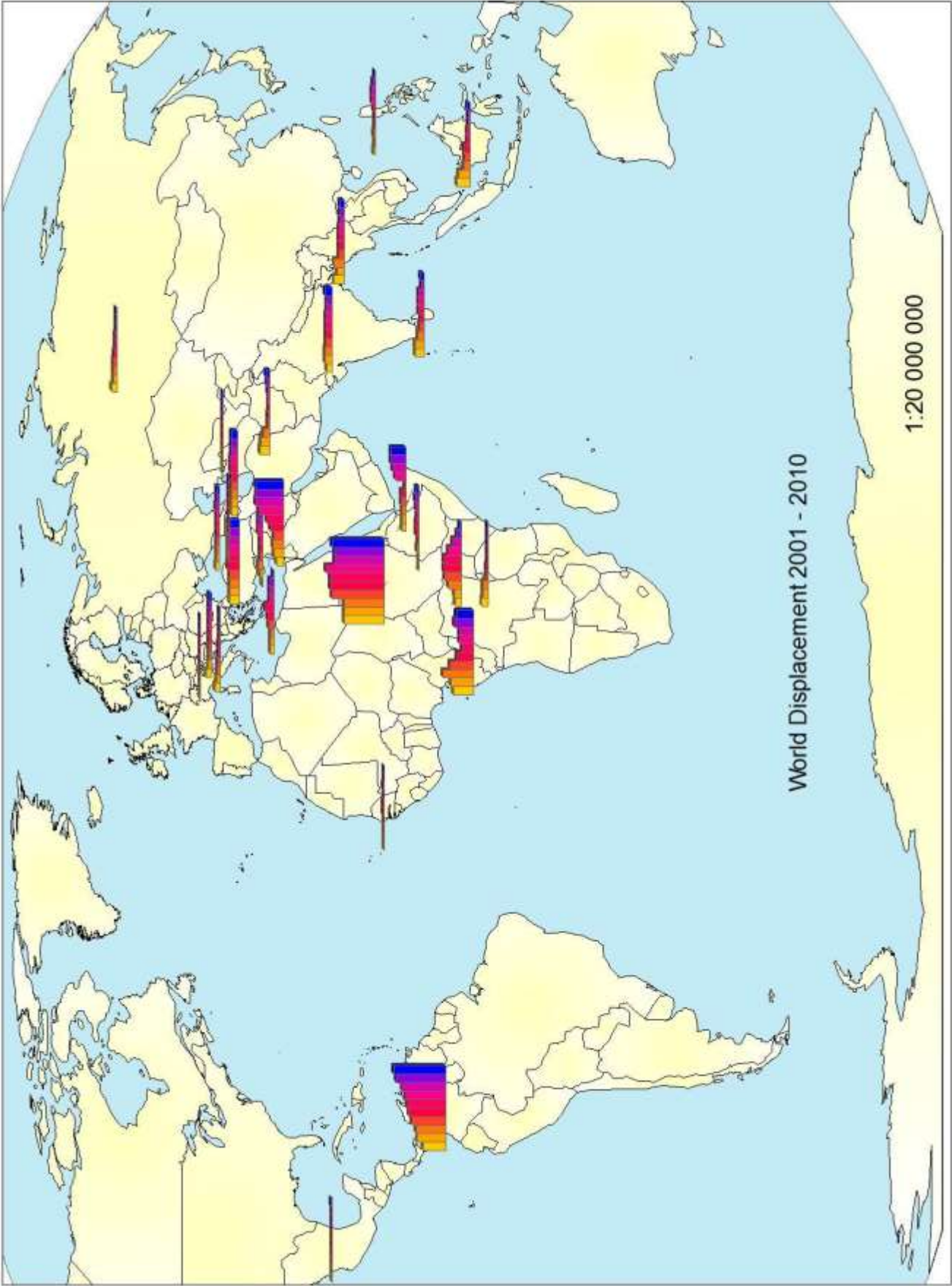
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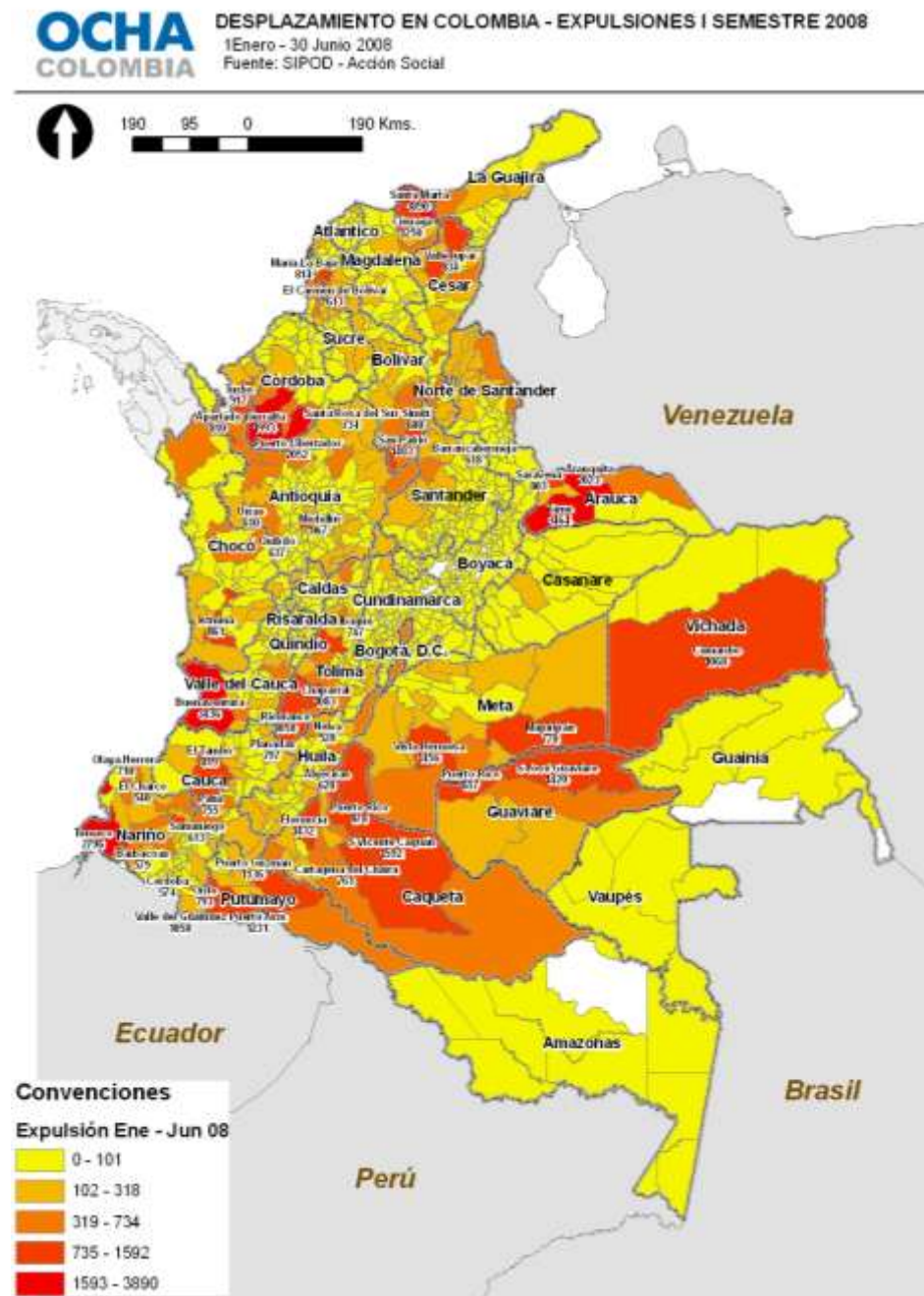
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Appendix 1 - World displacement



(ArcGIS, own creation. Data Source: IDMC 2012)

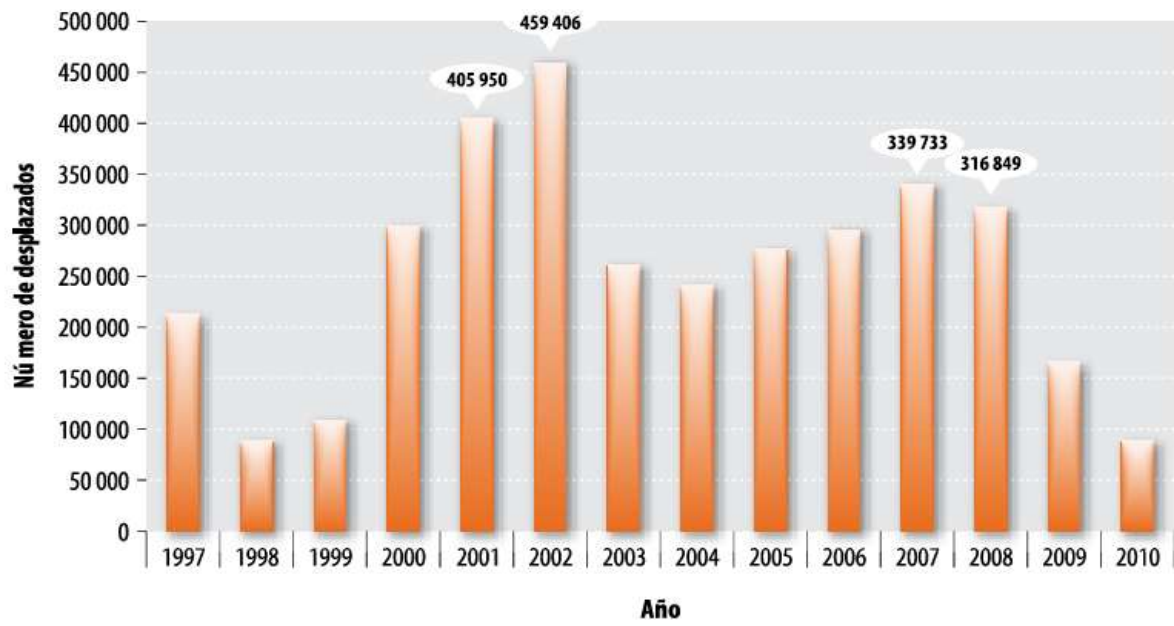
Appendix 2 - Colombian displacement



Colombia: the Expulsion rate of the municipalities (UNDP 2011)

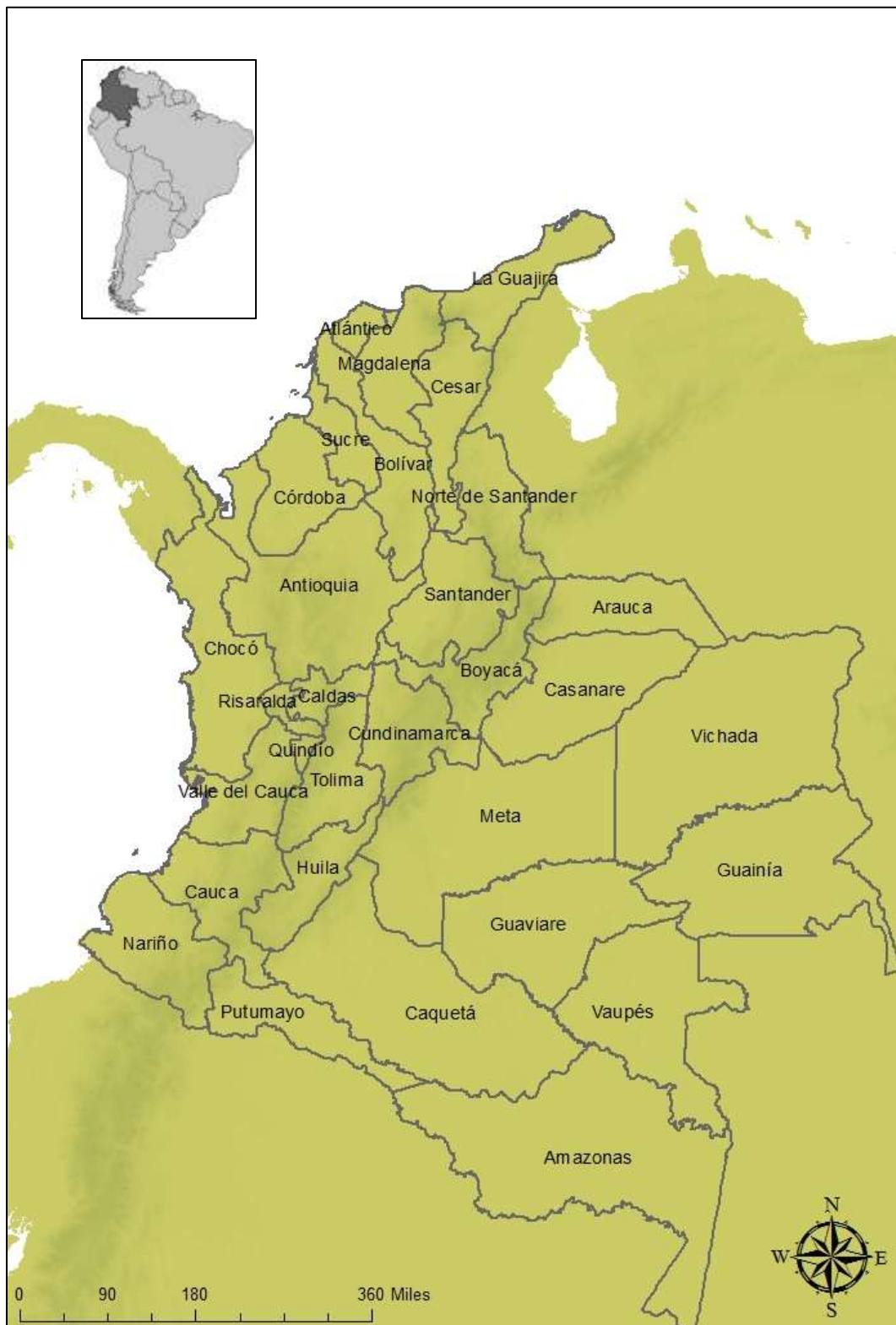
GRÁFICO 9.1

Expulsión nacional de desplazados por año. 1997 y 2010



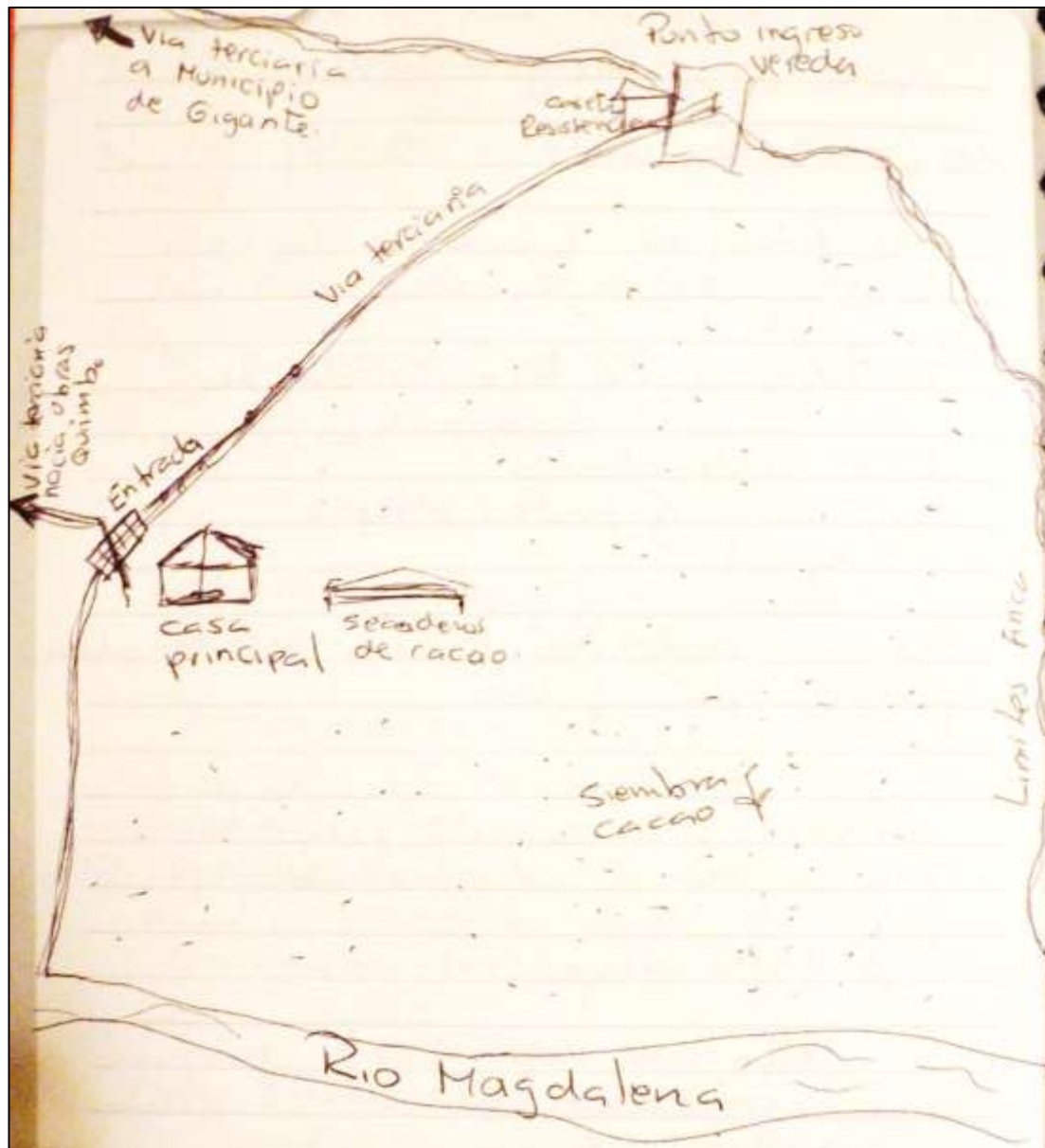
Displaced people per year from 1997 till 2010. UNDP 2011.

Appendix 3 – The localisation



ArcGIS map of the departments in Colombia, Latin America. Huila is south of Cundinamarca, the capital department. Own creation 2012.

Appendix 4 – Quiguanas mental map



“Lo que yo manejo” (That what I manage) – Mental map by Quiguanas of his territory. (Albarracin added the description based on Quiguanas oral explanation). On the top end is the guarded entrance to the *vereda* (the people resisting the displacement guard the entrance in shifts - only people they know are allowed to enter the area). From the left corner comes the road leading to Gigante. To the right flows a little water stream which is at the same time border between properties. Following the way from the *vereda* entrance to the left bottom, someone reaches the entrance of Quiguanas *finca*. The main house is right there, next to it a construction to dry the cacao beans. From the top to the river at the bottom, cacao plants are growing. The way to the left leads to the construction works of the dam.