Territorialities in transition: population displaced by the violence of the Colombian armed conflict resignifying the territory

Myriam Ocampo Prado*
Philippe Chenut Correa
Mayerlín Férguson López
Mabel Martínez Carpeta

Universidad Externado de Colombia, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanas. Bogotá, Colombia

Abstract: Armed violence in Colombia forces people to leave their territory to safeguard life. Four case studies with displaced populations – women heads of household, Afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, and peasants – were undertaken to approach understanding of two main processes in which are immersed the migrants aiming to overcome the loss of its place in the world: deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The research showed among the multiple effects that befall these people, the dynamics of reconstruction of a territory for themselves requiring them to adapt to high precarious conditions in a spiral of poverty and dependence that holds them to the social and economic State assistance. Understanding the process they go through involves approaching to a symbolic dimension: meanings and relationships with the place of origin and place of resettlement; and a material dimension: housing, work, social relationships and leisure.

Keywords: deterritorialization, reterritorialization, forced displacement, identity.

Introduction

Analyzing and trying to interpret the depth and complexity of the situation of a population after being violently displaced from their place of residence has required, in the study that gives rise to this article, to get in touch with the experience of settlers who in their story about the forced uprooting and the loss of referents of life, have realized their links of territoriality[1] in the territory of origin and the transformation of these links that built the notion of space and power to give meaning to life. Through describing and meaning of two processes: deterritorialization and reterritorialization, emerge three fields that provide elements of analysis regarding the extent of psychosocial, moral and material damage, experienced by the displaced: i) The territorialization in a natural and cultural context of origin as a process of significance of the territory and of themselves, ii) The deterritorialization as a fracture of the individual and collective identity, iii) The reterritorialization as reconstruction of the territory and of the own place, reinventing the way to be in the world.

The article presents some emerging aspects derived from the results of the research based on four case studies with displaced communities that represent diverse

population groups: women heads of household installed in an urban invasion sector in Montería, District of Córdoba, northwestern Colombia; a community of peasant-indigenous organized in the town hall Kitek Kiwe (Flourishing Earth) in Timbío, District of Cauca, Southwestern region; a group of Afro-Colombians resettled in a sector of the town of Suba in Bogotá, capital of the country; and two peasant communities organized around the construction of their homes and their neighborhood in Cúcuta, District of North of Santander, northeast, on the border with Venezuela. In all cases, the settlers have been resettled in municipalities different from their places of origin. The Map 1 Location of Case Studies about internal displacement in Colombia shows the geographical location where the communities participating in the research are located.

Recognizing the particularities of each group makes it easier to approach the relationship established by individuals with their living space, which is described as territoriality relation; this is constituted through the appropriation and internalization of inhabited and traveled space; this is appropriation of space in pragmatic terms, as it is exercised in it and it is known, where it is possible to find what is needed and wanted. The territoriality relation superimposes to the subjects and to the place where they have lived, where privileged experiences were produced, not necessarily pleasurable, which constitute a territory of relations where the subject has been born and endured [territory of origin] or where social and productive relations were established, are references that shape the image of oneself and to the aspirations about the reality in which the daily life experience is framed. The inquiry about this relationship is one of the issues discussed in this article.

---

* Corresponding address: myriamocampo@yahoo.com.mx

1 If territoriality is understood as the relation established by the subject with the territory; it is possible to understand that deterritorialization is the process of rupture, instigated by violence, of the relation with the territory and the territorialization is the construction of a new relationship with the resettlement site, understanding that this relation includes the availability of a home and fixed address, the generation of meanings associated with inhabited places and routed, and the guarantee of subsistence and enjoyment of safety conditions of life.

Map 1. Location of Case Studies about internal displacement in Colombia

This inquiry refers to the search for aspects that facilitate understanding the relationship that the displaced had established with their territory as a subject on which the analytical proposal, addressing two dimensions of analysis. A dimension related to the use and access to material goods: work, social interaction, leisure; and a symbolic dimension that examines meanings attributed to the territory as place of origin and as a resettlement space; the last one is scenario from which come social and economic dynamics that are marking traces for territorialization.

Methodology adopted to investigate the relationships involved in forced displacement in terms of loss and reconstruction of a territory

Addressing the experience of displaced people about the transformations that happened in a physical and symbolic level regarding the space-place of residence, and changes in this physical space in terms of shared place with other displaced and with people who resides in the

place where they arrived, required combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Through the use of various information collection and processing techniques, the four case studies were consolidated by the analysis of two dimensions considered, from a theoretical perspective, as fields to deepen the knowledge of the phenomenon of forced displacement and its impact on the projection of life and the references of existence of the people. The resident inhabitants also provided references of their territoriality mainly in terms of the relationship between the two populations.

The methodological process is summarized in the following sequence: review of secondary information, sampling, georeferencing of the new appropriate territories, design and implementation of an interview in pilot depth, design and implementation of a pilot survey, adjustment to the instruments, application of a survey to established residents and an in-depth interview with the displaced population, deepening of qualitative aspects through the application of georeferencing techniques and social cartography providing elements of spatial analysis in group, combining the application to displaced and resident to analyze the dissensions, consensus and hierarchies elaborated concerning the neighborhood as a unit that includes the people and the daily life of relationships built there.

This review and deepening the reality of forced displacement narrated by people who lived and suffered demanded to briefly contextualize the process of configuration of the scenario of armed confrontation that has been configured in Colombia through 50 years of internal conflict.

The socio-political context: Internal armed conflict and deterritorialization of settlers

The person who has been forcibly displaced in Colombia is one who has involuntarily mobilized within the national territory in situations related to the internal armed conflict; internal tensions, violence leading to massive violations of Human Rights, violations of International Humanitarian Rights, this occurred when armed groups (paramilitary or self-defense groups, guerrillas, public force) have deployed multiple forms of confrontation that have caused internal displacement forced for nearly five million five hundred thousand people, according to follow up made by the Internal Displaced Monitoring Center Of the Norwegian Refugee Council on the occasion of the 3rd report (2013), in which the evident humanitarian emergency in the country is reported.

The forced displacement of the populations referenced in this article occurred in the last three decades of the history of the Colombian armed conflict, in which the systematic expulsion of the inhabitants to make them leave their rural lands became the use of dispossession as an instrument of territorial control implemented by illegal armed groups. The areas of the country in which the armed conflict was most aggravated are those of great economic interest where violent conflict between settlers, indigenous, Afro-Colombians, day-laborers, and landowners, oil companies, mining companies, dealers and drug traffickers, with the participation of paramilitaries and guerrillas, in addition to the police and military forces, is the expanded result of the "forms of appropriation and valorization of the soil" (Sánchez, 2007, pp. 18-19).

With the introduction of illicit crops by violent means or by self-will, in the last 25 years, the dynamics of the armed conflict has further weakened the populations who have consistently lived in the theater of internal war from which they have gradually been expelled and subjected to the loss of their territory. Ethnic groups, women, the peasants involved in basic production for the processing of narcotics are populations highly violated by this historical situation, structurally and culturally damaging to their human condition. Among them were chosen the communities subject to the case studies.

Afro-Colombian population

The Afro-Colombian population has experienced historical processes of dislocation and reterritorialization; descendants of enslaved Africans managed to shape and consolidate communities emanating from their memories of Africa, to give origin to cultures that allowed them to survive the captivity and European subjugation; "Once settled, they exercised cultural dissent tending to the double integration of people with nature and their ancestors" (Arocha, 2004).

In Colombia only until the 80's of the 20th century the ancestral and cultural legacy of Afro-Colombian peoples started to be considered (Arocha, 2004), this process gave way to the Law 70 *De Negritudes*, that provided them with tools to defend their territories and their culture, meanwhile these were declared within the framework of the Law, collective territories, indefeasible, inalienable and imprescriptible. At the present time these territories and great part of the region located in the pacific coast – mostly populated by Afro-Colombians –. Afro-Colombian communities are displaced from their ancestral territories by actors of the armed conflict and due to the ambitions of national and international groups interested in developing economic megaprojects in these territories.

The Afro-Colombian settlers interviewed came from the District of Chocó, the routes that they followed are displayed on the Map 2, Dynamics of the displacement of Afro-Colombians resettled in the town of Suba, Capital District of Bogotá, in which two stages of displacement are observed: the first is that carried out by the population from their sidewalk or river where they lived towards the capital of the District of origin, and in a second moment the passage to Bogotá, as a place of settlement.
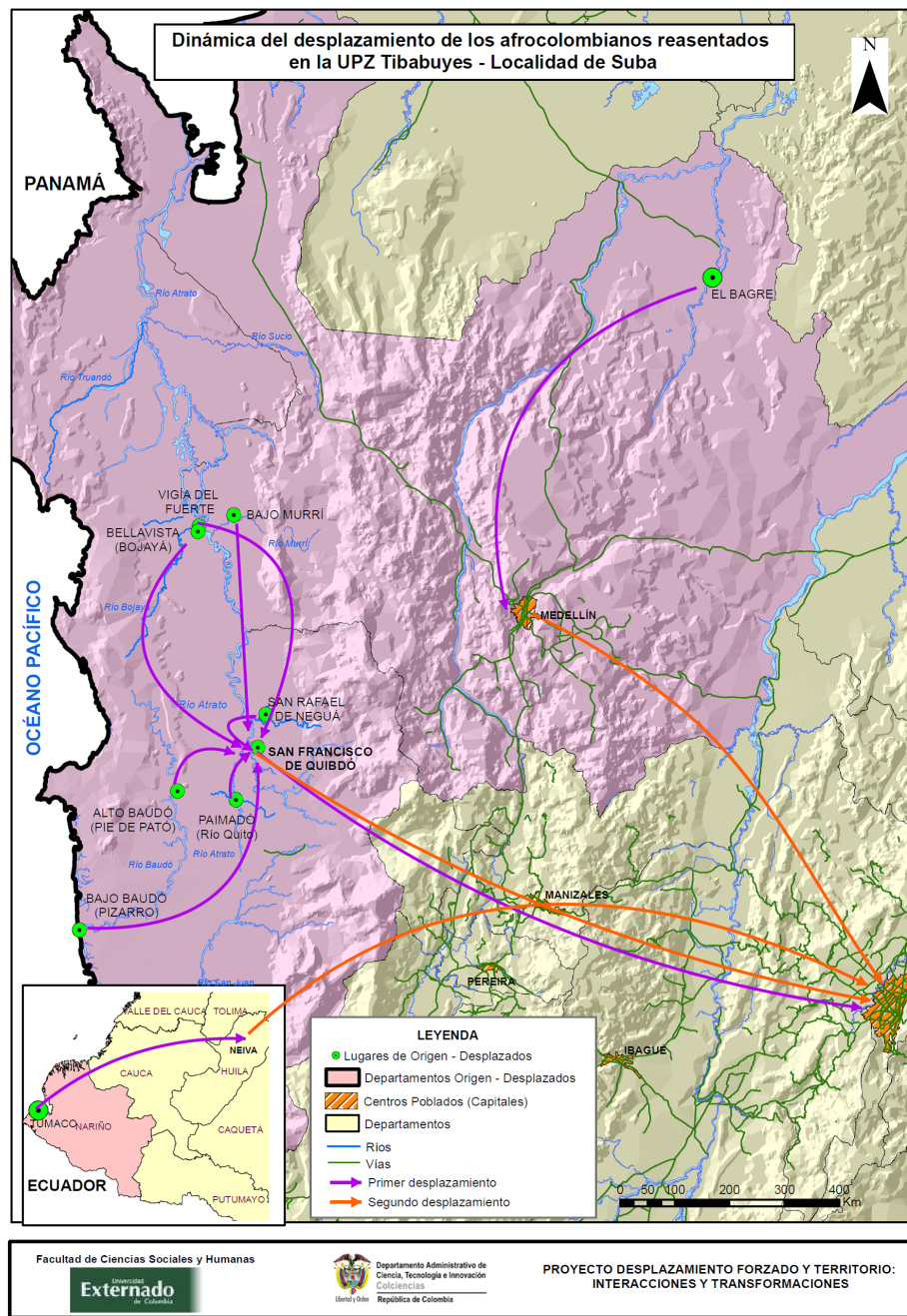
Map 2. Dynamics of the displacement of Afro-Colombians resettled in the town of Suba, Bogotá D.C.

Indigenous population

The indigenous population is located in territories historically scene of different social conflicts, political and economic. The indigenous reserves of wide extension, located in fertile lands or in mountainous regions geostrategically important for the exploration and exploitation of natural resources or as territories of difficult access, are location of armed groups outside the law, where the population and especially young people are forcibly linked to the forces in conflict (Conip, 2007). To perform a case study about the indigenous population allowed to observe the particular characteristics of uprooting, the

claim of ancestor, the history passed in the middle of the dispossession of territory and culture as fight constantly for maintaining and enforcing rights as an ethnic population that makes evident the pre-eminence of the territory meanwhile the mother earth that gives meaning and value to their existence.

In the region of High Naya, jungle region located on the pacific slope, in the districts of Valle del Cauca and Cauca, Colombian southwest, where the indigenous interviewed come from, armed groups generated strategies for territorial control and for the financing of their illegal activities, installed shelters and training camps according to Waldmann and Reinares (Osorio, 2009), making

it bastion and corridor of illicit activities (production and marketing of coca leaf, processed drug and arms trafficking). These conditions are imbricated and formed new relations between occupants of the region, introduced physical violence against the people; the massacre of Naya, April 11, 2001*,* committed by a contingent of armed men belonging to the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, AUC, against an unspecified number of settlers, (of which 40 were killed and 12 others are missing), generated the forced displacement of many of them.

This displaced indigenous community is now resettled in Hacienda La Laguna in the municipality of Timbío, District of Cauca. Before arriving at their place of settlement arrived at temporary shelter sites as shown in the Map 3. Route of the displacement of the settlers of the High Naya. The paramilitary incursion, the death of traditional leaders, family and community, the escape, the displacement in the middle of the terror they were living, took them on several sites in search of a place to take refuge; it is known that members of the community spent three years as refugees in a bullring as refuge.

Constituted in the Association of Indigenous Peasants of Naya, ASOCAIDENA claimed their right to reparation before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, CIDH, which issued a sentence against the Colombian State. The judgment recognized by the Constitutional Court of Colombia established the requirement to return a property to the community for their relocation in use of the full exercise of their rights.

The Map 3 Route of the displacement of the settlers of the High Naya shows the road traveled by the territory that they left and their place of resettlement.
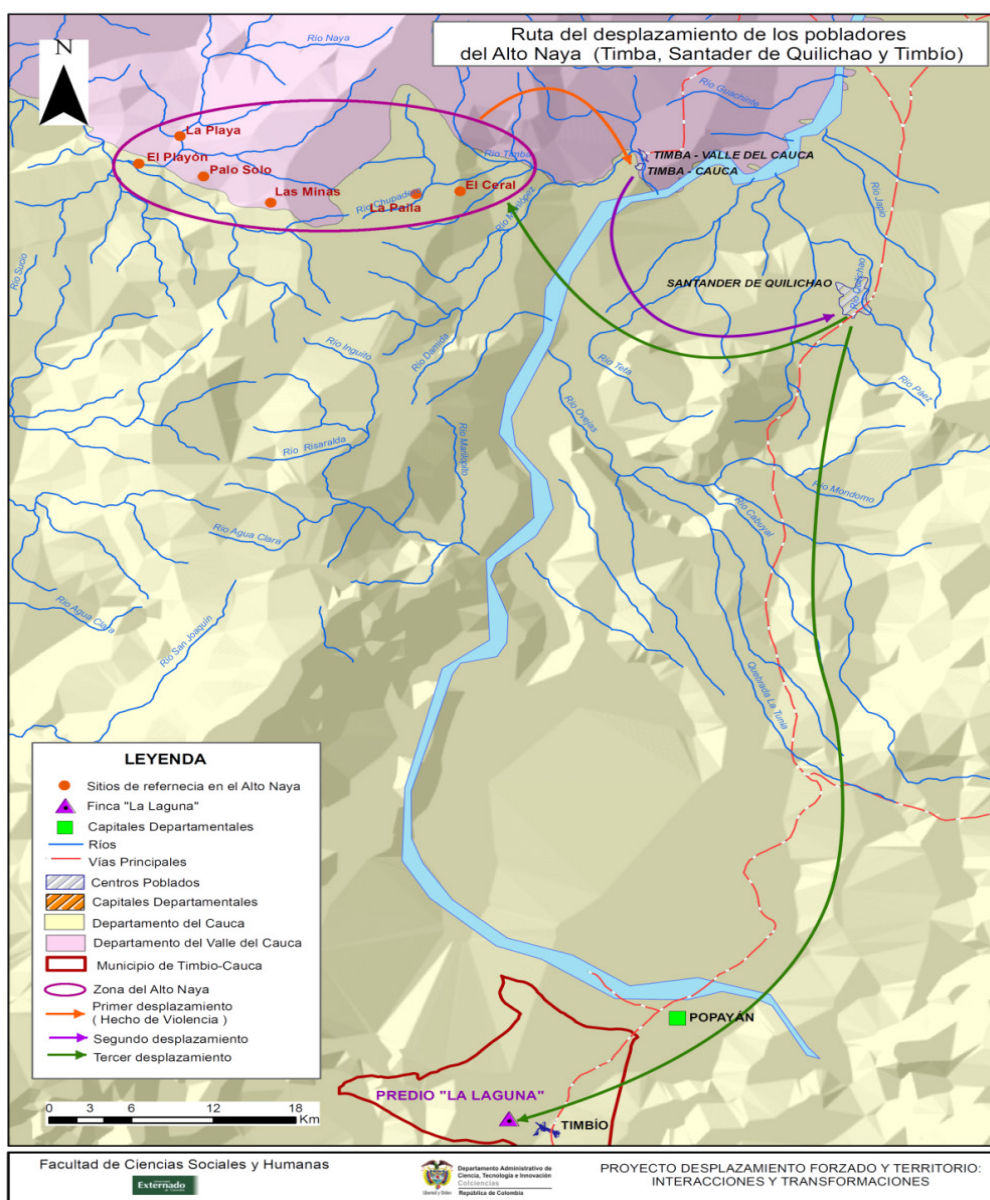
*Map 3.* Route of the displacement of the settlers of the High Naya

Population of peasants

The peasant population registers the largest number of people and households that have been forcibly displaced, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Acnur, (2001) estimated a 81% of total forced displaced people in Colombia, as a peasant population that has practices and knowledge about the use and management of the territory, who are threatened when they must migrate to the city.

The peasants interviewed for the case study come from subregions in the central zones, east and northeast of the country, which are characterized by the great wealth of natural mining resources and also the fertility and extension of the lands; the existence of this resources leads to multiple economic interests by various actors such as multinationals, illegal armed groups, forces of the State and the civilian population.

These displaced peasants were located in Cúcuta, capital city of the district of North of Santander, on the border with Venezuela. In the movement produced by forced displacement preferably villagers went to Cúcuta where they believed that they could be safe of the persecution of the armed groups and also to resolve the subsisting exercising multiple informal jobs. The Map 4 Dynamics of displacement by displaced resettled in Communes 8 and 9 of the city of Cúcuta, shows the routes followed by the peasants to arrive to Cúcuta.
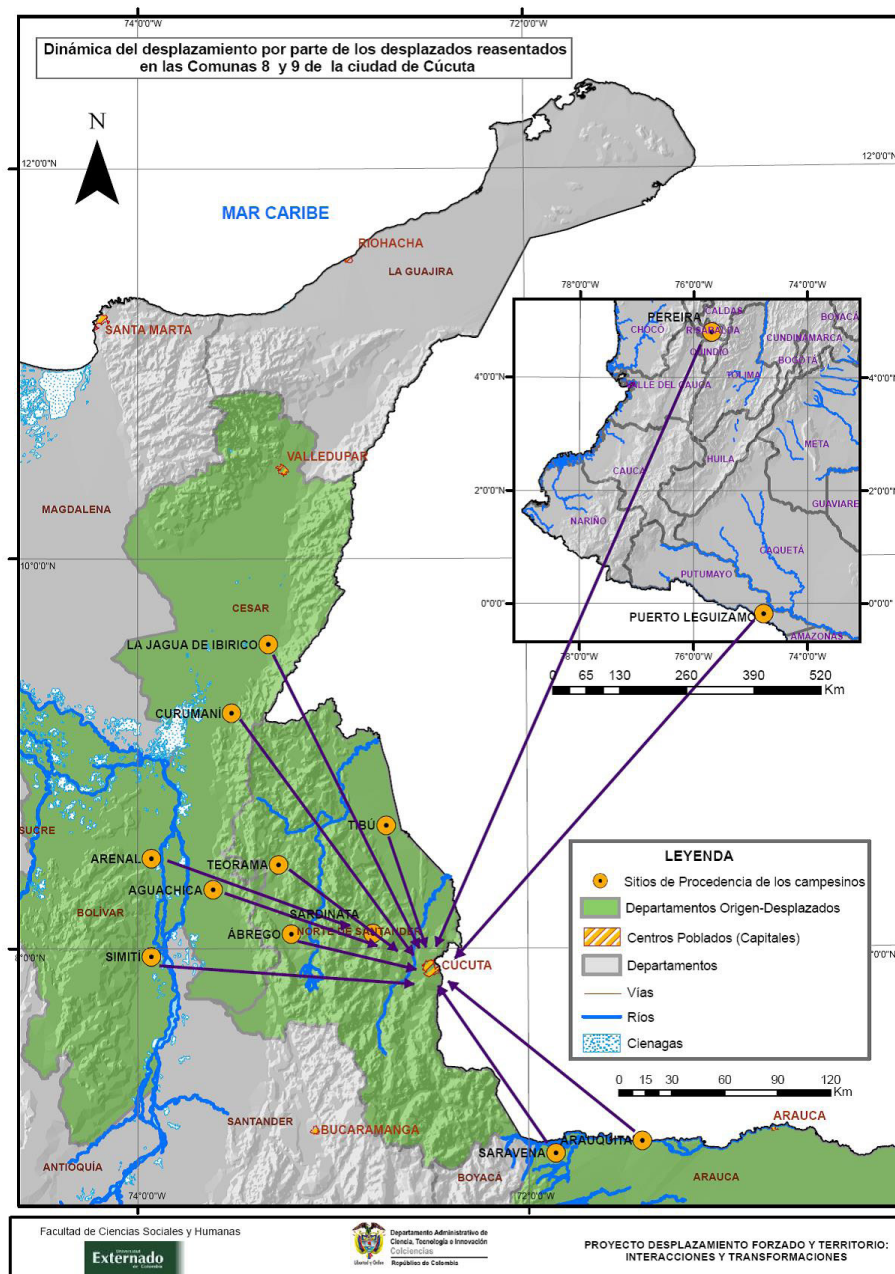
Map 4. Dynamics of displacement by displaced resettled in Communes 8 and 9 of the city of Cúcuta

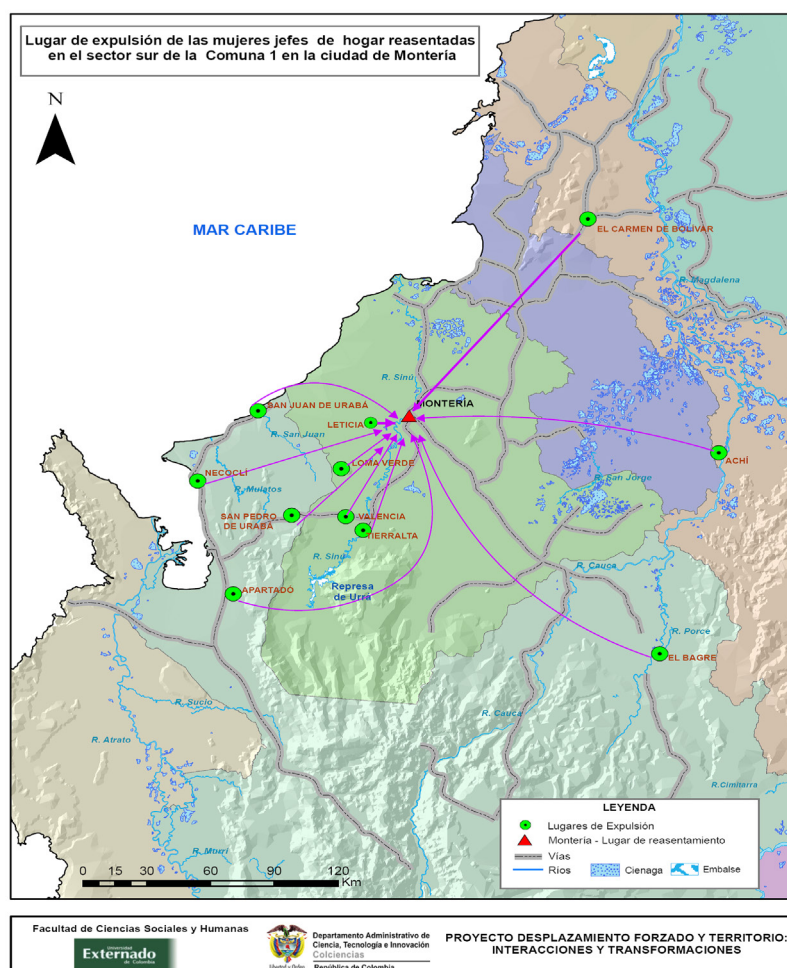## Population of women heads of households resettled in Montería

The study of this population of displaced women showed the intrafamilial dynamics, the ways of life and organization that compose the displaced people in their walk in search of a new place to settle. Gender is a component that must be highlighted in the reterritorialization of populations in displacement condition (Segura and Merteens, 1997).

The women's group in this case study was formed by displaced women from the Caribbean region of Colombia. These women originated, in the majority, of municipalities and townships of the district of Córdoba, migrated voluntarily to regions adjacent to their place of origin motivated by the search for better conditions and by the promise of a more prosperous life. Thus, they worked on banana plantations, farms, commerce or even gold mines; places where they founded their families and started life projects that would later be truncated by the war and armed conflict. The owners of these lands employ the populations as sharecroppers or participants in livestock activities in exchange for providing a place to live and the possibility of cultivating products to the subsistence.

Other territories where women were settled inside the same Caribbean region where the scarce presence of the State favored the growing of illicit crops, as well as the territories of mining for the extraction of gold, nickel and coal and the numerous small settlements located in narrow strips between tracks, rivers and canals, initiated taking advantage of some spaces left by the large farms, are a sample of the limitations for access to a territory of stay. The conflicts over land create a situation of expulsion evidencing the dispossession by the owners towards the peasants.

The women heads of households displaced from the Districts of Córdoba, Guajira, Antioquia and Bolívar in the Colombian Caribbean region, were resettled in the Commune 1 of the city of Montería, invading it with other peasants. Migrating there was an accessible option within the perspective of seeking new opportunities in less extreme security conditions.

The Map 5 Places for expulsion of women heads of household resettled in the southern sector of Commune 1 in the city of Montería shows the mobility of women by different places where they settled and again they began the search for conditions of life for themselves and for their family that allowed them to free themselves from political violence and social marginality.

Map 5. Places for expulsion of women heads of household resettled in the southern sector of commune 1 in the city of Montería

Territorialization in a natural and cultural context of origin as a process of meaning of the territory and of oneself

Despite of the social dynamics that would constitute the process of deterritorialization, the rural settlers reported their territories of origin as the niche where they built a clearly differentiating identity of their peasant being, although those that were linked to agroproductive or mining projects built an idea of themselves in the economic exchange of formal and informal work, particularly the women interviewed. Some such as Afro-Colombians, indigenous people and peasants, circumscribed in the physical and biotic context of their rural environment, established relationships to live and perpetuate themselves through the exercise of social and productive actions that facilitated them to maintain an idea of appropriation and domestication of their environment, to have the ability to lead their own lives, satisfy their material needs while endowing meanings with everyday experience in this environment. The geographer J. Monnet (2010), proposed an approach to synthesize these relationships: Territory is a material element, an area or network produced by repetitive human activities, while the territoriality, the relationship established with it, constitutes a system of values attributed to the territory. For this geographer the passage from territory to territoriality leads from the material object to a value that supports and at the same time is an expression of human subjectivity. The process under development within this relationship and location is the territorialization or human action based on the value system to produce a territory. Monnet speaks accordingly, of a socio-territorial system that associates the territory, territoriality and territorialization.
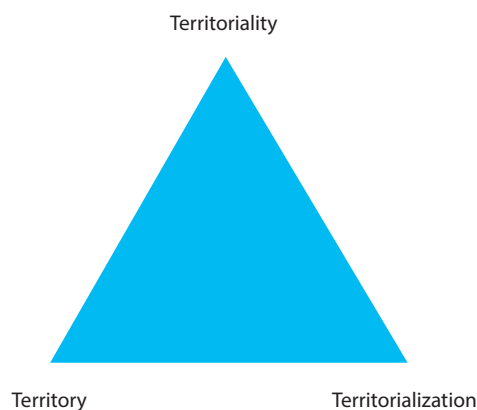

Figure 1. Socio-territorial system

Font: based on approaches by Jérôme Monet, 2010.

The geographer B. Debarbieux (2003) points to this idea of built territory as a combination of material and symbolic resources able to structure the practical conditions of the existence of an individual or a social group and to give, collaterally, elements generating of identity. The territory understood in this way, is the result of a historical process of meanings attributed to the inhabited space.

People and communities such as those who have been the subject of the case studies have realized social interactions and concrete cultural practices that over time have shaped the territory as its heritage. The collected stories allow corroborating the territorial dimension whose meanings attributed to the environment are fundamental content of the definition of oneself. The displaced persons interviewed indeed, evoked aspects of life that they carried in the rural environment and compared it with the kind of life they currently have in the city; to reflect about aspects such as food, housing, access and use of basic services (water, energy, gas, transportation etc.), work, formal education and upbringing, health, recreation, safety, highlights quality of life referrals:

> *Life was good, for somebody who is from there and feels good, comfortable, everything is free, the food, in each house was planted the food and there are rice and banana, occasionally someone gets gold. . . . then someone could live well, tasty . . . life was good, happy because someone, when this people were not here [the armed groups] could live well, we had everything needed. People was not rich (laughs) but at least had peace of mind and could live well, [to] did not miss to the people the little things that one needs, people worked in their fields.* (Displaced Afro-Colombian woman).

For displaced populations, the appropriated territory for their physical reproduction, social and cultural, allowed to build relations of proximity between its inhabitants, which could count on this one as content and continent necessary for the development of the project of life; having food security, a house for shelter, with enough space and conditions to raise birds and piglets, milking cows, planting tubers and vegetables, banana and the components necessary for a traditional diet. The solidary community, neighborhood relations, the creative coexistence with nature, religiosity and its commemorations, valorized and revived a worldview composed by different perspectives that, talking about the settlers, guaranteed and stimulated the specificities of peasants and all of this in a sense of being part of a community. Living and subsisting on family farming, the education of children within this value for work, among other characteristics, provided a meaning to the everyday way of life.

However, the practices implanted by the war, the cultivation and processing of coca leaf, introduced another relationship with the earth, not a relationship of respect and experiences of preservation and reproduction, but a relation of exploitation and usufruct that the instigators of the violence promoted and at the same time was creating the conditions for the subsequent struggle against the community until forced it to flee and move.

The deterritorialization as a fracture of the individual and collective identity

> *It is strange to see that someone takes root, construct something and goes out and leave everything thrown, starts again from scratch, everything that constructed, and to see that many times things do not work out like people would like to.* (Peasant woman, displaced)

In the face of the invasion and eviction imposed by armed groups, the displaced felt the fear, "seems to be the last resort of protection with which they count" (Villa, 2006, p. 17); horror strategy, of destabilization of daily activities, the threat to the exercise of practices that *ordinarily* allowed to live by an usual way, it was imposed to them the decision to flee. The rural territoriality from which they come, became blurred as a daily referent of life as peasants transforming in a radical way the interaction nature-work-community, the typical triad of the kind of life in the fields that displaced described how the condition of a "good living"[2]. This mode changed exemplifying the loss of peasant life.

This loss occurs because of the death of relatives, as well as uncertainty about how the situation will evolve, move the villager to find another place to live, the expulsion, sometimes sudden, of their territories puts them in front of a destructuring of the known world. The discourse of life becomes ambiguous and confusing, they do not know how to solve the food and the roof to shelter. The deterritorialization destabilizes them and makes confuse the place to protect themselves and the place to inhabit. As metaphorically emphasized Roelens (2002, p. 34), [the exiled] ". . . run the risk of being nobody", are in the requirement to rework each time their identity, reaffirming what they are in the most deep of themselves, with their memory and illusions, beyond the immediate survival.

An uneasiness and sense of inadequacy is explicit in that people talking when they speak about their forced displacement:

> *Then listen to me when I say that when someone is uprooted from a territory, the person lose something, that is to say this is about the effects of a displacement, a lot of the relationship with nature is lost, because here there is nature too, but it is not the same thing, that is to say it is another kind of lifestyle or the destiny just put the person in a situation, it is as if it were imposed, or I don't*

> *know, I don't know, it is something . . . I became very complex, everything else complexes me, that is to say I become very complex in relation to nature because I was fascinated there in [the* jungle*] I liked to walk a lot, that is to say I was the most curious of the three [sisters], the most fanciful, I liked going just walking, to look for animals, here no. Sure [*there*] people are more free than here, that is to say people have more relationship with nature, here no, people here sometimes have to have limits* (Indigenous woman, displaced).

The processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, impose a shuffle in which the memory of their territory of origin is maintained, valued, felt, enjoyed, field interactions[3]. The deterritorialization requires them to reconstitute a horizon of meaning for their "to be here", (Yory, 2007, p. 211) which becomes a challenge without previous references. New dynamics of interaction make everyday life a kind of "disconnection" (Vasco, 2002) of the territory of origin and at the same time an experience of strangeness facing the new settlement site where even if several years have passed, still feeling like a foreigner. Identity references built in the territory of origin denoted as peasant identity, the practices and landscapes are no longer present in the environment where they arrived, from the newly inaugurated identity as a displaced peasant forced to migrate to the city, had to start building new territorial referents that forced them to leave behind their previous way of life.

Thus, between ambiguities, loneliness and strangeness the displaced people begin a process of reterritorialization; Naranjo (2004) refers to this process from the accumulation of experiences and knowledge that bring the displaced people to the neighborhoods and sectors of arrival. These places, inhabited by poor migrants, become the stage for joint life when in some cases the prejudices and in others the solidarity, are shaping the process of re-establishing living conditions, building an own place, articulating material work and immaterial elements brought into memory. These elements reiterate the way of living in the territory of origin, evoke the natural and social landscape, the space of practices with which a natural heritage was constituted, cultivated or wild, and a cultural heritage resulting from the collective dwelling (Iranzo, 2009), where life was in its space.

New referents profiled the place where to live and try to concretize what the material and symbolic specificities already meaning by others, the displaced are endowing their own meanings. The familiar order built

---

2   This feeling and perception of good living refers to a notion of well-being. It is a feeling of well-being subjectively perceived as enjoyment of life, satisfaction and happiness, generalizations for their doing that allowed them to think day by day as a succession of predictable events. The living conditions in their previous territory were good and judged positive by them. These conditions refer to the way of life before the expansion of the actions of the armed actors and include the time of settlement in their respective regions and even until the time of the cultivation of the coca leaf for commercial purposes.

3   Field of interaction where forces emanating from the subject and forces generated by social facts that exert different influences are expressed, as Kurt Lewin put it in his field theory (1988), the psychological field considered as a "dynamic totality" that manifests the relational state of a person with the social environment at a given time, includes perceptions and motivations. It is possible to say that his relational field creates a scenario for deploying the imaginative world and the world of actions implementation, as described by the displaced.

in the rural ambient is unknown and strange in the urban environment, it requires other skills that will replace what is known about the cultivation of land and traditions.

Housing, basic services, daily food, income generation, education and childcare, recreation, in the rural environment before the displacement let them feel their needs met. Even if obviously safety and health in the rural environment did not correspond to their welfare needs, the perception and feeling of capacity and autonomy to find the own sustenance was the main reference to consider psychologically and subjectively[4] fulfilled the goal of feeling good. These characteristics of life contrast with their current feeling of loss or unfavorability.

Forced migration generated changes, violence brought fear, tensions, losses, J. Atxotegui, (2007) points to this state of affairs as grief:

> Grief is understood as the process of the personality reorganization which occurs when something that is meaningful to the subject is lost. In the case of emigration, the subject would have to reworking to the bonds that has established (people, culture, landscapes. . . . Links that have been formed during the stages of life and that have played a very important role structuring the personality.
> On leaving, the emigrant has to maintain those links because through them his personality and identity as a person is expressed and, at the same time, to be adapted, . . . must launch new links – for the new relations that he has to establish . . . –, which in part will replace those he left behind (Atxotegui, 2007).

From this look can be related the feeling of loss or unfavorable constant that manifest the displaced in their speeches, by a feeling of grief that requires them to reorganize the disposition before themselves and against the others, reset lost links, however, many of the displaced have long periods of time in the urban center where they currently live, the feeling of loss has not found a symbolic compensation. Atxotegui (2007) points about it: "in emigration there is a grief for what is left behind: the psychological problems arise from the difficulties in the elaboration of that grief", these difficulties are accentuated when migration is a product of the violence exerted to strip people of the territorial space of life that exemplifies forced displacement as a form of exile in which the feeling of constant loss does not disappear.

In this context, we have to be able to observe how the territory is characterized as vital space[5] and existential

heritage, not only lived ideally, but, above all, from a useful pragmatism that responds to daily necessities. Moral pain, goals, perceptions and motivations, move the displaced subject to try to rebuild the own place and return to the cosmoterritoriality (Primera, 2005) As a worldview that interweaves binding meanings and the metaphor of the process of taking root, meaning for the group, community, productive and recreational life.

The reterritorialization as reconstruction of the territory and of the own place: reinventing the being in the world

The relationship with the territory appears as fundamental to understand the process of overcoming the status of displaced people. In the process of reterritorialization, elements such as the previous identity and skills created in the life preceding forced displacement, demand to ask if displaced people relocated in urban localities are finding a new territory of life. Territoriality as a material and symbolic relation to the place occupied by a subject in the groups of displaced persons who initiate a process of resettlement in new territories and the process of relationship with residents at the place of arrival, in their struggle to establish themselves and build a project of subsistence and viable daily life to live, implies resizing oneself and the physical space as inhabitants who cohabit in the same and new territory.

The four groups addressed in the research showed different processes of reterritorialization:

• The group of indigenous people of the town hall Kitek Kiwe, in the present property has managed to establish a territory where to inhabit, the members of the Town hall have been strengthened like political actors and in the whole the community has recovered elements to reestablish its identity Nasa. Other aspects related to housing provision remain to be solved after 13 years of forced displacement.
• Peasants resettled in Cúcuta were benefited since the beginning of their arrival in the city of a housing project that allowed them to establish a location and to form a district. The principle of stabilization that gave them access to housing has clashed with the impossibility of economic stabilization, the transfers caused of their continue such for subsistence unresolved after eight years of having arrived in Cúcuta fleeing from political violence, also, the violence round them in the urban space in the periphery of the city where they are located.
• The women located in the Commune 1 of Montería, on invasion grounds, have experienced

---

4 Subjective Well-Being according to Diener (Abello et al., 2009) corresponds to the cognitive and affective assessments that a person makes around the life; Psychological Well-Being according to Ryff (Abello et al., 2009) is related to "the effort to perfect oneself and the realization of own potential".

5 This space contains the person, the goals that seeks, the negative "goals" that is trying to avoid, the barriers that restrict the movements and the paths that is necessary to follow in order to obtain what is needed, learning

that requires to rely on previous knowledge. Life space, beyond Lewin (1988) formulated, includes the geographic or physical space and the meaning that the subject has internalized and converted into symbolic content that constitutes the world as it affects or affects himself. (Hill, 1974).

great difficulty in accessing a housing, in their settlement precariousness in all orders marks the daily life of women who after 20 years of having invaded these properties do not have stability in access to public services, health or locatives, manage to solve their subsistence by carrying out many kinds of trades.

• The group of Afro-Colombians is reunited with extended family in the neighborhood where they were located for information of their countrymen who had already migrated to Bogotá, the capital of the country, continue to occupy houses for rent in conditions of high precariousness, depending on state subsidies, seeking to recreate their spaces of tradition that come from their hometown, trying to endow the present place of residence as a space similar to that they lived with family and nature, recreation, music, play and recreation with the countrymen.

Findings and questions regarding the reterritorialization process

Feelings and perceptions of the displaced could account for a process of construction of new territorialities from the appropriation of the spaces where they have arrived and now inhabit: the social relations that initiate and establish, the perception of themselves as inhabitants of those places, emerging feelings of "to be there" in the framework of the physical characteristics of the new space they communicate to them unknown forms of appropriation of these conditions.

In the immediate environment where they live, they develop a sociability with other displaced persons, family or friends and also with residents established with those who carry out associative activities such as the Council of the district, go shopping, go to church, also they learn productive or direct activities to generate an income, especially in the case of women; the children go to the nearest school and most of the family and friends also live in the same place. In spite of the precariousness and difficulties, is a space where they feel confident, there are risks that are usually minimized and restricted to some critical sites. The school and the church are perceived as pleasant places generators of support and trust, the residence of family and friends has become a place where they share experiences as a group and obtain some degree of shelter or protection against expressions considered hostile from the outside world. Relations with the formal institutionality of the State and with non-governmental organizations, participation in social, labor and political spaces that arise in the need to organize to request state assistance to stabilizing their living conditions, the use of mechanisms for claiming rights, is part of learning in use that previously did not exist for the displaced.

The displaced works in various sectors of the city, some walk long distances to reach them, for others the work is located near the place of residence, especially for women who have established work in the house where they live with the family. Some large parks are places visited sporadically, so the really well-known and regularly traveled city is concentrated in these frequented places, the surroundings are practically unknown, the lack of economic resources makes it very difficult for the displaced to frequent places outside the immediate space where they live. The center of the city is generally reserved for formalities, and in particular, the actions related to support for the displaced offered by state and non-governmental entities, medical care from complex situations and some extraordinary purchases. Usually the center is perceived as a conflictive and external space. This process exemplifies in the displaced the acquisition of new tools for life, does not allow affirming that these practices promote feelings of autonomy and exercise of a full citizenship by account of opportunities to reinvent perspectives or a project like inhabitant of the city.

The opposition raised by Guy Mercier (2009) between territory as a product of the intrinsic power of the actor and the place as a result of the game of extrinsic powers, would allow a reading of the process of forced displacement and resettlement as a sequence in which one starts from a territory of origin, in which people could exercise some kind of power or deployment of their potency of life. The actions and influence of various actors of violence and intimidation turned this territory of sufficiency into a place of fear and terror that limited the intrinsic power of the settlers. They had to move and resettle in a place where, with very little autonomy and in the midst of precariousness, managed to survive. Far from being able to deploy their own capacity they should be limited to take advantage of the few possibilities offered and depend on various types of aid. In this process the displaced acquire new skills and begin to deploy their capacities to overcome poverty and marginality. Nevertheless, this is a slow, difficult and unfinished process that would correspond to a transformation of the place into territory, in terms of Mercier. In this measure we can speak about territories under construction, the Graph 1 shows elements of this process in which housing plays a fundamental role, the difficulties to obtain it or at least to have an adequate accommodation, are strongly resentful of the displaced. The opposition between the cases of Cúcuta and Suba speak for themselves. The precarious situation of displaced in Suba in this matter is a critical point in the resettlement process, as the following testimony expresses:

> *If I had a property here [in Bogotá], I would feel the happiest woman in the world. If I had not just a house, but my little farm where I could take nap with my children, without having to think 'the day of the lease is coming', then, if I had it, I would be happy, because for the rest I would work, I would work hard* (Gina, 34, Afro-Colombian woman resettled in Suba, Bogotá).

In Cúcuta, on the one hand, the housing project made the initial phase of the resettlement process in fewer difficulties; the difficulties in generating income are the main concern of the displaced.

On the other hand, the perception of discrimination against them by the society that surrounds them or has surrounded them in the various places to which they have arrived, and the economic situation generated by the precariousness of their jobs, begins to show to the displaced another facet to themselves. They begin to dream of places similar to their place of origin, but where they can find working and security conditions that allow them to survive in peace: To reach conditions of reparation to the damage caused by the violence, the marginalization and the exclusion, to be reconnected with the autochthonous and own of their culture and also the guarantee of the civil rights. The reality of poverty and the difficulty to meet basic needs make these dilemmas present. Inevitably, the spiral of poverty, inequality of physical, economic and social means will continue to mark them in their process of adaptation and integration to the new environment, place and territory in order to fulfill their aspirations and needs.

It is the new generations of displaced households who guarantee permanence as a community over time. On the one hand, young people, many of whom became adults after arrival at settlement sites, and some others born and socialized in the new territory, consider that the place of resettlement is their place of origin, the place they has allowed them to form and become the men and women who they are. These feelings of belonging to the territory, flourish at the same time as young adults, adolescents and children, constituted an identity based on their relationship with the new territory with which they have established processes of appropriation, they have constructed a sense of territory. The elders thus pose one of the key pillars that substantiated the meaning of this research, while the relationship with the territory is structuring the life forms of a community, collective or individual, that in this relationship constitutes the best reference for a project of life and the symbolic construction of a world to be appropriated. Thus we have seen the repeated evidence that forced displacement forces communities, groups or individuals to re-structure their ways of life.
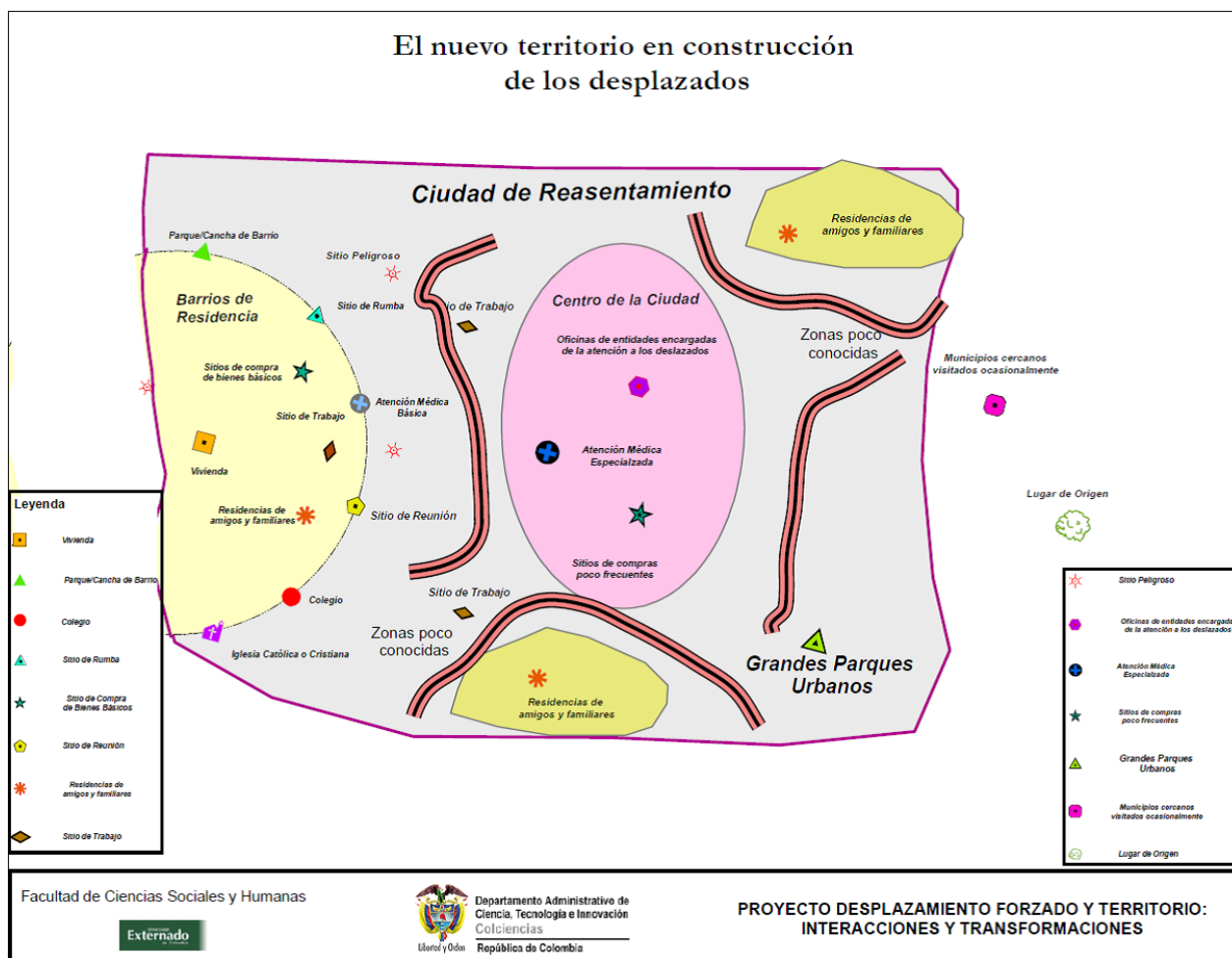
Graph *1*. The new territory under construction for the displaced

Territorialidades em transição: moradores desalojados pela violência do conflito armado colombiano e a ressignificação de seu território

Resumo: A violência armada na Colômbia obriga as pessoas a abandonar seu território para salvaguardar a vida. Quatro estudos de caso com populações desalojadas (mulheres chefes de família, afrodescendentes, indígenas, camponeses) foram empreendidos para compreender dois processos principais nos quais os migrantes forçados em busca de superar a perda do seu lugar no mundo estão imersos: desterritorialização e reterritorialização. Entre as múltiplas afetações que essas pessoas sofrem, este estudo mostrou a dinâmica de reconstrução de um território para si que os obriga a se adaptar a condições de elevada precariedade em uma espiral de pobreza e também de dependência que os sujeita à assistência social e econômica do Estado. Compreender o processo que atravessam envolve aproximar-se de uma dimensão simbólica: significados e relação com o lugar de origem e com o lugar de relocação; e de uma dimensão material: moradia, trabalho, relações sociais, ócio.

Palavras-chave: desterritorialização, reterritorialização, despejo forçado, identidade.

Territorialités en transition: des habitants déplacés par la violence du conflit armé en Colombie resignifient leur territoire

Résumé: Dans le contexte de la violence armée en Colombie, des personnes sont obligées à abandonner leurs territoires pour sauvegarder leur vie. Quatre études de cas de populations déplacées – femmes chefs de famille, afro-colombiens, indigènes, paysans –, furent entrepris pour comprendre les processus de déterritorialisation et reterritorialisation vécus par ces migrants forcés qui doivent surmonter la perte de leur place dans le monde. La recherche a montré que parmi les nombreux dommages subis par ces personnes, la dynamique de reconstruction d'un territoire pour eux-mêmes exige s'adapter à des conditions d'une grande précarité au milieu d'une spirale de pauvreté et de dépendance de l'assistance sociale et financière de l'État. Comprendre leur parcours suppose aborder une dimension symbolique : sens et relation avec les lieux d'origine et de rétablissement, ainsi qu'une dimension matérielle : logement, travail, relations sociales, loisirs.

Mots-clés: déterritorialisation, reterritorialisation, déplacement forcé, identité.

Territorialidades en transición: pobladores desplazados por la violencia del conflicto armado colombiano y la resignificación de su territorio

Resumen: La violencia armada en Colombia obliga a las personas a abandonar su territorio para salvaguardar la vida. Cuatro estudios de caso con poblaciones desplazadas (mujeres jefas de hogar, afrodescendientes, indígenas, campesinos) fueron emprendidos para aproximarse a la comprensión de dos procesos principales en los que se ven inmersos los migrantes forzados en búsqueda de superar la pérdida de su lugar en el mundo: desterritorialización y reterritorialización. La investigación mostró, entre las múltiples afectaciones que sobrevienen a estas personas, la dinámica de reconstrucción de un territorio para sí mismos que les exige adaptarse a condiciones de elevada precariedad en una espiral de pobreza y también de dependencia que los sujeta a la asistencia social y económica del Estado. Comprender el proceso que atraviesan involucra acercarse a una dimensión simbólica: significados y relación con el lugar de origen y con el lugar de reubicación; y una dimensión material: vivienda, trabajo, relaciones sociales y ocio.

Palabras clave: desterritorialización, reterritorialización, desplazamiento forzado, identidad.

References

Abello, R. L., Macías, M. A., Abarca, A. B., Orozco, C. M., Palacio, K. P. M., González, M. M., . . ., & Méndez, D. D. (2009). Bienestar y trauma en personas adultas desplazadas por la violencia política. In *Universitas Psychologica*, *8*(2), 455-470. Recuperado de https://goo.gl/ZW9q4N

Atxotegui, J. (2007). Los duelos de la migración: una aproximación psicopatológica y psicosocial. *Inmigración Hoy: Documentos*, 14-26. Recuperado de https://goo.gl/EmNdKW

Acnur. (2001). *Cifras desplazamiento en Colombia.* Bogotá: Acnur.

Arocha, J. (2004). Procesos de guerra y paz en el litoral pacífico. In G. Montañez (Ed.), *Dimensiones territoriales de la guerra y la paz*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Consejo Nacional Indígena de Paz. (2007). "Ustedes misión, son fuego, agua, viento y plantas": *memorias de la Misión Internacional de Verificación (MIV) de la Situación Humanitaria y de Derechos Humanos de los Pueblos Indígenas de colombia*. Bogotá, Colombia: Conip.

Debarbieux, B. (2003). Territoire. Agencement de ressources matérielles et symboliques capables de structurer les conditions pratiques de l'existence d'un individu ou d'un collectif social et d'informer en retour cet individu ou ce collectif sur sa propre identité. In J. Lévy & M. Lussault, (Dirs). *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l´espace des sociétés*. Paris: Belin.

Hill, W. F. (1974). *Teorías contemporáneas del aprendizaje*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Iranzo, E. (2009). *El paisaje como patrimonio rural: Propuesta de una sistemática integrada para el análisis de los paisajes valencianos (Tesis de Doctorado)*. Universidad de Valencia, Valencia, España.

Lewin, K. (1988). *La teoría del campo y el aprendizaje*. Barcelona: Paidós.

Mercier, G., (2009). *Una teoría del lugar*. In J. W. Montoya (Ed.), Lecturas en teoría de la geografía. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Monnet, J. (2010). Le territoire réticulaire. *Anthropos,* (227), 91-104. Récupéré de https://goo.gl/ZgvK5J

Naranjo, G. (2004). Ciudades y desplazamiento forzado en Colombia: el reasentamiento de hecho y el derecho al restablecimiento en contextos conflictivos de urbanización. En M. Bello (Ed.), *Desplazamiento forzado: dinámicas de guerra, exclusión y desarraigo* (pp. 279-310). Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Norwegian Refugee Council (2013). Global Overview. People internally displaced by conflict and violence. Retrieved from https://goo.gl/b35eIz

Osorio, F. (2009). *Territorialidades en suspenso: desplazamiento forzado, identidades y resistencias*. Bogotá: Codhes.

Primera, G. (2005). *Territorio y territorialidad: el caso de las comunidades negras en Colombia en investigaciones en construcción*. Bogotá: Unibiblos.

Roelens, T. (2002). Sal de tu tierra... a la tierra que te mostraré. *Palimpsesto*, 2, 34-35.

Sánchez, L. (2007). Migración forzada y urbanización en Colombia, perspectiva histórica y aproximaciones teóricas. *Seminario Internacional Procesos Urbanos Informales*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

Segura, N., & Merteens, D., (1997). Desarraigo, género y desplazamiento interno en Colombia. *Revista Nueva Sociedad,* (148), 30-43.

Vasco, L. (2002). *Entre selva y páramo: viviendo y pensando la lucha india*. Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia. Recuperado de https://goo.gl/jeBaQb

Villa, M. I. (2006). *Desplazamiento forzado en Colombia, el miedo: un eje transversal del éxodo y de la lucha por la ciudadanía.* Bogotá: Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá.

Yory, C. (2007). *Topofilia o la dimensión poética del habitar*. Bogotá: Javegraf.