



Norwegian University of Life Sciences  
Faculty of Landscape and Society  
International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)  
Thesis 2021:37

# **The Defence of Territory: Contested Environmental Politics at the El Quimbo Hydroelectric Dam in Huila, Colombia**

Til forsvar for territoriet:  
Strid rundt miljøpolitikk ved El Quimbo  
vannkraftverk i Huila, Colombia

Cornelia Helmcke



# The Defence of Territory: Contested Environmental Politics at the El Quimbo Hydroelectric Dam in Huila, Colombia

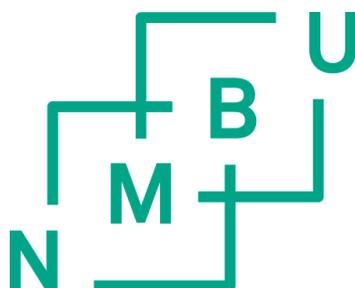
Til forsvar for territoriet:  
Strid rundt miljøpolitikk ved El Quimbo vannkraftverk i Huila, Colombia

Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) Thesis

Cornelia Helmcke

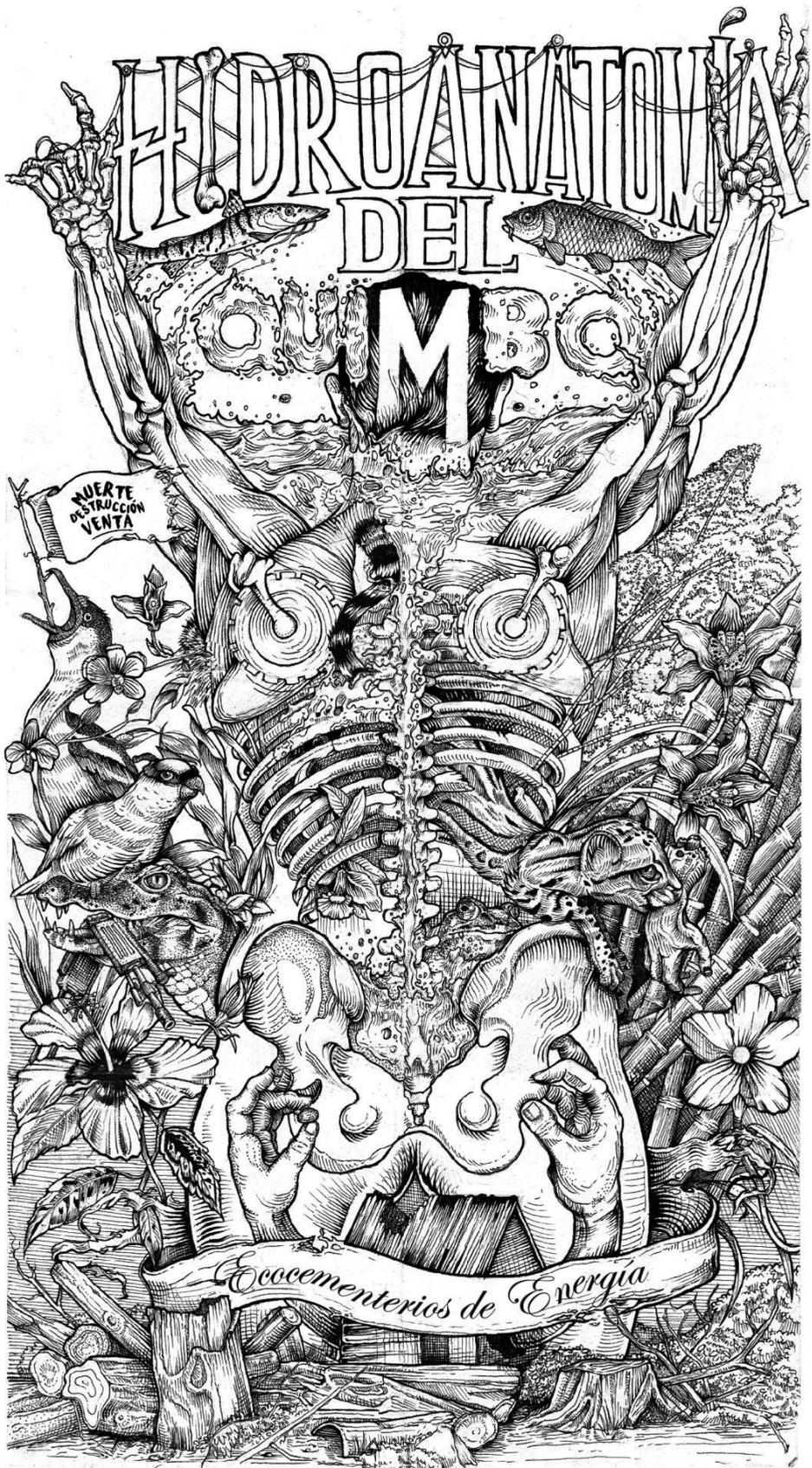
Norwegian University of Life Sciences  
Faculty of Landscape and Society  
Department of International Environment and Development Studies

Ås 2021



Thesis number 2021:37  
ISSN 1894-6402  
ISBN 978-82-575-1736-6





# HIDROANATOMÍA DEL

# LUMBO

MUERTE  
DESTRUCCIÓN  
VENTA

*Ecocementarios de Energía*

Title picture: “Hidroanatomía del Quimbo – Ecocementerios de energía” (Hydro-anatomy of the El Quimbo dam – Eco-cemeteries of Energy); on the flag it says: “muerte, destrucción, venta” (death, destruction, sale); poster produced by Colombian artist Zunzún (<http://zunzunete.tumblr.com/>); the picture is published on his webpage as well as on Wikipedia: “Represa del Quimbo” (22/09/2020)

# **LA DEFENSA DEL TERRITÓRIO**

Política ambiental en disputa en la represa  
hidroeléctrica **EL QUIMBO**  
en el Huila, Colombia



**YUMA**



## PhD Supervisors

Associate Professor Esben Leifsen  
Faculty of Landscape and Society  
Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU)

Professor John-Andrew McNeish  
Faculty of Landscape and Society  
Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU)

## Evaluation Committee

Assistant Professor María Cecilia Roa García  
Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios Sobre Desarrollo (Cider)  
Universidad de Los Andes, Colombia

Professor Susan Paulson  
Center for Latin American Studies  
University of Florida, US

Professor Tor Arve Benjaminsen  
Faculty of Landscape and Society  
Norwegian University of Life Science (NMBU)



## Acknowledgements

*Noragric*, from the first day, I felt at home. I am infinitely grateful for the opportunity and the support I received from the department and NMBU to do my PhD. The last five years were full of new exciting challenges, I got to know so many great people, laughed and learned so much.

Esben Leifsen, thank you for your supervision, advice and patience during these years. Your thoughtful and thought-provoking considerations guided me through the fieldwork, through my phase of being lost in analysis, and in completing this monograph.

John Andrew McNeish, thank you for your advice and insights over the years. Your knowledge in Colombian politics, extractivism and energy were essential contributions to the elaboration of this work.

I also thank my colleagues from the RAPID cluster for the possibility to exchange and discuss ideas and writings: Bill Derman, Andrei Marin, Randi Kaarhus, Tor Arve Benjaminsen, Shai Divon and Ian Bryson. Special thanks goes to my (former) “inmates” of Parkgården, for the lunches we had and the coffee and cookies we shared to get through dragging days: Ian, Shai, Darley Jose Kjosavik, Bill Warner, Gufu Oba and of course all my dear fellow PhD candidates.

Mikael Bergius and Paul Beaumont, I had the honour to start together with you the PhD programme and to share an office. It was an unforgettable time. Your brilliance and serenity inspired me every day. Mikael, our ceremony of starting the early mornings with coffee and quixotic contemplation was lifesaving.

Great support also were my later office mates Moses Majid Limuwa, Erika Rojas and Dara Sands. I very much appreciated sharing our joys and sorrows with each other. This also applies to my other PhD fellows and friends around the campus: Elizabeth Mac Afee, Anette Virtanen, Sergio Roche, Hans Adam, Awais Arifeen, Jill Tove Buseth, Tomohiro Harada, Noé Mendoza, Linn Jäckle, Eva Davidsdottir and Gard Vangsnes. Thank you for your continuous encouragement.

Furthermore, this PhD would have not been possible without the support of Josie Teurlings, Liv Ellingsen, Anna Holm, Ingunn Andersen and all the great Admin in Tivoli. It is thanks to Margarita López Garcia and Ruth Coetzee that my Colombian interviews were correctly transcribed and that my English is readable. My gratitude goes also to Joy and Paul Mawbey for their thorough engagement and patience with my thesis.

Esto me lleva a mis estimadxs amigxs en Colombia: Juan Manuel Gonzáles, Erika Marcela Tinoco, Jazmin Aguiar, Sergio Patilla, Juan Carlos Albarracín, John Jairo Trujillo, Oscar Reyes, el equipo de Asoquimbo, la comunidad de Rioloro y de la Veracruz. Gracias para siempre hacerme sentir en casa y gracias por todo el apoyo que me dieron durante mi estancia en el Huila. Esta tesis es de Ustedes.

También gracias a mis amigxs afuera de Huila: Grace Camacho, Sandra Staub y Guy Crawford, quienes siempre me daban hospedaje y cariño. Espero nos veamos pronto otra vez.

Am Ende möchte ich meiner Familie und meinen Freunden in Deutschland danken, vor allem meinem größten kleinen Bruder, meinen Eltern und meiner besten Freundin Sarah Gottwald. Danke für eure ununterbrochene Unterstützung und dass ihr immer für mich da seid. Ohne euch wäre diese Arbeit nie möglich gewesen.

*Cornelia Helmcke* – March 2021, Ås

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the environmental struggle caused by a large-scale dam project in Huila province, Colombia, and the politics that allowed the controversial hydroelectric power plant “El Quimbo” to start operating in 2015. Through examining different truth regimes around the environmental impacts, the thesis provides a nuanced understanding of the profound differences between conventional apolitical economic and ecological framings of versus political ecology approaches to such investments. It seeks to understand how related politics across temporal and spatial scales structured the possible fields of action of the affected population. More specifically, it analyses how spaces of contestation are *opened* or *closed* through the production of knowledge of place, the reconfiguration of space and infrastructure, the distribution of discourses and narratives, the enactment of networks across scales, as well as of democratic control mechanisms. With this, the study contributes to the conceptualisation of aspects of power within political ecology.

By making use of scientific knowledge and inscribing this knowledge onto the affected area, the energy company Emgesa produced structures of domination that ultimately enabled it to *engineer a reality* favourable to the energy project and thus dam the Magdalena River. While Emgesa depoliticised the issues at stake, the socio-environmental movement against the dam repoliticised them, combining public actions (protests and art events) with formal, institutionalised procedures (judicial contention, public hearings and roundtables). To defend life and territory, the movement challenged the dominant development discourse that justified the dam project by presenting the problems caused by “development” and argued for more autonomy for the territories within the state system thus enhancing its political influence in Huila. After the regional elections held after the reservoir filling in 2015, the movement found new allies within the state apparatus that increasingly committed to the struggle for territorial autonomy against the centrally enforced neoliberal extractivist model. The adaptation of wider political goals led to the reconfiguration of the movement; it increasingly detached itself from the more immediate concerns and the unresolved situation of the affected people around the El Quimbo valley. Expanding the scale of analysis, the struggle further revealed the disaggregated character of the Colombian state. It is argued that the role of internal ambivalence, territorial diversity and political opportunism in the state formation process signify a threat to civil society as well as a possibility for change.

This study is based on data collected from participant observation and interviews carried out during two periods of fieldwork in Huila, 2012 and 2016-17, as well as from newspaper articles

and reports about the case between 2008 and 2019. With this long-term, multi-scale and multi-actor analysis of a territorial conflict, which was sparked by a renewable energy project in Colombia, I rely on and contribute to the political ecology literature on hydroelectricity, extractivism, infrastructure and the defence of territory. I ultimately reflect on how environmental struggles have contested environmental harmful practices and opened the imagination to and implementation of alternative development pathways.

## Sammendrag

Denne avhandlingen undersøker en miljøkonflikt forårsaket av et storskala damprosjekt i Huila-provinsen, Colombia, og politikken som muliggjorde igangsettelsen av det kontroversielle vannkraftverket "El Quimbo" i 2015. Gjennom en studie av forskjellige sannhetsregimer rundt miljøkonsekvenser, gir avhandlingen nyansert innsikt i de dype forskjellene mellom konvensjonelle apolitiske økonomiske og økologiske rammer for forståelse, versus politisk økologiske tilnærminger til slike investeringer. Studien søker å forstå hvordan politikk utført over tid og i ulike kontekster strukturerte de mulige handlingsfeltene til den berørte befolkningen. Mer spesifikt analyserer den hvordan kontroversielle handlingsrom *åpnes* eller *lukkes* gjennom produksjon av kunnskap om sted, rekonfigurering av rom og infrastruktur, distribusjon av diskurser og fortellinger, dannelsen av nettverk "mellom skalaer", samt gjennom demokratiske kontrollmekanismer. Med dette bidrar studien til en begrepsfesting av maktaspekter innen politisk økologi.

Ved å benytte seg av vitenskapelig kunnskap og innskripe denne kunnskapen i det berørt området, etablerte energiselskapet Emgesa dominansstrukturer som til slutt gjorde det mulig å *konstruere en virkelighet* som var gunstig for energiprojektet og som tillot neddemming av elven Magdalena. Mens Emgesa avpolitisererte problemene som sto på spill, re-politisererte den folkelige bevegelsen mot dammen dem ved å kombinere offentlige handlinger (protester og kunstbegivenheter) med formelle, institusjonaliserte prosedyrer (rettsprøvelser, offentlige høringer og rundebordskonferanser). I et forsvar for liv og territorium utfordret bevegelsen den dominerende utviklingsdiskursen som rettferdiggjorde dam-prosjektet. De fokuserte på problemene forårsaket av "utvikling", og argumenterte for mer territoriell autonomi innenfor statssystemet. Dette styrket bevegelsens politiske innflytelse i Huila. Etter regionalvalget som fant sted etter reservoarfyllingen i 2015, fant bevegelsen nye allierte i statsapparatet. Statsaktører og institusjoner tilsluttet seg i økende grad til kampen for territoriell autonomi mot

den sentralt håndhevede og nyliberale ressursutnyttings-modellen. Innføringen av bredere politiske mål førte til en omstrukturering av bevegelsen; den distanserte seg i økende grad fra de mer umiddelbare anliggende og den uløste situasjonen for den berørte befolkningen i El Quimbo-dalen. I et videre analytisk perspektiv kommer den disaggregerte colombianske staten til syne. Jeg argumenterer for at intern ambivalens, territorielt mangfold og politisk opportuniste i statlige praksiser innebærer en trussel mot det sivile samfunn, men de kan også muliggjøre positiv endring for den berørte befolkningen.

Denne studien er basert på datainnsamling gjennom deltakende observasjon og intervjuer gjennomført i to perioder med feltarbeid i Huila, 2012 og 2016-17, samt gjennomgang av avisartikler og rapporter om saken mellom 2008 og 2019. I denne analysen av en territoriell konflikt utløst av et fornybart energiprojekt i Colombia, og som er foretatt over et lengre tidsrom og omfatter flere skalaer og stakeholdere, bygger jeg på og bidrar til litteraturen innen politisk økologi om vannkraft, ekstraktivisme, infrastruktur og forsvar av territorium. Avslutningsvis reflekterer jeg over hvordan miljøkamp retter søkelyset mot miljøskadelig praksis og åpner for nye visjoner rundt og implementering av alternative utviklingsveier.

## Resumen

Esta disertación examina el conflicto ambiental provocada por un proyecto de represa a gran escala en el departamento de Huila, Colombia, y las políticas que permitieron que la controvertida central hidroeléctrica “El Quimbo” comenzara a operar en 2015. Al examinar diferentes regímenes de verdad en torno a los impactos ambientales, la disertación aporta una comprensión matizada de las profundas diferencias entre los marcos económicos y ecológicos apolíticos convencionales versus los enfoques de la ecología política para tales inversiones. Busca comprender cómo las políticas relacionadas a través de escalas temporales y espaciales estructuraron los posibles campos de acción de la población afectada. Más específicamente, analiza cómo los espacios de disputa se *abren* o *cierran* a través de la producción de conocimiento del lugar, la reconfiguración del espacio y la infraestructura, la distribución de discursos y narrativas, la promulgación de redes a través de escalas, así como de los mecanismos de control democrático. Con esto, el estudio contribuye a la conceptualización de aspectos del poder dentro de la ecología política.

Aprovechando del conocimiento científico e inscribiendo este conocimiento en el área afectada, la empresa energética Emgesa produjo estructuras de dominación que finalmente le permitieron

*diseñar una realidad* favorable al proyecto energético y represar el Río Magdalena. Mientras Emgesa despolitizaba los temas en juego, el movimiento socioambiental contra la represa los re-politizó, combinando acciones públicas (protestas y eventos artísticos) con procedimientos formales e institucionalizados (disputa jurídica, audiencias públicas y mesas temáticas). Para defender la vida y el territorio, la resistencia desafió el discurso dominante del desarrollo que justificaba el proyecto de la represa presentando los problemas causados por el “desarrollo” y abogando por una mayor autonomía de los territorios dentro del sistema estatal. Esto realzó su influencia política en el Huila. Luego de las elecciones regionales que tuvieron lugar tras el llenado del embalse en 2015, el movimiento encontró nuevos aliados dentro del aparato estatal que cada vez se comprometía más con la lucha por la autonomía territorial contra el modelo extractivista neoliberal centralizado. La adaptación de objetivos políticos más amplios llevó a la reconfiguración del movimiento; se desprendió cada vez más de las preocupaciones más inmediatas y de la situación no resuelta de la población afectada al lado del valle de El Quimbo. Expandiendo la escala de análisis, el conflicto revela además el carácter desagregado del Estado colombiano. Se argumenta que el papel de la ambivalencia interna, la diversidad territorial y el oportunismo político en el proceso de formación del Estado significan una amenaza para la sociedad civil, así como una posibilidad de cambio.

Este estudio se basa en datos recopilados a partir de la observación participante y entrevistas recopiladas durante dos periodos de trabajo de campo en el Huila, 2012 y 2016-17, así como de artículos periodísticos e informes sobre el caso entre 2008 y 2019. Con este análisis de largo plazo, multi-escala y multi-actor de un conflicto territorial, que fue provocado por un proyecto de energía renovable en Colombia, hago uso y contribuyo a la literatura de la ecología política sobre hidroelectricidad, extractivismo, infraestructura y la defensa del territorio. En última instancia, reflexiono cómo las luchas ambientales han impugnado las prácticas ambientales nocivas y han abierto la imaginación y la implementación de vías de desarrollo alternativas.

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	i
Abstract .....	iii
Sammendrag .....	iv
Resumen .....	v
List of Figures .....	ix
Glossary .....	xi
Introduction .....	1
I. Water, Power, Conflict.....	11
1. The dam in its context .....	13
2. Theoretical framework .....	33
Approaching political ecology .....	33
Power: closures and openings .....	36
Scale: politics of space and time .....	41
3. Methodology .....	47
Positionality and situatedness .....	47
Methods.....	50
Ethical considerations .....	61
II. Damming the River.....	67
Prologue: Engineering reality at El Quimbo valley .....	68
4. Corporate truth .....	70
The census.....	74
The ecology–economy–culture nexus.....	80
Accountability.....	93
Knowledge of place .....	95
5. Dispossession and detachment .....	97
New enclosure.....	99
Erosion of local infrastructure.....	102
Contamination.....	107
Erosion of the social fabric .....	112
New built environment.....	124
Reconfiguration of space .....	139
Epilogue: Dammed river .....	140

III.	The Resistance .....	143
	Prologue: Mobilising against the dam.....	144
6.	The Defence of Life-Territory.....	145
	Closed spaces of participation.....	145
	Activism and science .....	150
	Civil disobedience and confrontations .....	157
	Judicialisation of conflict .....	163
	Defending life-territory .....	166
7.	The Defence of Region-Territory.....	172
	The filling of the reservoir .....	172
	“The day of Huilan dignity” .....	178
	Defending region-territory .....	185
	Epilogue: Turning against the state.....	195
IV.	The State and the Territory .....	201
	Prologue: Dividing the state.....	202
8.	The disaggregated state .....	203
9.	The capitalist state.....	211
	El Quimbo dam in the national interest .....	211
	The corporate state as enemy .....	229
10.	The constitutional state.....	232
	Environmentally democratising El Quimbo dam.....	232
	The territorial state as ally.....	253
	Epilogue: Territory and the two forms of state .....	254
	Conclusion.....	259
	References .....	267
	Appendix 1 .....	311
	Appendix 2 .....	312
	Appendix 3 .....	314

## List of Figures

Figure I-1 Location of key cities and Magdalena and Cauca River Basin within Colombian national borders .....	12
Figure I-2 Map of Colombian topography and drainage systems.....	13
Figure I-3 The El Quimbo valley before and after 2015.....	14
Figure I-4 Matambo Mountain.....	16
Figure I-5 Map of Huila, southern state province of Colombia.....	18
Figure I-6 El Quimbo reservoir, municipalities and relevant places.....	19
Figure I-7 Hydroelectric dams in the Magdalena and Cauca River basin .....	23
Figure II-1 Google earth image of the Magdalena River valley around Rioloro .....	76
Figure II-2 Finca at La Honda.....	86
Figure II-3 Farmers’ cooperatives: Land tenures in 2007.....	100
Figure II-4 The tree cemetery.....	108
Figure II-5 Former fishing ground at el Hobo.....	110
Figure II-6 The San José de Belén chapel before the dismantling.....	115
Figure II-7 The replica chapel at the resettlement La Galda.....	115
Figure II-8 The demolished and slowly flooding San José de Belén chapel .....	116
Figure II-9 Fisherman in the El Quimbo reservoir with the catch of the day .....	121
Figure II-10 Guided tour at Finlandia .....	126
Figure II-11 Nueva Veracruz .....	130
Figure II-12 Chapel of Nueva Veracruz.....	130
Figure II-13 Traditional <i>finca</i> in Rioloro .....	131
Figure II-14 Old rural house of <i>bahareque</i> (clay) in San Augustin, Huila .....	132
Figure II-15 Former chapel of Veracruz, June 2015.....	132
Figure III-1 Social protest of the affected population and urban-based critics of the dam in Neiva, September 2012.....	151
Figure III-2 Roadblock in Gigante, early 2012 .....	159
Figure III-3 Fisherfolk occupying the riverbank in negotiation with the police.....	161
Figure III-4 Forced eviction of people from Domingo Arias.....	161
Figure III-5 “Great Minga for the Liberation and Defence of Mother Earth in Huila” .....	162
Figure III-6 Filling of El Quimbo dam reservoir without prior notification.....	173
Figure III-7 Press conference of governor Carlos Julio Gonzáles with Asoquimbo .....	176
Figure III-8 The public hearing in Garzón: Carlos Julio Gonzáles.....	181
Figure III-9 The public hearing in Garzón: Miller Dussán .....	181
Figure IV-1 Caricature by “Leo”: “Eviction at El Quimbo”.....	226
Figure IV-2 The El Quimbo dam from the capitalist state perspective.....	230
Figure IV-3 The dam from the local population perspective .....	230
Figure IV-4 List of environmental licences granted between 1993 and Feb. 2011.....	245
Figure IV-5 Thematic Roundtable Meeting, near Garzón, in February 2017.....	247
Figure IV-6 Community action council of Rioloro, meeting in May 2017 .....	250
Figure IV-7 New tanks for aquaculture in El Hobo.....	250



## Glossary

### *ANLA*

*Autoridad Nacional de Licencias Ambientales* (National Authority of Environmental Licences); part of the Environmental Ministry; responsible for granting and following up on environmental licences for projects that influence the environment and whose realisation falls into central jurisdiction in Colombia (large scale investments, like mega-dams).

### *Asoquimbo*

*Asociación de Afectados de la represa El Quimbo* (Association of people affected by the El Quimbo Dam); non-governmental, social movement against the El Quimbo dam project; formed in 2009 in central Huila; part of the Colombian wide movement *Ríos Vivos*.

### *Betania dam*

The other hydroelectric dam operating along the upper Magdalena River, downstream of El Quimbo; built by the public company *Betania-S.A.* between 1980 and 1987; *Endesa* took over ownership in 1996; main purpose of the reservoir has been energy generation (540 megawatts), but locals have used it for fish cultivation and tourism.

### *CAM*

*Corporación Autónoma Regional del Alto Magdalena* (Regional Autonomous Corporation for the upper Magdalena River); one of several regional environmental agencies (*Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales*, CARs) in Colombia; it is a regional state agency responsible for the environmental protection and the land-use management of the upper Magdalena river basin including the Amazonian Forest Reserve; CARs can grant environmental licences for small-scale investment of local influence.

### *Campesino*

Spanish name for agricultural workers, like farmers, small-holders, peasants and seasonal workers; it is more an expression of identity and profession than a job description; the livelihood practices and campesino culture is typically characterised by a strong connection to the community and the land.

### *Carlos Julio González*

Governor of Huila between January 2016 and December 2019; part of the conservative party *Cambio Radical*; elected for his campaign against dams in Huila after the El Quimbo dam filling started in June 2015.

### *Community Action Council*

*Las juntas de acción comunal* (JAC); rural self-governmental bodies of *veredas*; all residents are members who can vote a president to represent them within municipality politics and decide on issues surrounding the community organisation at meetings.

### *EIA*

*Estudio de Impacto Ambiental* (Environmental Impact Assessment); formal evaluation of the social and environmental influences of an investment; basis for granting the environmental licence, which is needed for the realisation of any project of environmental influence.

### *Emgesa*

*Empresa Generadora de Energía Eléctrica S.A.*; the company for energy generation that is operating the El Quimbo and Betania dam; it is the result of the partial capitalisation of the Colombian public company *Empresas Energía de Bogotá* in 1997; it was first part of *Endesa*, which was then merged with *Enel Group*; Emgesa merged with Betania-S.A. in 2007 and received the rights over the El Quimbo project in 2008.

### *Endesa*

Formerly public Spanish-Chilean energy company; bought *Betania-S.A.* in 1996 and one year later *Empresas Energía de Bogotá*, which formed *Emgesa* (Colombian subsidiary for energy generation) and *Codensa* (Colombian subsidiary for energy distribution); merged with *Enel Group* between 2007 and 2009.

### *Enel Group*

Multinational energy corporation; former public company of Italy; its subdivision *Enel Américas* is one of the biggest energy producers and distributors in South America; with acquiring *Endesa*, Enel also acquired *Emgesa* and the El Quimbo dam project in 2009.

### *El Quimbo*

Generally referring to the El Quimbo dam; a reservoir-based hydroelectric plant located at the upper Magdalena River in central Huila; constructed between 2008 and 2015 by Emgesa; installed capacity is 400 megawatts.

### *Farmers' cooperative*

*Empresa comunitaria* (collectively owned agricultural business); it is a form of associative enterprise owned and managed by a number of people (*socios*), who met the conditions to be beneficiaries of the agrarian reform programmes in the 1970s and 80s; the business receive land titles on which basis the *socios* are able to take up loans.

### *Ingetec-S.A.*

Colombian Consultancy for Engineering; has taken out many EIAs for larger investment projects in Colombia, among them for the El Quimbo dam project; it was already contracted in the 1990s to do the feasibility study of the project and was again assigned to take out the EIA in 2007 by Emgesa; after the granting of the environmental licence, Ingetec-S.A. designed, audited and supervised the construction works of El Quimbo.

### *Huila*

State province of Colombia (*departamento*) located South of the State capital Bogotá, bordering Tolima, Cundinamarca, Putumayo, Caquetá, Meta and Cauca.

### *Miller Árcmin Dussán Calderón (short: Miller Dussán)*

Professor at the South-Colombian University in Neiva; co-founder of Asoquimbo and its leader between 2012 and 2018; self-proclaimed Eco-Socialist; intended to run as candidate for the governor election of Huila in 2019 but did not receive the required support from the left-wing parties.

### *Neiva*

Capital of Huila; located downstream of El Quimbo and Betania dam along the Magdalena River; more than 350,000 habitants

### *Peasant Reserve Areas*

*Zonas de reserva campesina* (ZRC); similar to indigenous reserves, the scheme grants common land titles to small-scale farmer communities for the development of their peasant economy and food security on their lands.

### *Ríos Vivos*

Living rivers movement; organises communities around Colombia that struggle against dam and mining projects for the protection of the rivers; part of the international non-governmental organisation *International Rivers*.

### *South-Colombian University*

*Universidad Surcolombiana* (USCO); public university of the South of Colombia; main campus located in Neiva.

### *Vereda*

Compound of farms; rural administrative divisions within municipalities (*municipios*); municipalities vote a mayor who represents the area in provincial politics; provinces (*departamentos*) in Colombia are headed by regional elected governors.



# Introduction

*Del Oriente la Luz ilumina  
Los paisajes y el fresco verdor  
Y los ríos cual lazo de plata  
Resplandecen al rayo del sol.*

*En un vuelo de garzas gigantes  
De este valle el eterno formó,  
Entre mágico azul de los Andes  
Un oasis de paz y de amor.*

*From the east the light illuminates  
The landscapes and the fresh green  
And the rivers whose silver ribbons  
Reflect the rays of the sun.*

*In a flight of giant herons,  
In this valley the eternal is formed,  
Between the magical blue of the Andes  
An oasis of peace and love.*

Garzón hymn

These verses of the Garzón hymn attained new meaning on 11 November 2016, when the then governor of the province Huila – Nasa (indigenous) language for “lucid mountain” (Salas Ortiz 2011:13) – quoted them at the beginning of a two-day public hearing in the municipality of Garzón, Colombia. The event’s objective was to review the environmental licence of the *El Quimbo* dam project. The licence for the hydroelectric power plant was granted in May 2009, and the construction of the dam was finalised in June 2015. After the controversial project had started operating, social mobilisation against it reached a new momentum, accompanied by unexpected political change in the region.<sup>1</sup> By examining this one case of struggle over land-use change, I provide a nuanced understanding of the profound differences between conventional apolitical economic and ecological framings of versus political ecology approaches to environmental impacts. I show that, despite consistent opposition to the dam project, the energy company was able to create a reality favourable to the project relying on a corporate truth regime and capitalist state institutions. I contribute to conceptualisation of aspects of power within political ecology by analysing how politics of knowledge, space, time, and scale structured the possible field of action of affected populations along the upper Magdalena River.

The Magdalena River is Colombia’s principal drainage basin (see Figures I-1 and I-2). It is the largest river basin within Colombian borders, extending from the south (the Magdalena Lagoon in Huila) and flowing between the Andean cordilleras into the Caribbean Sea. Around 70 to 80 per cent of the Colombian population inhabit the region (Angarita, Wickel, Sieber, Chavarro, Maldonado Ocampo, Herrera, Delgado, and Purkey 2018:2841; Cormagdalena 2007:14; Lasso, Paula Gutiérrez, Morales Betancourt, Agudelo Córdoba, Edwin Ramírez Gil, and Ajiaco Martínez 2011:36). This population produces 80 to 85 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product (Cormagdalena 2007:14; Lasso et al. 2011:36; Ministerio de Transporte de Colombia 2017). Angarita et al. (2018:2841) justifiably refer to the Magdalena River as the “principal riverine trade artery of the country”.

Important as the Magdalena River is to the nation, it is as equally important to the communities living along its tributaries. The valley, which today forms the El Quimbo reservoir (around 8,500 hectares) was formerly characterised by fertile lands and agricultural production (see Figure I-3). Most of the affected lands are within the jurisdiction of the municipalities Gigante, El Agrado and Garzón. The lines of the Garzón hymn, quoted above, highlight the special

---

<sup>1</sup> A momentum of a resistance is described by Brosius (1999a:283) as the “periods when the possibility of success seemed certain, enthusiasm was high, and events followed one after the other.”

meaning the river has in the eyes of the local population in the formation of their landscape, history, mythology, culture and economy. While the verses cited painted a romanticised picture of a green river valley surrounded by blue mountains, as an oasis of peace and love, in the passionate speech of the governor, they became the symbol of what had now been lost because of the dam.<sup>2</sup>

The mega-dam project resulted in a drastic alteration in the ecosystem, social organisation, economic production and livelihood opportunities, which affected the whole central region of Huila. Owing to the widespread local experience of the negative impacts of the dam construction starting in 2008, local resistance to the project grew rapidly. Supported by urban intellectuals, environmentalists and students in Neiva (capital of the Huila province), the movement gained significant political influence, and reached its peak in the realisation of the public hearing in 2016, nearly 17 months after the reservoir had started to fill.

Introduced to the anti-dam struggle in Huila in 2012, I returned to the area in October 2016 to study the process in more depth. By 2015 the struggle appeared to have been lost. The dam had become an inevitable reality. I was surprised to discover on my return that the resistance had gained an unexpected new momentum following the filling of the reservoir, this time with increased national attention. Coinciding with peace negotiations between the Colombian government and the guerrilla group “Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombian People's Army” (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia–Ejército del Pueblo – FARC*), the land-use conflict at El Quimbo provided fuel to an already enflamed national debate about who would be the best authority to decide on land and resource use within the Colombian state. As a member of the National Agrarian Coordination said in 2017, “Peace in Huila does not translate into the absence of the guerrilla, but rather in the resolution of environmental and social conflicts” (quoted in Baquero Melo and Quiroga 2019:208).<sup>3</sup>

The El Quimbo dam could be considered as just another conflict on Colombian soil, or as another example of a large hydroelectric project in dispute on the world scale. Many large-scale investments in Colombia, however, enter a state of social (armed) conflict that the investors commonly aggravate further. This makes it easier for the investors to deny responsibility of the violence (Maher 2015; Meger and Sachseder 2020; Sachseder 2020). The investor of El

---

<sup>2</sup> The complete speech is accessible at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2yK3Lo5XBEw> Retrieved 14 May 2020.

<sup>3</sup> legally constituted national peasant association with the participation of more than 60 grassroots organisations and a presence in 22 provinces of Colombia.

Quimbo (Emgesa) entered a relatively peaceful area, where most previous land-use conflicts had been solved through the agrarian reforms in the 1970s. A first project proposal for the dam had been denied because of the negative impacts it may cause (see Chapter 4). Consequently, I view the environmental conflict around El Quimbo as a recent example of a mega-dam development causing regional opposition – including within the political elite – who contested Colombian territorial politics during the peace process.

My main research question for this study is, *how did Emgesa successfully dam the river in spite of the original negative evaluation and constant resistance?*

To answer this question, I need to look at three dimensions of the struggle, each of which I address with two sub-research questions.

The first dimension consists of the company's involvement with the area affected by the dam. I ask: (a) *what kind of knowledge regime did the company produce around the El Quimbo dam project* and (b) *how has this knowledge been inscribed onto the affected area?* These questions are answered in Part II – Damming the River.

The second dimension encompasses the anti-dam movement. I ask: (c) *how have local and regional reactions to the dam project changed over the years of struggle* and (d) *what has the resistance achieved?* These questions are answered in Part III – The Resistance.

The third dimension expands the scale of analysis to answer the questions: (e) *what role did the Colombian state play in the El Quimbo dam struggle* and (f) *how does the case fit into the wider political economy of the country?* These questions, I target in Part IV – The State and the Territory.

Through answering the research questions, I advance a theoretical understanding of the politics at play around large-scale land deals and hydroelectricity infrastructure. As Dunlap (2020:1) points out, “the complexity of conflict, social manipulation, and political pacification surrounding land deals remains under acknowledged”. Geenen and Verweijen (2017:758) call for “an interactionist approach, which looks at the interplay between political actions and reactions both ‘from below’ [local] and ‘from above’ [extra-local]”. This, I will argue, involves moving beyond *above* and *below* binaries. By elaborating on the *openings* and *closures* of the possible fields of actions through the production of knowledge of place, the configuration of space and infrastructure, the use of discourses and narratives, the enactment of networks across

scales, as well as of democratic control mechanisms, I intend to contribute to parts of existent conceptualisations of power and scale within political ecology.

Situated within political ecology, the case study of a recent hydroelectric dam project in Colombia, allows three academic streams to be brought together; that is the inquiry of politics surrounding hydroelectricity worldwide, the emerging critique of renewable energy and infrastructure projects, and the study of social-environmental struggles in the “defence of territory” in Latin America. While each part of this thesis responds to corresponding debates, I provide a short literature overview on how these topics relate.

Damming rivers for generating energy is a historic practice, but in the global south, the importance of hydroelectricity has accelerated in recent decades. Political ecology allows the exploration of the multiple impacts dam construction has caused and the uncovering of discourses that have been used to legitimise such developments worldwide. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, large dams became symbols of *modernity* and *man*’s control over *nature* (Kaika 2006). Since the early 2000s, hydroelectricity is seen to be a *sustainable* energy source necessary to ameliorate climate change (Killingtveit 2014; see Chapter 1). In the edited volume by Nüsser (2014a), the authors examine the evolution of such large-scale dam discourses – supporting and opposing. They use the framework of “technological hydroscape” to understand “the socio-hydrological nature of dam building and river control under changing technological and ideological settings” (Nüsser 2014b:6). Similarly, Hommes and Boelens (2018) analyse dam building as the result of discursive and material dependencies between spaces, in this case between the city of Lima and the rural Rímac watershed in Peru. The framings of both publications relate to a wider literature based on “hydrosocial cycles” that considers water as socio-nature – at the same time material, discursive and symbolic. It critically examines how water (and hydraulic infrastructure) shapes social relations, and vice versa, to question dominant technocratic practices within water politics (Boelens 2014; Boelens, Hoogesteger, Swyngedouw, Vos, and Wester 2016; Budds 2009; Duarte Abadía, Boelens, and Roa Avendaño 2015; Meehan 2014; Swyngedouw 2007, 2009b).

In addition in a case from Peru, Rasmussen (2016:222) analyses how predicted future changes, such as climate change, and “new water vocabularies” from “extra-village politics” and water bureaucracies influence the “redefinition, reconstruction, and manipulation of particular landscapes” and therefore the sense of place of Andean peasant communities. Goldman (2005) illustrates the influence of the World Bank on such bureaucracies on the global scale. Facing

increasing environmental and social justice opposition from civil society, the World Bank adapted its framework towards “sustainable development” to legitimise its investments. Goldman (2005:156) describes how the bank produced environmental knowledge and experts for a “new disciplinary science of sustainable development” that supported hydroelectricity development in the Mekong River. Using examples of dam building in the Indian Himalayas, Huber (2019) focuses on one important aspect of such knowledge politics: the strategic ignorance of risks and the production of uncertainty in hydropower development.

The uneven distribution of environmental risk and burdens links to another important stream of political ecology literature: water justice. Based on environmental justice perspectives, it looks at “how available water flows are accessed and allocated” (Zwarteveen and Boelens 2014:144) applying principles of equal distribution of gains and burdens, cultural recognition of values and knowledge practices, procedural democracy and socio-ecological relations (Johnston 2018; Leifsen 2017; Roa García 2017; Thorkildsen 2018; Zwarteveen and Boelens 2014). In the context of Colombia, Velasco (2016) takes the justice perspective to analyse the implication of the Anchicayá dam conflict for Afro-Colombian communities on Colombia’s Pacific coast. Martínez and Castillo (2016) make a social (energy) justice assessment of several dams built between 1980 and 2010 to explain resulting conflicts. Notable has been the decades-long environmental justice conflict around the Urrá hydropower plant (see Leguizamón Castillo 2015; Orduz Salinas and Rodríguez Garavito 2012). Reviewing these and other Colombian water justice conflicts, Roa Garcia (2016, 2017) argues that processes of environmental democratisation must accompany any ambition towards peace in the territories.

The peace negotiation between the Colombian government and the guerrilla group FARC was concluded in 2016. Since then a debate has ensued over extractivism and its implications for the implementation of peace in the country (Roa García 2016; Soler Villamizar 2018). Many critical scholars (e.g. Baquero Melo 2019; Cairo, Oslender, Piazzini Suárez, Ríos, Koopman, Montoya Arango, Rodríguez Muñoz, and Zambrano Quintero 2018; Ulloa and Coronado 2016a) consider the concept of *paz territorial* (territorial peace) to be of particular importance. The “territorial-based approach” originates in the peace accords signed in November 2016 (Final Peace Agreement 2016). It captures the idea that trajectories for peace have to be defined by the territories (regions), in consultation with their people and in accordance with their context-specific histories (see Chapter 2 and 10; Cairo et al. 2018; also OXFAM and Planeta Paz 2017).

In this light, Cardona, Pinilla and Gálvez (2016) examine the mega-dam project Hidroituango in Antioquia. The project was approved by the Government at the same time as El Quimbo, in 2008, but is located historically in a much more violent zone of Colombia. The authors describe Hidroituango as “an extractivist undertaking”, using Gudynas’s (2010:1; see also 2018) influential decolonial definition of extractivism “to describe activities which remove great quantities of natural resources that are not then processed (or are done so in a limited fashion) and that leave a country as exports”. Although Hidroituango was declared a clean energy source with few major impacts, it would make intensive use of resources such as water and soil. It would expand the capitalist frontier into a territory that is otherwise marked as isolated and unproductive, and generate energy “for the sole purpose of obtaining profit from international trade” (Cardona et al. 2016:313; see also Suárez Gómez 2017). Similarly, Del Bene, Scheidel and Temper (2018:630), in their global analysis of large dam conflicts, argue for an “extractivism of renewables” or “the manifestation of extractivist violence in renewable energy projects”. In this line of thought, Soler Villamizar (2018) argues that hydroelectric development in Colombia hinders any peace advances (see also Soler Villamizar, Duarte Abadía, and Roa Avendaño 2014b, 2014a).

The Global Atlas of Environmental Justice lists 126 environmental conflicts throughout Colombia (including El Quimbo; as of May 2020). Many are related to mineral and fossil fuel extraction (61%), with another 21 per cent related to hydroelectricity (10%) and infrastructure projects (11%), according to an assessment in 2014 (Pérez Rincón 2014:287–89). In 2018, Colombia accounted for the second-largest number of environmental defenders (24 in total) to have been killed worldwide (Global Witness 2019).<sup>4</sup> The exploitation of raw materials for export (extractivism) and the expansion of the commodity frontier is known to have caused environmental social conflict around the world.<sup>5</sup> Related transformations have been studied widely since Polanyi’s famous work, *The Great Transformation* (2001 [1944]) and Marx’s ground-breaking volumes of *Das Kapital* (2009 [1872]). While never losing relevance, the issue gained new attention in the 1950s with the global desire to develop the South (Escobar

---

<sup>4</sup> “There has been a general increase in killings of HRDs [Human Rights Defenders] since the beginning of the peace process: 2013 – 78 cases, 2014 – 55 cases, 2015 – 63 cases, 2016 – 80 cases, and in 2017, this figure rose to 121 cases” (Front Line Defenders 2018:17). In 2018, 115 killings were confirmed. In 2019, 107 activists were killed, and the UN Human Rights Office in Colombia suggests the annual total to be 120 killings. “And this terrible trend is showing no let-up in 2020, with at least 10 human rights defenders already reportedly killed during the first 13 days of January” (UNHCR 2020).

<sup>5</sup> The term “commodity frontier” refers to the need of capitalism to constantly grow by including territories, resources and societies outside the capitalist economy into the system of exploitation (i.e. turning land, labour and nature into commodities for the exchange on the market; Moore 2015).

2012) and particularly in the 1980s with neo-liberalist agendas and since the 2000s with neo (and hyper)-extractivist agendas taking hold of Latin America politics, causing new waves of violence in the regions (see McNeish 2018). This sparked the emergence of post-colonial and post-development theories, criticising these forms of progress and proposing alternative projects for justice, equality and *Buen Vivir* (the “good life”; see Escobar 2008, 2010; Gudynas 2011, 2018; Quijano 2000; Rodríguez Garavito 2011; Santos 2017; Sousa Santos 2010, 2014; Sousa Santos and Rodríguez Garavito 2005).

The study of local social movements in “the defence of territory” against capitalist advances emerged as a new field in academia, often associated with political ecology, environmental justice or environmental economics, agrarian or conflict studies (e.g. Copeland 2019; Dunlap 2020; Hall, Edelman, Borrás, Scoones, White, and Wolford 2015; Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, and Reyes 2017; Machado, López Matta, Campo, Escobar, and Weitzner 2017; Martínez Alier 2002; Martínez Alier, Anguelovski, Bond, Del Bene, Demaria, Gerber, Greyl, Haas, Healy, Marín Burgos, Ojo, Porto, Rijnhout, Rodríguez Labajos, Spangenberg, Temper, Warlenius, and Yáñez 2018; McNeish 2017a; Roa García 2017; Sañudo, Quiñones, Copete, Díaz, Vargas, and Cáceres 2016; Svampa 2012; Temper, Demaria, Scheidel, Del Bene, and Martínez Alier 2018; Ulloa 2001; Weitzner 2017; Zografos, Rodríguez-Labajos, Aydin, Cardoso, Matiku, Munguti, O’Connor, Ojo, Özkaynak, Slavov, Stoyanova, and Zivcic 2014). Also, more recently, attention has turned towards conflicts connected to renewable energies and “green” technologies which have gained widespread popularity among politicians and investors since 2011 (Argenti and Knight 2015; Burke and Stephens 2018; Dunlap 2018, 2019; Howe and Boyer 2016; Howe, Boyer, and Barrera 2015; Mulvaney 2019; Standal 2018; Vanegas Cantarero 2020).

By linking the debates referred to above, the thesis sheds more light on corporate and contentious politics surrounding a large-scale energy project in Colombia and their influence on environmental politics. In following the development of one anti-dam struggle over time, it is shown that a trans-local movement in the defence of life and territory emerged in a formerly peaceful area and transformed itself into a supralocal defence of territorial autonomy after the dam gates had closed and the river water ceased flowing. The movement broadened its agenda and turned into an important political actor. El Quimbo dam became a showpiece for “top-down development gone wrong” in advocating territorial-based solutions and decision-making within the Colombian state. This case analysis reflects on the significance of place-based and participative approaches to environmental impacts, but also on the role of local politics, law and opportunism within the Colombian state formation process. In this, I contribute to the

above-mentioned literature through a long-term, multi-scale and multi-actor analysis of a land-use conflict, that is sparked by a renewable energy project.

The thesis is organised into four parts.

Part I – *Water, Power, Conflict* presents first the context of my chosen case study (Chapter 1). It describes briefly the geography of the river and the history of the armed conflict in the region. It then presents the technical details of the dam project in question and provides a general overview of the hydroelectricity sector in Colombia as well as worldwide. The theoretical framework of this study is outlined in Chapter 2. I situate myself within the field of political ecology and show how I conceptualise power and scale for the analysis of my case. The final section of Part I explains the methodology of my research undertaking (Chapter 3). I critically discuss my positionality, my methods used, and the ethical challenges faced.

Part II – *Damming the River* begins to answer the overall research question, targeting specifically the sub-questions (a) and (b). It shows how the company engineered a reality that it suggested already existed. The environmental impact assessment first produced knowledge of the place (corporate truth) that was favourable to the dam investment (Chapter 4). The subsequent dam construction was accompanied by processes of dispossession and detachment, which fragmented communities and landscapes, making them susceptible to the company's objectives (Chapter 5). Part II focuses on the corporate actions that intended to create closure (i.e. to limit people's range of actions to influence the project).

Part III – *The Resistance* turns attention to the contentious politics of the local population and other dam opponents to produce openings (i.e. possibilities to engage in and determine decision-making). This part identifies a shift in the configuration and objectives of the resistance movement from being in the "defence of life-territory" – protecting life projects in the affected area (Chapter 6), to being in the "defence of region-territory" – advocating political change towards more territorial autonomy (Chapter 7). Accordingly, Part III addresses sub-questions (c) and (d).

Part IV – *The State and the Territory* leaves the scene of Huila and looks at the Colombian state to answer sub-questions (e) and (f). It first discusses the state's ambivalent appearance in the case of the dam conflict as well as in the literature (Chapter 8), and then identifies and examines two observed forms of the state – the capitalist state (Chapter 9) and the constitutional state (Chapter 10). It is argued that the Colombian state is deeply disaggregated, and this has been

made use of by corrupt elites to maintain their own systems of rule. However, it has also offered spaces for change, which social movements have increasingly appropriated.

The *Conclusion* summarises the findings and answers to the research questions. It ends with a reflection on the possibilities for change in Colombia, the limitations of this study and possibilities for future research.

# I. Water, Power, Conflict

*It is not just about Huila;  
it is about the Magdalena River,  
water governance, water quality, the loss of fish species  
and about fisher-families downstream having nothing to eat...*

Carlos Julio Gonzáles  
Public hearing, 11 Nov 2016

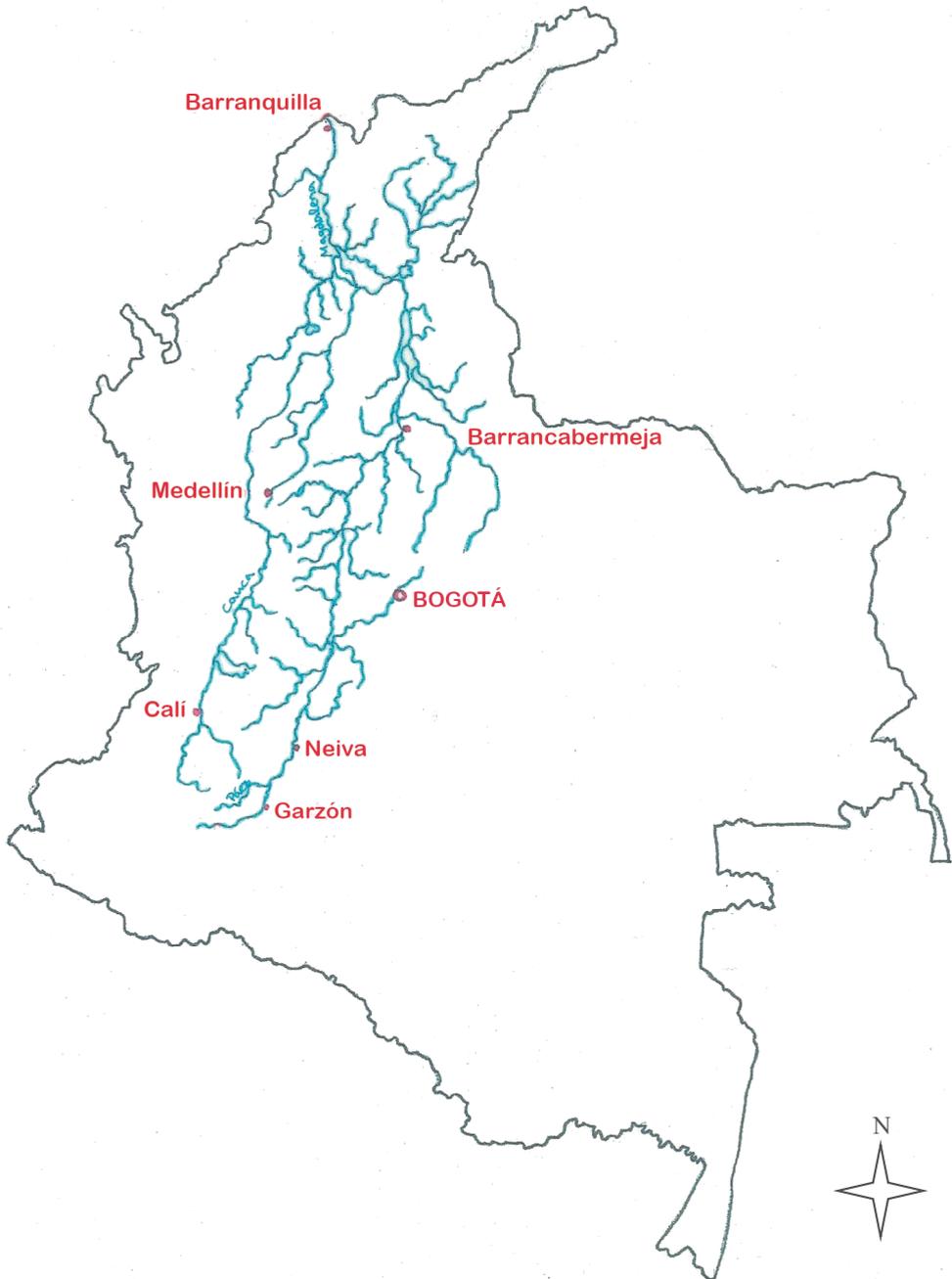


Figure I-1 Location of key cities and Magdalena and Cauca River Basin within Colombian national borders (author's creation).

# 1. The dam in its context

## *The river*

If one looks at a national map of Colombian topography (see Figure I-2), the Andean cordilleras stand out. In the south-west of the country at the Colombian massif, the Andes split into three cordilleras, running towards the north: these are the eastern, the central and the western cordilleras. The Magdalena River originates in the Colombian massif and makes its way through the valley between central and western cordilleras until it merges with the Cauca River (which runs through the valley between eastern and central cordilleras) and ends its journey, after 1,540 kilometres, in the Caribbean Sea at the city of Barranquilla (see Figure I-1; Alvear Sanín 2005; cited in: Museo Nacional de Colombia 2007; see also Angarita et al. 2018:2841–42).

The spring of the river is the Magdalena Lagoon, situated at a height of 3,500 metres above sea level at the Parámo de las Papas (mountain wetland) in the southern border of the province of Huila. During its first 100 kilometres it rapidly loses height and enters the upper-stream basin. After 280 kilometres, at 442 metres above sea level, it passes Huila’s capital city Neiva (around 350,000 inhabitants) in the north of the province (Figure I-5) and continues to flow north.

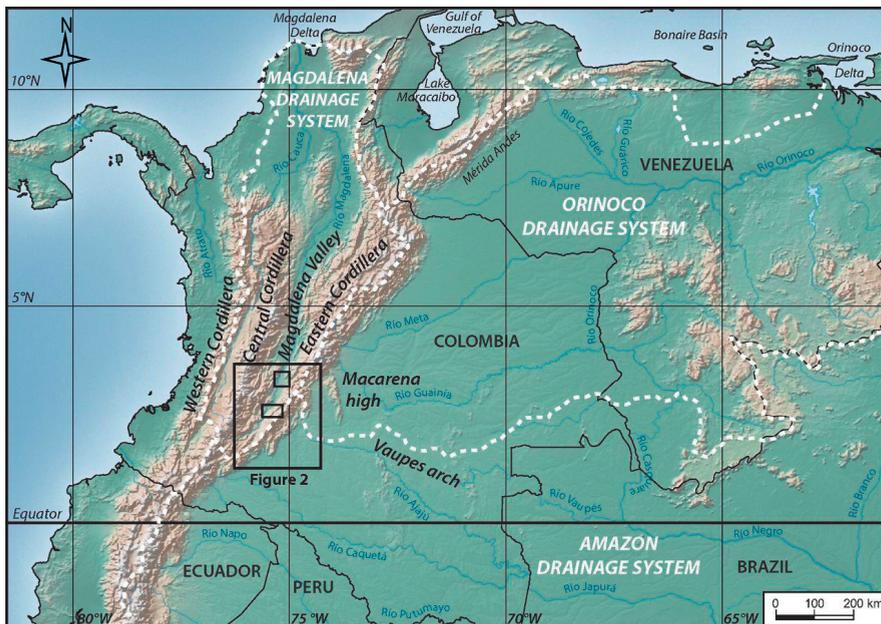


Figure I-2 Map of Colombian topography and drainage systems. Rectangle “Figure 2” marks the upper-stream basin of the Magdalena River. The lower small rectangle is the location of the El Quimbo dam project (Anderson, Horton, Saylor, Mora, Tesón, Breecker, and Ketcham 2016:1236).



Figure I-3 The El Quimbo valley before and after 2015 (Above: Taken by the author in 2012. Below: Official picture of the dam at [Proyectoelquimboengesa.com.co](http://Proyectoelquimboengesa.com.co), retrieved 05 May 2016).

Strategically speaking, and historically until the present day, the Magdalena River has been Colombia’s most important river. Indigenous groups used the river for navigation and later the conquistadors followed it upstream to reach “the heart of America” in the promise of gold. From its banks, settlements and cities grew (Alvear Sanín 2005; cited in: Museo Nacional de

Colombia 2007). San José de Belén – a community previously located in the El Quimbo valley (Figure I-6) – was estimated to be the first colonial settlement in the south of Colombia (originally known as Taperas). The San José de Belén chapel is believed to be over 200 years old. La Jagua, located just south (upstream) of the El Quimbo reservoir (Figure I-6), was an indigenous settlement before the Spanish conquest.<sup>6</sup>

For indigenous cultures, many sacred and spiritual sites are located along the upper Magdalena River, which they mostly refer to as *Yuma*.<sup>7</sup> This makes the southern part of Huila of great archaeological interest. Most discoveries were made in the area of San Agustín not far from the Magdalena Lagoon (Figure I-5). Prehistoric artefacts such as monolithic sculptures up to seven metres in height, date back to 50–400 AD. A variety of tombstones which show anthropomorphic and zoomorphic features, suggests that different precolonial cultures from different parts of the Andean region travelled to the area. It is considered the world's largest necropolis and was declared a UNESCO heritage site in 1995. Also in the El Quimbo valley, prior and during the dam construction, several *metates* (pre-Hispanic moulding stones), ceramics and rock engravings were found (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1300).

The relevance of the river throughout history is further documented by legends and stories that have been handed down through generations.

For instance, here is the tale of the giant, Matambo, which is directly connected to the area of El Quimbo and told by its inhabitants: Once upon a time, Matambo, the giant, came to the upper Magdalena River. He encountered many groups of small people, who felt threatened by the giant and fought him. But the giant fell in love with the daughter of an indigenous goddess, who was sent down to earth to live with the human tribes. Together the couple tried to escape, but they were defeated by the local tribes and killed. Today, the mountain range to the left of the El Quimbo reservoir shows the face of the giant looking upwards and the breasts of his beloved woman next to him (see Figure I-4). The mountain range is called Matambo, and the town nearby is called Gigante (giant).

---

<sup>6</sup> Today La Jagua is known for its well-preserved colonial structures, and the presence of witches and magic (pueblo de las brujas).

<sup>7</sup> The Caribbean tribes called the river *Karakali* (Great River of the caimans) or *Karihuaña*. The tribes of Tora, close to Barrancabermeja (middle stream), called it *Arlí* (River of fish). At the upper-Magdalena, the Quechua called it *Guaca-hayo* (River of the tombs) and the Muisca called it *Yuma* (River of the country of friend; Alvear Sanín 2005; cited in: Museo Nacional de Colombia 2007).



Figure I-4 Matambo Mountain. In the background of the reservoir, the nose of the Giant stands out, his body extends to the left. The breasts of his lover are visible towards the right (taken by the author in May 2017).

Popular lore also makes reference to resistance and independence in the region through the story of La Gaitana, an indigenous heroine who fought the Spanish conquistadors in the 16th century: The upper river valley was populated by different indigenous groups when the Spanish arrived in 1538. In particular, the mission of Pedro de Añasco was to conquer the south, and the Magdalena River offered him the main route. When he arrived in the region, which today is Huila, he called for the leaders of the indigenous tribes to meet him. He wanted their collaboration, their subordination and their services. However, one of the leaders, the Andaqui leader, was a woman. Añasco refused to negotiate with a woman and ordered her son to speak with him, which the son refused to do. Outraged by this disrespect, Añasco and his soldiers sought the son and burned him alive in front of his mother. Subsequently, La Gaitana took revenge. She united several indigenous tribes to rise up and fight the conquistadors. An army of 5,000 took Añasco's group by surprise. Everyone was killed apart from Añasco, who was brought alive to La Gaitana. The official Huilan webpage continues:

To take revenge on Añasco and his soldiers, La Gaitana began a fierce battle that allowed her to defeat her enemy; she took his eyes out and dragged him all around town. Although later, this brave and proud woman disappeared from the scene of the war, her spirit and the memory of her rebellion have been kept alive through the centuries (Gobernación del Huila 2017).

It is said that when fleeing from the Spanish, La Gaitana jumped to her death from the Pericongo canyon along the upper Magdalena River. The last scene of the battle against Añasco has been eternalised in the statue at the Neivan waterfront, and many stories are told among the Huilan population to remember this heroic fight for independence.

### *The armed conflict*

Huila's post-colonial history has also been marked by resistance and land struggles. Because of the high fertility of the land and its strategic location, land conflicts have occurred throughout the last century and persist to this day. Poverty and inequality in rural Huila gave rise to early confrontations between conservative landowners and *campesinos* (peasants/farmers). Some of the first events, which led to the era of "La Violencia" (civil war between 1948 and 1957), took place in Huila and its neighboring province of Tolima (see Guzman Campos, Fals Borda, and Umaña Luna 1962:40, 46–62).<sup>8</sup> During that time, many *campesinos* were killed or forcefully displaced into southern regions, like Caqueta. After La Violencia, the agricultural lands were left in the hands of only a few large landowners. This presiding inequality gave rise to new guerilla movements and the establishment of the FARC in the 1960s. Huila was one of the first strongholds of the guerillas and is considered to be traditional FARC territory. The high presence of FARC blocs in the 1960s and 1970s caused landowners to abandon their haciendas in central Huila. Many politicians and elites were kidnapped and killed (Ramírez Jiménez and Gómez Alarcón 2019; UNDP 2010).

In the early 2000s, the presence of paramilitary and state military groups increased. Paramilitary groups received very little support in Huila apart from the province's capital Neiva and the city Pitalito, a drug shipment route to the south (Figure I-5). However, the state military soon managed to push the existing FARC blocs towards the mountains, away from the strategic routes connecting the north with the south of the country. In subsequent years, FARC concentrated on targeted attacks against politicians. The last attack took place in 2009 in the town hall of Garzón, where four politicians were killed and one kidnapped (UNDP 2010:29). Nowadays, because Huila is not an important site for drug production, it is relatively peaceful compared to other locations in the country. Consequently, Huila is a "receiving province", a region which receives internally displaced people searching to escape from other more conflictive southern provinces such as Caqueta, Putumayo and Meta (UNDP 2010:37). In 2007, around 13,000 people came to Huila, according to UNDP (2010:37). This has increased the demand and competition for land, a situation that was further intensified by the flooding of the formerly fertile lands at El Quimbo.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> The indigenous rebellion (1912–1925) led by Quintin Lame was one of the early precursors of La Violencia (Guzman Campos et al. 1962:49). He fought for an indigenous autonomous republic that would have covered the territory of Huila, Tolima, Cauca and Valle de Cauca (see also Troyan 2015).

<sup>9</sup> Huila's Gini index for land concentration was 0.81 in 2009, one of the highest inequalities in land access in Colombia (Ramírez Jiménez and Gómez Alarcón 2019).

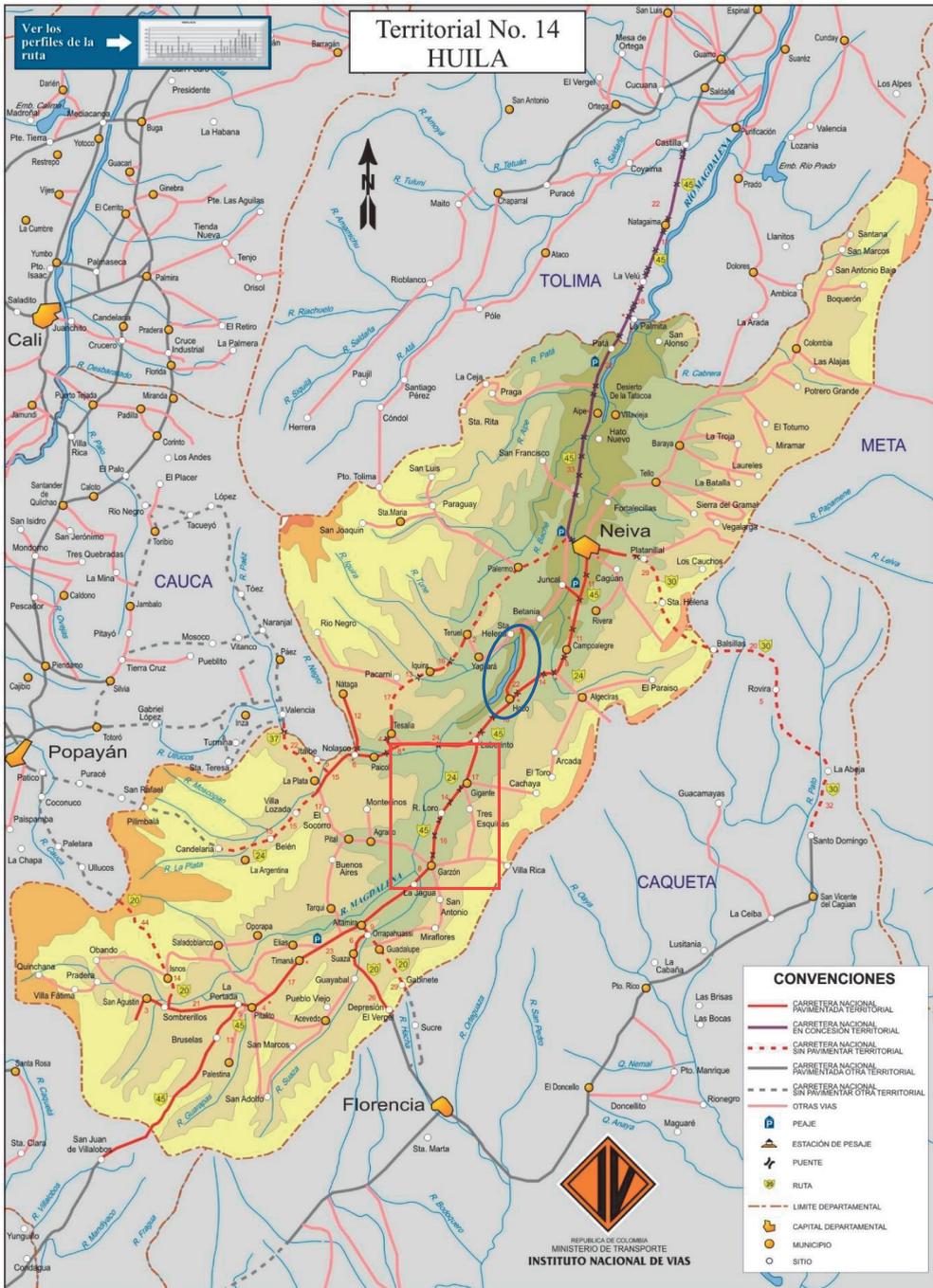


Figure I-5 Map of Huila, southern state province of Colombia (open access, origin: Instituto Nacional de Vías)

Blue oval: location of Betania dam

Red square: detailed in next map (Figure I-6)



Figure I-6 El Quimbo reservoir, municipalities and relevant places (GIS map, author's creation).

### *El Quimbo and Emgesa*

The valley in question extends from the El Quimbo gorge to the point where the Magdalena River meets the Suaza River (Figure I-6). It is located between 600 and 700 metres above sea level, 210 kilometres downstream of the Magdalena spring and 69 kilometres upstream of the outskirts of Neiva (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:623). El Quimbo dam is the second hydroelectric project along this stretch of the river. The first, Betania dam, was built in the early 1980s and finalised in 1987 by the public company Betania-S.A. The artificial lake of 7,400 hectares has the single purpose of power generation. It is located in the vicinity of the municipalities of Yaguará, Hobo and Campoalegre in Huila, 15 to 35 kilometres downstream of El Quimbo dam (see Figure I-5). Its main tributaries are the Magdalena, Yaguará and Páez Rivers (Ingetec-S.A. 2008: 621). It has an installed capacity of 540 megawatts.

El Quimbo hydroelectric project adds to the national power grid 400 megawatts of on-site exploitation (two installed Francis turbines of 200 megawatts each). It is estimated that an average power generation of 2,216 gigawatt hours per year can be achieved. Together with Betania, this would be equal to eight per cent of Colombia's total power demand (as estimated in 2008). The flood barrage is 151 metres high and 632 metres wide. The reservoir captures a maximum of 2,601 cubic hectometre of water, which floods an area of 8,250 hectares. Together with the space the dam construction requires, the "area of direct influence" amounts to 8,586 hectares in total: 55 kilometres long and 4 kilometres wide at its maximum (Ingetec-S.A. 2008; see Figure I-6).<sup>10</sup>

El Quimbo was the first dam in Colombia to be built by a private enterprise (Enel Group 2020). The Spanish utility Endesa, through its Colombian subsidiary Emgesa, was granted the ownership over the project in 2008 and planned to invest USD 837 million in the project (Hydroreview 2010).<sup>11</sup> In 1997, Endesa had formed Emgesa through the partial capitalisation of the Colombian company "Empresas Energía de Bogotá". The multinational corporation financially contributes 48.48% to Emgesa, while the now-called "Grupo Energía Bogotá"

---

<sup>10</sup> The *area de influencia directa* or AID as determined by Emgesa is restricted to the dam site and the reservoir surface; its delimitation is different to the people's conception of affected areas (see Chapter 2).

<sup>11</sup> It would spend around USD 700 million on the construction and another USD 200 million for the power distribution network (Hydroreview 2008). General Director Lucio Rubio (see next page) told *Reuters Latin America* that Emgesa "would fund 20 percent of the investment and the rest could come from local banks and lenders such as the InterAmerican Development Bank and the Andean Development Corporation and debt issues." (Mozzo 2009). The Environmental Justice Atlas (<https://ejatlas.org/conflict/el-quimbo-hydroelectric-project-colombia>, 04/01/2021) names next to the InterAmerican Development Bank the European Investment Bank as funders of the project. However, both information could not be validated. No listing of the funders of the dam project has been published. The final cost of the project in 2015 was USD 1.23 billion (Ingram 2018).

contributes 51.51%. Emgesa fused with Betania-S.A., a process which was completed in 2007 (Enel Group 2016, 2019; see also Anif and Correal 2011).

Around the same time, Emgesa contracted a private consultancy firm (Ingetec-S.A.) to take out an environmental impact assessment on a dam possibly located at the El Quimbo gorge. In 2009, after the environmental licence for the project was granted, Enel (Italy) acquired majority shares of Endesa (92.02%), and Emgesa became part of Enel Américas (Enel Group 2019). Enel Group states in a report on investments in Latin America in 2016:

We hold 56.4% of Emgesa's voting rights as a result of a transfer of voting rights from Enersis [Endesa Chile] and we are allowed to appoint the majority of the Board members pursuant to a shareholders' agreement. We therefore control Emgesa (Enel Group 2016:34).

Enel Américas has since then been involved in the electricity distribution, generation and transmission through subsidiaries in four Latin American countries: Colombia, Brazil, Argentina and Peru. In its own words, it is "Latin America's largest privately owned energy company", having an installed capacity of 11,257 megawatts and 24.5 million clients at the end of December 2018 (Enel Américas 2019). With regard to its subsidiary Emgesa, the company states on its homepage:

Emgesa S.A. is now Colombia's largest power company [22.6% of total energy generation], operating 14 plants with a total capacity of 3,509 MW, including El Guavio, the country's largest hydroelectric plant with a capacity of 1,213 MW. Twelve of the fourteen plants are hydroelectric and the other two are thermoelectric. The net generation for 2017 was 14,765 GWh (Enel Américas 2018).

Enel Group provides energy in 33 countries to 70 million consumers around the world. As non-transparent as any multinational corporation of this scale can be, Enel Group discloses only general information of its shareholders and investors. Enel Américas lists as shareholders: Enel S.p.A (57.26%), ADR's Citibank N.A (6.66%), "Chilean Pension Funds" (14.05%), "Custodian Banks" (1.89%), "Foreign investment funds" (14.99%), "Brokers, Insurance companies and Mutual Funds" (3.49%) and "other shareholders" (1.65%; Enel Américas 2020).

The people behind these structures rarely step into public light. When it comes to the El Quimbo dam struggle, Emgesa has usually been represented by one key figure: long-term General Director Lucio Rubio Díaz. Rubio is of Spanish origin and came to Colombia with Endesa in 1997. Only four years later he was promoted to the general management of Emgesa, a position he still assumes today (Enel Group 2020). From the planning period onwards, Lucio Rubio accompanied the El Quimbo project development, not just as the company's public face and

defender of the company's actions, but also as a key negotiator with the Colombian government. Another more controversial figure is José Antonio Vargas Lleras. He has been Chairman of Emgesa since 2006 and was its executive president in 2015. His brother Germán Vargas Lleras was Vice-President (2014–2017) of President Juan Manuel Santos. Large hydroelectric projects in general have been of high national and strategic interest.

### *Hydroelectricity in Colombia*

*Colombia has the third largest installed hydropower capacity in South America, at 11,726 MW. The sector makes up 70 per cent of national installed energy capacity and, in 2017, produced 86 per cent of national electricity generation, exceeding the 70 per cent average generation of the past four years with continuous droughts and above the 79 per cent recorded in 2012.*

International Hydropower Association [IHA] 2018:61

As this quotation from the Hydropower Status Report of 2018 demonstrates, hydroelectricity is the primary power source of Colombia. By 2018, it had 140 hydroelectric power plants either in operation, under construction or planning, each of these relying on run-off water technologies as well as on small to large dams (Vargas Nieto 2018). Large reservoir-based hydroelectric plants usually have the highest installed capacity and are therefore considered of particular political and economic relevance for a nation.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, their construction usually demands major initial investment, long planning and development periods, as well as considerable environmental and social sacrifices (WCD 2000).

In Colombia, 23 large dams make the greatest contribution to the energy grid. Twenty-two of them are located within the Magdalena River basin (see Figure I-7), where in total 33 hydroelectric power plants are in operation (Vargas Nieto 2018). The largest and most important dams (above 200 megawatt installed capacity) are Hidroituango (potentially 2,400 MW), Guavio (1,213 MW), San Carlos (1,240 MW), Chivor (1,000 MW), Hidrosogamoso (820 MW), Porce III (660 MW), Peñol-Guatapé (560 MW), Betania (540 MW), Porce II (405 MW), El Quimbo (400 MW), Miel I (396 MW), Urrá (340 MW) and Salvajina (270 MW; see also

---

<sup>12</sup> The International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD) defines a large dam as a dam with a height of 15 metres or more from the foundation. If dams are between 5-15 metres high and have a reservoir volume of more than 3 million cubic metres, they are also classified as large dams. Using this definition, there are over 45,000 large dams around the world (World Commission on Dams [WCD] 2000:11). The classification for mega-dams varies. A major dam either is at least 150 metres high (El Quimbo reaches 151 metres), has a volume of at least 15 million cubic metres, has a reservoir storage of at least 25 cubic kilometres, or generates at least 1,000 megawatts (McCully 2001:5–6). I concentrate here on power-generating large dams.

Bacca García 2019:19). Apart from Urrá, all are located within the Magdalena-Cauca basin and except for the biggest project Hidroituango, all have been in operation since 2015. El Quimbo was the latest addition to the energy grid.

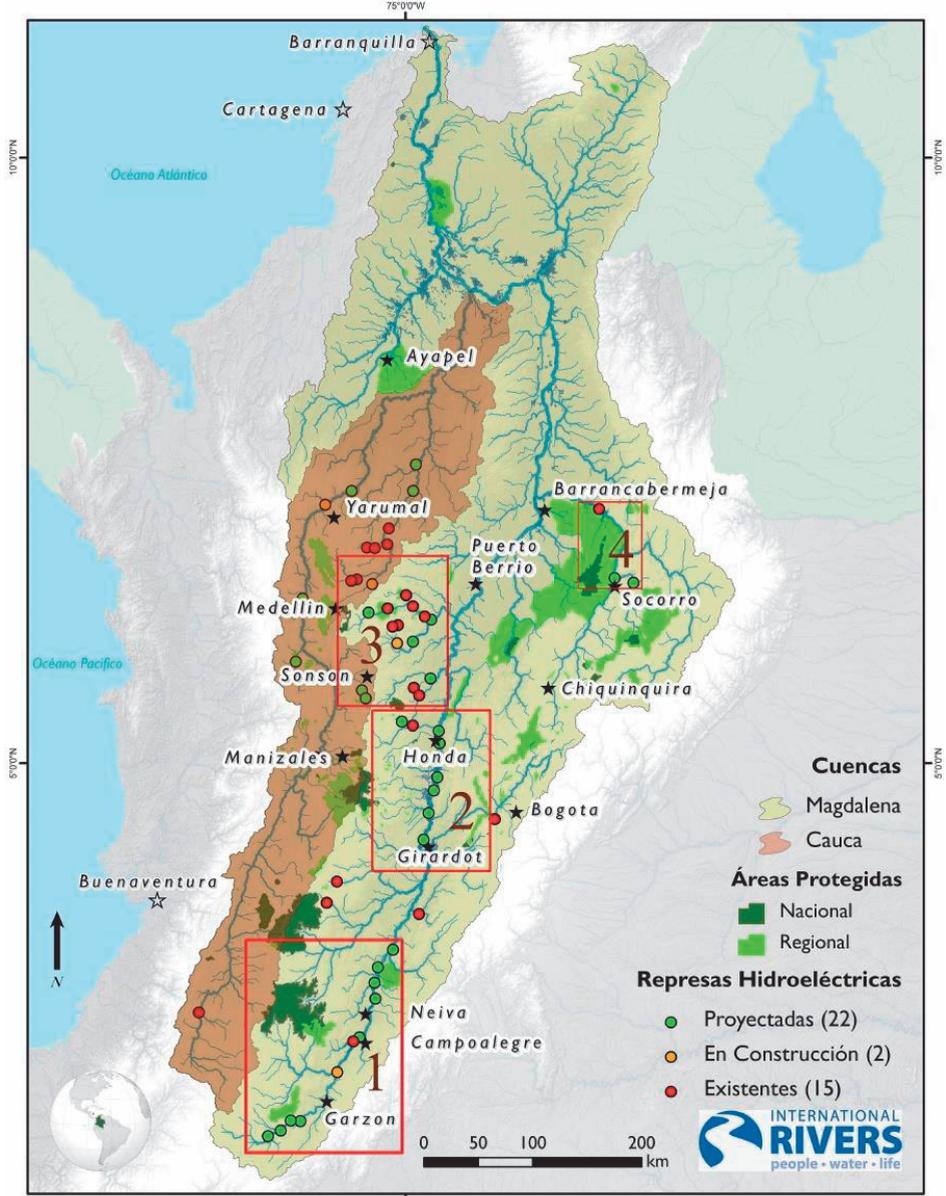


Figure I-7 Hydroelectric dams in the Magdalena and Cauca River basin (Wight and International Rivers 2015). El Quimbo dam is still marked orange, as “under construction” (see square 1). Red dots mark existing dams, and green dots projected dams. (The numbers in the legend are inaccurate.)

One main wave of large dam construction in Colombia occurred in the 1970s and 1980s (Guavio, San Carlos, Peñol-Guatapé, Salvajina, Betania and Chivor). Another period followed at the beginning of the new millennium, in response to the national power shortage of 1991 (Porce II, Porce III, Miel I, and Úrra I; see Garcia 2000:30). The last mega-dam projects approved by the Colombian government in 2008 were Hidroituango, Hidrosogamoso and El Quimbo. Independent of size and construction date, what all projects have in common is that they caused local environmental conflicts. “Conflicts over water and dams are probably as ancient as dam building itself [...] though it is only in recent years that they have come to command wider attention” (WCD 2000:18). Even though disasters and accidents have occurred (such as a landslide in 1983 during the Guavio dam-building that killed more than 180 people; see e.g. Gonzáles 2015), few are known of in relation to dam constructions in the last century. Environmental impact assessments have only been regulated since the mid-1990s; related studies or newspaper articles of the time are rare and only a few are still publicly available.

A graduate student, Vanegas Galindo, carried out an extensive archive search in 2018 to analyse the impacts and the conflicts resulting from the Betania dam construction in the 1980s. This researcher's study shows that while the Betania's construction caused social tensions especially among local farmers around the issue of land acquisitions and compensation payments, it was supported by the wider Huilan public and regional political leaders. Similar to earlier dam developments and in contrast to the El Quimbo dam, Betania was the result of a regional initiative to extend the power coverage in the Colombian south (Vanegas Galindo 2018). With its operational start in May 1987,

Betania provided energy to the provinces Huila, Caquetá, Cauca, Nariño [towards the south] – provinces with high electrification problems in those years – via the power line Betania-Popayán (320 KW), as well as to the provinces Tolima, Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Meta and el Viejo Caldas via the Betania-Ibagué line (320 KW) [towards the north], and finally for the city of Neiva through the Betania-Neiva line (115 KW) (Vanegas Galindo 2018:49).

Until then, it had been common to locate hydropower plants close to where their energy was needed (e.g. close to cities). However, in the late 1990s large dams were increasingly connected to the central power grid, deviating the direct benefits away from the areas of impact (Vanegas Galindo 2018).

Because of intense resistance from the affected indigenous communities, the Úrra dam was the first hydroelectric project to receive wider public attention from the time that its planning began

in 1984. Several studies have been published on its impacts since then (e.g. Garcia 2000; Leguizamón Castillo 2015; Orduz Salinas and Rodríguez Garavito 2012). The most famous cases, in terms of the national public attention on social and environmental consequences, were the El Quimbo dam and, more recently, the Hidroituango project (Rico 2018; Suárez Gómez 2017; Vargas Nieto 2018). Because I explore the case of El Quimbo dam at length throughout this thesis, here I only briefly outline the struggles around the Ituango dam.

Colombia's biggest dam project is owned by the public company of Medellín "Empresas Públicas de Medellín" (known as EPM). It began the Ituango dam construction in 2010 and planned to finish it by 2018. However, several technical failures, beginning in April 2018 and continuing until 2019, brought the dam infrastructure to a near collapse, putting at risk many communities located upstream and downstream of the Cauca River.

Intense rainfall had led to increased turbulence in the river and caused landslides upstream of the dam construction site early 2018. Heavy material (like tree branches, stumps and rocks) carried by the water started to block the deviation tunnel in use. Consequently, the valley upstream filled with water before the works at the main dam wall and barrier had been finalised. This led to further erosion and landslides. To prevent the collapse of the dam, EPM decided to open the already existing powerhouse to discharge water in a controlled manner (*Semana* 2018b). However, the two former deviation tunnels which had been sealed, opened accidentally as a result of the pressure. This caused a sudden uncontrolled water discharge three times higher than normal. Around 25,000 people, mainly artisanal fishing and mining communities downstream, had to be evacuated (*El Espectador* 2018b).

The powerhouse collapsed on 16 May, after which the rainfall and water level slowly decreased, so that some families could return to their homes in June 2018 (*Semana* 2018c). However, throughout the following months, the tension never fully eased. The level of alert would go down to orange, only to return to red a few days later. At the beginning of 2019, EPM noticed fractures in the dam structure and decided to close all compartments, stopping all run-off water. The river downstream ran dry, leaving the population with another disaster to deal with (*Semana* 2019a). During the entire period, EPM had trouble finalising the dam's infrastructure, experiencing one setback after another. At the beginning of 2020, no new potential opening date had yet been announced.

Before this disaster, Hidroituango was already a highly controversial project. The dam is located in a very conflictive area in Antioquia, 170 kilometres north of the provincial capital

Medellín. Different guerrilla groups, paramilitary organisations and state military have moved in and out of the area, leaving behind many deaths and traumatised families (Betancour Alarcon 2014; *Semana* 2019b). During the first years of the dam construction, many corpses were recovered in the drained valley of the Cauca River (Herrera Durán 2020).<sup>13</sup> The dam project did not stop armed threats from occurring. Up to May 2018, the regional organisation against dams, “Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia”, counted six assassinations among their members (two in that month alone), together with 63 death threats (three of them collective) and 11 massive evictions affecting up to 700 families (*Mongabay Latam* 2018).

These drastic circumstances around the Ituango dam, following the conflict at El Quimbo, left its imprint on the sector in Colombia. While several studies, such as the report of Hydrochina (2013),<sup>14</sup> emphasise the immense potential of Colombia’s river basins for further large-scale dam developments, the Hydropower Status Report (IHA 2018:61) makes the following statements about Colombia in 2017:

ANLA [Ministerial Department for Environmental Licences] denied, for the second time, the environmental licence to the 960 MW Cañafisto hydropower project. Isagen [investor] is already undertaking feasibility studies for an alternative project that would be a smaller version of the original one with 380 MW of installed capacity. During 2017, Colombia increased hydropower installed capacity by 100 MW, with a focus on smaller capacity hydropower projects.<sup>15</sup>

Even though the above-mentioned struggles cannot represent the sector at large, they are also not unique among mega-dam constructions around the world. The multiple impacts, risks and conflicts caused have been widely studied and criticised.

---

<sup>13</sup> Around 200 families in the territory mourn missing people whose bodies they suspect are among those found in the valley of the reservoir (Espinosa 2018). Between 1985 and 2012 more than 950 cases of forced disappearance were reported in the 12 surrounding municipalities (*Semana* 2019b). The families have demanded the search and exhumation of disappeared people prior to the dam finalisation (Espinosa 2018), which EPM continues to do (Herrera Durán 2020). However, the resistance doubts that the officials do their best in solving the crimes. It claims that the dam will “flood the truth” (*se inhunda la verdad*), leaving no chance for closure and reconciliation (*Colombia Plural* 2018).

<sup>14</sup> This “Master Plan” for the economic development of the Magdalena River was elaborated by Hydrochina and published in English in 2013 (no Spanish version). It states that only ten per cent of the theoretical reserved hydropower resources of the main river are made use of (Hydrochina 2013:23). It sees potential for 17 more dams in the upper-Magdalena River basin (Hydrochina 2013:178; see also Figure 1-7).

<sup>15</sup> Isagen is a former Colombian public company. In 2016, it affiliated with the Canadian company Brookfield Asset Management. Isagen also applied for an environmental licence of Colombia’s first large hydropower plant in the Amazon basin (Caqueta River). ANLA denied the licence in 2009 (see Finer and Jenkins 2012). In 2014, Isagen still seemed eager to receive the permission at one point. However, since then, there has been no update on the project.

## *Hydroelectricity worldwide*

*The World Economic Forum ranks Colombia 8th in the Global Energy Architecture Performance Index [...] The index measures countries' ability to deliver secure, affordable and sustainable energy. Colombia is the first non-European country in the top ten.*

IHA 2018:61

In view of the circumstances surrounding the Ituango dam, the IHA quotation above sounds almost farcical. It exemplifies, however, that hydropower is generally regarded as being a green energy source. It tames “wild” rivers and makes economic use of their natural power by generating substantial amounts of electricity for the nation or even for the export market (Obertreis, Moss, Mollinga, and Bichsel 2016:171). Dams can have secondary benefits such as flood control, irrigation and water storage. Because no water is directly extracted from the river, hydroelectricity is categorised as renewable.

Historically, large dam constructions have been a symbol of technical advancement and political power. Many regimes in the Global North have taken advantage of hydropower to manifest their sovereignty. Greece marked its dam development for Athena’s water supply early last century as a victory over nature, which implied developing like the West towards modernisation (Kaika 2006). Francisco Franco used dams to centralise his power in Spain and to weaken regions from potential uprising (Swyngedouw 2007, 2015:150). The US and the former Soviet Union competed to realise the Aswan High Dam along the Nile to gain political influence over Egypt (McCully 2001:19). Both superpowers built several huge hydroelectric plants during the 1960s and 70s within and outside their borders, attempting to technologically outcompete each other (Lagendijk 2015). In general, the West and colonial powers not only try to make their own regimes independent of others, but also to create dependencies over other countries. While the federally owned US-corporation “*Tennessee Valley Authority*” (founded in 1933) was first responsible for economically developing the Tennessee Valley, it soon influenced dam developments around the world (see Lagendijk 2015; McCully 2001:245; Molle, Mollinga, and Wester 2009:335).

Tortajada, Altinbilek, and Biswas (2012:2) point out: “Construction of large dams before the 1960s was very significant in the so-called developed world, which included western Europe, the United States, Australia, Canada, the former Soviet Union and Japan”. Soon, however, this changed:

By 1975, the United States, Canada and most countries in Western Europe had essentially completed their programmes of constructing large dams. [...] during the post-1975 period, the construction of large dams rarely occurred in the developed countries mentioned above; the focus shifted completely to developing countries (Tortajada et al. 2012:3).

It is estimated that “the remaining economic development potential is located in Africa, Asia and Latin America” (The International Renewable Energy Agency 2012:16). Beginning with Chile, the World Bank started to finance large dams outside the industrialised North in the 1960s (Nelson 2013). Especially emergent economies such as China and Brazil contributed to a new boom for hydroelectricity. China increasingly moved away from financing small-scale power grids for the rural regions and invested mostly in large-scale hydropower plants, the size of which reached international attention (McCully 2001:19–21). Other countries soon followed (Hansjürgens, Droste, and Tockner 2016:67; see also Zarfl, Lumsdon, Berlekamp, Tydecks, and Tockner 2015). Tortajada et al. (2012:3) point out that especially for post-colonial countries it would be about proving their independence and modernity to the world:

During the post-1950 period, many countries of Asia and Africa began to shed their colonial past. With their newly gained independence, there was an urgency to accelerate their national development processes, to which inadequate attention had been paid by colonisers during centuries of European rule. [...] Because of the major contributions dams could make to national development processes, construction of large dams often became a symbol of nation-building and national pride, and in many instances was considered to have contributed to national unity.

During his early political career (in the 1950s), the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, called mega-dams “temples of modern India” (Molle et al. 2009:335). Rwanda and Sudan used dam development to overcome the image of an impoverished country (Dye 2016) and to create a national identity, “turning dam-builders into nation-builders” (Mohamud and Verhoeven 2016:182).

However, controversies about large dams spread during the 1990s and caused the World Bank to reconsider their investments in the industry (WCD 2000:26). One important contribution to the debate was the book *Silenced Rivers* by Patrick McCully of the International Rivers Network (2001 [1996]), which “depicts a particularly bleak record” (WCD 2000:27). The new millennium brought a “greater understanding of the often unexpected social, economic, and environmental costs” of dams (Hansjürgens et al. 2016:67), and more public recognition of these costs. The WCD published its final report “Dams and Development – A New Framework for Decision-Making” in 2000. This report acknowledges the importance of large-scale dam developments, but places that within the context of their actual costs and consequences relating

to experiences from around the world (US, Russia, China, India, Norway, Pakistan, Brazil, Thailand, South Africa, Zambia/Zimbabwe and Turkey).<sup>16</sup> Chair, Professor Kader Asmal, introduces the report with the following words:

If politics is the art of the possible, this document is a work of art. It redefines what is possible to all of us, for all of us, at a time when water pressure on governments has never been more intense. Consider: on this blue planet, less than 2.5% of our water is fresh, less than 33% of fresh water is fluid, less than 1.7% of fluid water runs in streams. And we have been stopping even these. We dammed half our world's rivers at unprecedented rates of one per hour, and at unprecedented scales of over 45,000 dams more than four storeys high (WCD 2000:i).

These numbers shed new light on the technology and raise the question: is the effort worth the consequences? In 1948, Indian Prime Minister Nehru said of the Hirakud Dam: "If you are to suffer, you should suffer in the interest of the country". He acknowledged the immense social impacts the dam had but considered them as necessary sacrifices in order to modernise. Towards the end of his legislation, however, he seems to have changed his opinion. At the annual meeting of the Central Board of Irrigation and Power in 1958, he said:

I have been beginning to think that we are suffering from what we may call "disease of gigantism" [...] We want to show that we can build big dams and do big things ... but the idea of having big undertakings and doing big tasks for the sake of showing that we can do big things is not a good outlook at all (Central Board Irrigation and Power 1959:172; quoted in: McCully 2001:20–21).

The final report of the WCD (2000) presents in detail the diverse range of possible consequences of this disease. It identifies the following problems commonly connected to large dams:

Economic:

1. budget over-run: under-estimation of economic costs;
2. delays: not meeting time schedules;
3. poor performance: over-estimating economic benefits, not meeting installed capacities or falling short of irrigation targets;
4. outputs vary (climate dependent) and decrease with time (sedimentation);

---

<sup>16</sup> "The Commission's two objectives were: to review the development effectiveness of large dams and assess alternatives for water resources and energy development; and to develop internationally acceptable criteria, guidelines and standards, where appropriate, for the planning, design, appraisal, construction, operation, monitoring and decommissioning of dams" (WCD 2000:xxx).

5. improper flood management: flood control targets compete with power generation or irrigation targets, unpredictability of extreme climate events;

Environmental:

6. alteration of groundwater level: waterlogging and salinity of surrounding lands;
7. habitat fragmentation and loss: displacement of terrestrial species and blocking of fish migration;
8. Greenhouse gas emissions: slow decomposition of organic material in the reservoir, especially high on tropical soils;
9. alteration of flow regimes, water temperature and quality: affecting aquatic and riparian species upstream and downstream;
10. loss of fertility of flood plains: affecting agricultural production;

Social:

11. Uncertainty during planning phase: psychological stress, restrictions of investments;
12. forced displacement;
13. loss of livelihoods: former land/river-based professions lost (downstream and upstream), only short-term job creation in construction;
14. change of production regime: cash crops instead of food crops;
15. loss of social cohesion, tradition and culture: influx of foreign workers, products and services, change of values;
16. spread of illnesses;
17. inaccurate compensation mechanisms: lack of participation, incomplete census of affected, no or poor resettlement schemes;
18. further marginalisation: unequal benefit distribution, population affected often already marginalised like peasants and ethnic minorities, women;
19. conflict; and finally
20. dam failure (WCD 2000:15–17)

An increased awareness of these consequences created a negative reputation, which led to a decline in hydropower development (Hansjürgens et al. 2016; McCully 2001). It was however foreseeable that, with increasing concern around climate change, the industry would experience a revival. McCully (2001:xvii) states:

The great hope for the industry is that global warming will come to the rescue – that hydropower will be recognised as a “climate-friendly” technology and receive carbon credits as part of the international emissions trading mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol.

McCully was proven to be right. Hydropower was included as a clean development mechanism in the carbon offsetting market:

Carbon credit that is currently granted to hydropower projects through the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) is one of the most controversial aspects of efforts to mitigate global warming under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Fearnside 2016:434).

Environmental pollution has become one of the main contemporary challenges globally and the so-called renewables (mainly solar, hydro and wind sources) are considered the solution to climate change. The World Energy Council defines renewables as “forms of energy which are not exhausted by use”. Branding an energy-generating technology “clean” or “green” creates the impression that it would not pollute the environment nor release greenhouse gases. These technologies are then associated with sustainable development (see Kuriqi, Pinheiro, Sordo-Ward, and Garrote 2017) – a discourse proven useful for global investors, like the World Bank, to defend large hydroelectric projects (see Goldman 2005).

Hydroelectricity is considered renewable and sustainable because its source of energy (run-off water) is not directly subtracted from the system (or water cycle), but as in the case of reservoirs, only periodically stored. As long as there is water flowing in the river, or as Killingtveit (2014:455) puts it, “as long as the sun shines”, the water is returned to the water cycle through evaporation and energy can be generated. It is also considered not to emit many greenhouse gases. However, several studies have shown that this is a misleading conception. As indicated above, large dams pollute fresh water and increase evaporation, consequently restricting its availability for the region (WCD 2000:78–81). Construction works, loss of vegetation and the slow decomposition of organic material in the reservoir contribute to higher greenhouse gas emissions, especially in tropical regions in the first 20 years of a dam’s operation (see e.g. Fearnside 2016; Fearnside and Pueyo 2012; WCD 2000:75–77).

In recent years, some researchers have directed their attention to the “extractivism of renewables” (see Del Bene et al. 2018). They see green energy as “a synecdoche of anxieties and frustrations regarding broader extractive practices that the people feel powerless to confront” (Argenti and Knight 2015:784; see also Howe and Boyer 2016). This is not limited to hydroelectricity. For example, Mexico’s large-scale investments in wind energy generated

national and international controversies, as the distribution of costs and benefits did not match with local aspirations (Dunlap 2018, 2019; Howe and Boyer 2016; Howe et al. 2015). European investments in solar and wind energy parks in Greece sparked similar discontent and resistance (Argenti and Knight 2015; see also conflict around wind parks in Norway, Fjellheim 2020).

In 2000, the WCD reacted to these issues with regard to large dams, proposing a “new policy framework for the development of water and energy resources”. Their framework is guided by five core values: equity, efficiency, participatory decision-making, sustainability, and accountability (WCD 2000:199). It requires the recognition of rights and the assessments of risks – an approach that goes beyond the mere “cost and benefit” analysis – to identify all interested and affected parties, their stake in the project and their necessary involvement in the decision-making process (WCD 2000:198–210). Negotiations about the project should be fair (all stakeholders participate), wise (fully informed), efficient (time- and cost-effective) and stable (an enduring agreement; WCD 2000:210). The framework has seven strategic priorities:

1. gaining public acceptance (through informed participation by all groups),
2. comprehensive options assessment (explore alternatives),
3. addressing existing dams (optimising their benefits),
4. sustaining rivers and livelihoods (understanding, protecting and restoring ecosystems),
5. recognising entitlements and sharing benefits (mutually agreed and legally enforceable mitigation and development provisions),
6. ensuring compliancy (meeting the commitments made), and
7. sharing rivers for peace, development and security (“good faith negotiations between riparian States”; WCD 2000:213–51).

The El Quimbo dam was built nine years after the WCD’s final report was published. The environmental impact assessment does not refer to the report directly, but it summarises the outcomes of a particular *taller* (workshop/seminar) with the mayor’s office of Gigante in 2007, during which one of the attendees argued that development should not come at the cost of people and environment, quoting the WCD report (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:852). The response, in this instance, was that large dam developments have negative impacts, but that the company Emgesa would mitigate and compensate for these through social, environmental and economic investments to the region (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:852).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> With Resolution No. 1628: *Por la cual se resuelven los recursos de reposición interpuestos por Emgesa S.A. E.S.P., Fundación El Curibano y Alexander López Quiroz contra la Resolución No. 0899 del 15 de Mayo de*

Throughout the present thesis it becomes apparent to what extent this goal has been achieved. In the following chapter, I outline the overall theoretical framework in which my concepts are embedded.

## 2. Theoretical framework

My theoretical approach is highly influenced by political ecology, which I present in the following section. Subsequently, I discuss two core notions on which the approach and my analysis relies: power and scale.

### Approaching political ecology

Investigating issues of power that surround environmental conflicts suggests the theoretical engagement with political ecology. This approach arose “from the effort to link social and physical science to address environmental change, conflicts and problems” (Paulson, Gezon, and Watts 2005:17). The first tendencies towards related problematisations can be noted in the 1960s, when it became increasingly pertinent to understand how humans transform the earth. Related research put local issues of ecology in the context of the political economy, following the ambition to be analytical, normative and applied (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987:17). In the following decades, the approach was influenced by a proliferation of development studies and critiques of colonialism (e.g. dependency theory) that brought to the fore questions of social differentiation, exploitation, and the impact of international markets on the rural poor in the global south.

An important source of inspiration to political ecology has been Karl Polanyi. In his groundbreaking book, *The Great Transformation* (2001), he describes the historical formation of the market society and capitalism. Farmers who previously lived off the land and their labour, exchange and reciprocity, were expropriated and displaced to the industrialised city, to sell their labour. Land, labour and money became “fictitious commodities” traded on markets. The nation states played a central role in facilitating laissez-faire economy (Polanyi 2001). Counter-movements arose to fight the surging inequalities and exploitation by the land-owning elite, which lead to social change and the elaboration of welfare mechanisms.

---

2009 (of 21 August 2009), the Ministry of Environment responded to criticisms of Environmental Licence 0899, among others, in relation to the WCD report. It refers to the company’s commitment to sustainability, its mitigation and compensation schemes and the ministry’s obligation to follow up on those (155-157).

This historical account of what happened during industrialisation in Europe, is currently as relevant as ever. Globalisation, and the expansion of capitalism into all parts of the world – which Bernard (1997) refers to as the “second great transformation” – has enormous social, environmental and cultural consequences for places and population groups. Especially, Latin American political ecologists have essentially contributed to a critical understanding of these transformations which come with expansion of the capitalist frontier into the south (see edited volume by Alimonda 2011; and Alimonda, Toro Pérez, and Martín 2017; also Machado Aráoz 2010, 2012).

Influenced by the common history of colonialism, subordination and resistance (Alimonda 2016), these (and other) post-development scholars have enunciated that the principal organiser of the world system is a knowledge regime embedded in colonial, Western and Christian paradigms and mentalities, which dominate other systems of thinking (Grosfoguel 2006). “Europe’s hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony” (Quijano 2000:540).<sup>18</sup> Decolonial scholars are therefore committed to overcoming the nature–culture dichotomy dominating the Western knowledge system and to integrate alternative knowledges into science (Escobar 2008, 2016; Fals Borda 2009; Herrera Huérfano, Sierra Caballero, and Del Valle Rojas 2016; Sousa Santos 2010, 2014; Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito 2005; Svampa 2012; Ulloa 2001). Congruently, the importance of discourses and knowledge surrounding environmental and social issues worldwide has received increasing attention during the last decades.

Within political ecology, the “environment” can be considered a biophysical phenomenon, as well as the result of social practice and cultural meaning (Gezon and Paulson 2005:2). Brosius (1999b:17) distinguishes between two primary forms of what is labelled as political ecology: the first represents “a fusion of human ecology with political economy” (which takes nature as its material base and is Marx-inspired); the second is informed by poststructuralist social theory (which takes nature as discourse, as being socially constructed, and is Foucault-inspired; Brosius 1999b:17, see also 1999a:303). Escobar (1999:25) sees the need for more dialogue between these different perspectives, and I consider it a strength of political ecology to bring problems in political economy into a relationship with post-structuralism (Escobar 1996; Peet and Watts 1996:13).

---

<sup>18</sup> Here, hegemony can be broadly understood as domination.

Political ecology is concerned with moving beyond time, scale and symbols, connecting contemporary local environmental challenges with historical and supralocal socio-economic and political processes (Gezon and Paulson 2005:9–10). Svarstad, Benjaminsen and Overå (2018:356) observe that “having local sites as points of departure has often proven to be useful for identifying how various actors and processes influence and shape power relations through interaction between local and distant spaces across scales”. This analysis is often more political (engaging critically with actors, networks and power relations) than it is ecological.

A common critique of political ecology is that it is lacking ecological analysis (see Vayda and Walters 1999; Walker 2005). A purely ecological approach would seek answers to why certain environmental changes occurred by looking at biological and chemical reactions which might have been influenced by configurations of the landscape, land or water use. While the concentration lies here on the biophysical dimension, political ecologists’ starting point is the biophysical change, but the focus is placed on the external configurations which might have led up to this change, and/or on how this change is used for political interests (see Robbins 2012). Important contributions of political ecology have uncovered discourses of environmental change that are used to suppress population groups, but with poor biophysical foundation for their arguments. Fascinating examples are biodiversity loss seemingly caused by slash-and-burn agriculture of Mexican indigenous people (Mathews 2005), desertification of the Sahel zone seemingly caused by pastoral tribes (Adger, Benjaminsen, Brown, and Svarstad 2001) or land degradation in Norway apparently caused by Sámi reindeer herders (Johnsen, Benjaminsen, and Eira 2015).

Another point of criticism of political ecology relates to the term “applied” (see Walker 2006). How applied or policy-relevant can a study be if it criticises somewhat abstract discourses and power structures which are often entangled in complex global processes? Such an approach will not, for instance, improve the water quality of a contaminated lake. However, political ecologists do not claim to contribute to finding short-term solutions, such as filtering the water and redirecting sewage. That is the job of practitioners, engineers and environmental scientists. Political ecology aims to discover the underlying mechanisms which have led to the disaster happening, and to establish who profits and who suffers in such a situation. Here, political ecology has been influenced by environmental justice, which has its origins in North America and emphasises the relevance of race, gender and religion in environmental decision-making and in the unequal distribution of environmental burdens (Svarstad and Benjaminsen 2020; see also Escobar 2006; Martinez Alier 2002; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003).

In addition to finding inspiration in the above-mentioned literature, I apply the approach because I intend to unmask structures of power, looking at the political economy of Colombia's land-use conflicts, counter-movements and knowledge creation. The El Quimbo dam construction caused an obvious environmental change to the configuration of the river and the surrounding landscape. This initiated a chain of further environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts in the region. I critically reflect on the knowledge production around these impacts and how it is contested, without contributing own environmental findings. I further analyse how the unequal distribution of benefits and losses has led to political conflicts beyond the local. The key concepts used in this thesis contribute to a discussion of power and scale. Each of these notions deserves a closer look.

### Power: closures and openings

According to its Latin origin "*posse*", power means being capable of doing something. But its common usage involved to express more than a simple action or agency. Power describes a *hierarchical* relationship, what Hornborg (2001:1) terms a "social relation built on an asymmetrical distribution of resources and risks". Those who are "powerful" generally have the ability to access and influence decisions, not just over themselves, but also over others. However, these relations are rarely "simple cases of the powerful dominating the weak" (Gezon and Paulson 2005:12). Power is embedded in structures and is continuously negotiated and shifting (Gezon and Paulson 2005:12).

To grab power analytically, a variety of scholars suggested to classify power according to its origins and results. Wolf defined four particular modes of power (2001). The first mode he identifies is in the actor's capability; it is agency. The second mode expands this capability towards the action of others – to influence the agency of another individual. With the third and fourth modes, Wolf turns the attention towards structures. The third mode he calls tactical or organisational power, that is, indirectly acting upon the actions of others by providing or restricting their access to energy and resources. While the exercise of power influences structure, it is still within an actor-orientated, behavioural approach that presupposes an intentionality behind such action (as the first and second modes). The fourth mode targets the autonomous reproduction of structures, which determine access and ability of an individual (Wolf 2001). This mode resembles important structural conceptions of power, for instance

Bourdieu's habitus (1984),<sup>19</sup> the political economy (Marx 2009),<sup>20</sup> Gramsci's "common sense" (2018 [written between 1929 and 1935]),<sup>21</sup> or language (Foucault 1990, 2002).<sup>22</sup>

Another famous proposal for the classification of power is offered by Lukes (2005). He identifies three dimensions of power in the literature, which "can be seen as alternative interpretations and applications of one and the same underlying concept of power, according to which *A* exercises power over *B* when *A* affects *B* in a manner contrary to *B*'s interests" (Lukes 2005:30). The first two dimensions are of behavioural origin: *A* gets *B* to do something that *B* would not otherwise do (one-dimensional view) and *A* prevents *B* from taking certain decisions (two-dimensional view). While the first is an "observable conflict of interest", the second dimension of "non-decisions" is often covert. In either way, *B* is aware of his own interest. This changes in the three-dimensional view: "*A* may exercise power over *B* by getting him to do what he does not want to do, but he [*A*] also exercises power over him [*B*] by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants". *A* tries to prevent conflict of interest from arising in the first place (Lukes 2005:27). Lukes's three-dimensional view hints in the direction of Wolf's third and fourth mode of power, as well as Foucault's notion of *governmentality* which he defines as "to structure the possible field of action of others" or the "conduct of the conduct" (Davidson 2011:28; Foucault 1982:790, 2007; Lemke 2002:5). However, Foucault does not presume an intentional act behind each power relation but focuses on discursive practices that reproduce power structures.

Considering these contributions and limitations in analytically dealing with issues of power, Svarstad et al. (2018:352) identify three theoretical approaches to power in political ecology literature:

The first type consists of actor-oriented power perspectives [see above], and the second draws on neo-Marxist power perspectives that emphasize how power is exercised through economic domination and exploitation. The third form of power includes variations of discursive power perspectives drawing on poststructuralism, and in particular the work of Michel Foucault (discourses in a broad sense,

---

<sup>19</sup> Bourdieu considers that in the habitus of individuals, structures are reproduced, e.g. culturally appropriate behaviour (*doxa*) in the workspace (*field*). For instance, not shaking hands or dressing in a suit could limit one's access to an office job.

<sup>20</sup> Marx identifies inequalities (the class system) as determined by political economy. Access depends on class, race, gender, citizenship, education etc.

<sup>21</sup> Gramsci sees the common sense as the general accepted way of thinking about certain practices without questioning them, like social hierarchies. For instance, having a certain title can automatically open up doors.

<sup>22</sup> Foucault highlights language and the reproduction of discourses as expressions of power. Limiting one's language can limit one's imagination. For instance, the conventional/conservative way of talking about sexual relationships only regards two genders (male, female) and heterosexuality as existent within society. This discriminates against other forms of sexual expression.

governmentality, and biopower). We find that the three theoretical perspectives overlap and that power is productively conceived as a combination of these perspectives. However, the weight given to each perspective may vary depending on the empirical situation.

These authors argue for a combination of the three perspectives to fully understand power in the field of environmental struggles and resource conflicts. Also Hickey and Mohan (2004a:14) highlight: “By combining structural and post-structural accounts of power it is possible to examine how individuals (re)make rules and (re)constitute institutions and conversely how institutions shape individual actions”.

Ribot and Peluso’s (2003:153) approach to “access” makes an important contribution in this regard. They define access as “the ability to benefit from things – including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols”. Access as “bundles of powers” is embedded in larger “webs of power”, which are time- and space-dependent (Ribot and Peluso 2003:153). With the approach of access and ability, these authors expand on the right-based approach of property theory to give justice to the multiple factors that influence people’s access to and exclusion from resources. Next to right-based access (and illegal access), they identify structural and relational access mechanisms: the circumstances related to the particular political economy and culture. Their conceptualisation is a useful contribution to analytical grasp power. However, I consider the terms “access” and “ability” suggest that power is static and inevitable. For the purpose of this study, I find it necessary to emphasise the motion, intentionality and contestability of power.

I agree with Svarstad et al. (2018:359) that “power perspectives should be seen as complementary in that they involve a multi-faceted and nuanced focus on agency, political economic structures, and discursive formations”. I consider agency enabled and constrained but not determined by structure (Bourdieu 1977, 1989; Giddens 1984; Long 2001; Svarstad et al. 2018:353). In Tania Murray Li’s words (2007:17): “To govern means to act on the actions of subjects who retain the capacity to act otherwise”. I support T.M. Li’s conception of power that combines Gramsci’s idea of an apparent system of domination, consent and coercion (hegemony)<sup>23</sup> with Foucault’s conception of self-reproducing power relations that remain unnoticed by those who are governed (governmentality). “Some practices render power visible; they trigger conscious reactions adequately described in terms such as resistance,

---

<sup>23</sup> I understand *hegemony* in this thesis as a structure of domination (ruling class) “that manages to win the active consent over those it dominates (over whom it rules; Gramsci 2018:244).

accommodation, or consent. Other modes of power are more diffuse, as are peoples' responses to them" (T.M. Li 2007:25).

I consider direct and indirect forms of power that seek to "conduct the subjects' conduct" (Fletcher 2010:178) as either enabling or disabling peoples' actions. Restricting one's range of action can happen *spatially* (e.g. by preventing someone's movement), *politically* (e.g. by preventing someone in participating in decision-making), *infrastructurally* (e.g. by preventing someone the access to basic services), *economically* (e.g. by preventing someone's access to resources), *socially* (e.g. by preventing someone's recognition of belonging to a certain community), or finally *discursively* (e.g. by preventing someone to question specific truth claims). Creating one or several of these limitations I term the "closure" of possibilities; working against such closure in order to enable action, I refer to as creating "openings".

In social science literature, "closure" has been used to describe many different processes. Closure could mean the actual act of closing something, for instance the closure of the dam gates (see e.g. Del Bene et al. 2018:8). It could also express the enclosure of land and resources (such as privatisation; Chatterton and Chatterton 1996). The latter could be linked to so-called social closure, a process in which a population occupies a certain place and excludes others from taking part in their community and resource use (see e.g. Lund 2016). Then there is political closure, which refers to act of delimiting a person or population group to actively participate in a decision-making process (see Deetz 1992; Gaventa 2004:38; Vasstrøm 2016). Finally, discursive or theoretical closure is named, often in relation to Foucault, to describe the process of delimiting knowledge in terms of access to information, but also in terms of what counts as truth (Cornwall 2004:84; Gordon 1991:18). Foucault (1990 [1978]) has shown as no one else before him how language and discourse can restrict peoples' imaginations. Also, the mere act of choosing a research question implies a closure, because it automatically restricts the answers one looks for.

An important contribution is made by Ferguson in *The Anti-Politics Machine* (2003). He defines closure as the process of taking an intrinsically political project, in his case "development", and turning it into a technical problem. Tanja M. Li (2007) borrows the concept from Ferguson to express experts' discourses and practices that limit problem perceptions – including debate and contestation – to the manageable, and render issues of power technical and apolitical (Ferguson 2003; T.M. Li 2007). Only those questions would be asked that one could find answers to. "Openings" would re-politicise those fields of intervention. I find these

conceptualisations of closure (and openings) very useful, in combination with the earlier-mentioned meanings. I define a closure as any act, intentional or unintentional, actor-centred or not, that restricts peoples' possible range of manoeuvring, including the field of (political) contestation. I define openings as working contrary to closures, in opening up the range of possibilities, contestations and imaginaries for alternative actions.

Creating openings is not necessarily a form of resistance, but intrinsic to it. Resistance can be described as opposing power or as constituting power; it can be destructive (preventing change) or constructive (triggering change), noisy or silent. We find many different terms describing forms of resistance: counter-hegemony (Gramsci 2018) or counter-movement (Polanyi 2001), counter-conduct or revolt (Foucault 2007), insurgence or rebellion, parrhesia (Legg 2018) or hidden transcript (Scott 1990), as well as counterwork (Arce and Long 2000; Escobar 2008; Leifsen 2017; Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. 2017) or "responses from below" (Borras and Franco 2013; Hall et al. 2015).

All these forms of resistance want to create openings (in response to closures) but can also create closures themselves. For instance, choosing violence as form of resistance possibly closes opportunities for political participation (as the FARC experienced in Colombia). In my use of the word "resistance" in this thesis, I do not refer to the people who simply disagree with the dam project (or its terms of realisation), but to the actor groups who take action to change the outcome of the project and the political practice related to it. The resistance movement purposely mobilises power to create openings and challenge existing power structures. With this, I do not wish to disregard hidden forms of resistance Scott emphasised in his work (1985, 1990). Negative talk about the company Emgesa and the informal politics along the motto "don't make it too easy for them" doubtless play an essential role in the development of the conflict (see Part III). However, for analytical purposes, I limit the meaning of the term "resistance movement" to those in overt resistance. As a Colombian social leader<sup>24</sup> formulated it: *Resistir no es aguantar, es contruir* (To resist is not to bear or endure, but to construct).<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the El Quimbo dam struggle, I consider the production of closures and openings not as much bound to specific actors as to specific structural practices: the creation of knowledge

---

<sup>24</sup> The statement was made during a seminar held by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO) on the Colombian peace process, 4 Jan 2018.

<sup>25</sup> An affected head of household might have actively resisted any cooperation with the company, but at one point chose to negotiate for compensation. This person might still work for change by publicly criticising the project. The person is therefore still part of the movement. However, someone who decided to stay silent in fear of losing the compensation negotiated, has left the resistance movement, while probably still talking negatively about the project in private.

about place, the reconfiguration of space and infrastructure, the distribution of discourses and narratives, the enactment of networks across scales, and the access to decision-making entities. While these practices reconfigure structural power and accordingly delimit or enable actions, I wish to re-emphasise the importance of “will” and “opportunity” in actions taken (agency). While I will delve further into each of these concepts in the following chapters, at this point, I wish to introduce the second crucial notion in political ecology and of relevance to this thesis: scale.

## Scale: politics of space and time

*The social and material constructions of scale [...] define this story of environmental and livelihood conflict.*

Goodman, Boykoff, and Evered 2008:10

Scale plays a fundamental role in studying environmental conflicts (see above quote and Gezon and Paulson 2005; Leitner and Sheppard 2009; Mahon and Keil 2009; Martinez Alier 2003; Swyngedouw 2004, 2009a).<sup>26</sup> Socially constructed, it influences the way one thinks of (and acts upon) a phenomena and its relationships in time and space. I argue that every scale reference needs to be approached in its relation to other scales without *a priori* ascribing certain notions of power asymmetries to them. In what follows, I address how I approach spatial scale, the multiple meanings connected to “territory”, and temporal scale.

Spatial scales are commonly defined along the line of political-institutional borders, which leads to the classical (*Russian doll*) categorisation of processes and institutions into local, regional, urban, national and global levels (Brenner 2009; Cox 1998; Sheppard 2002).<sup>27</sup> This ordering of the world could be interpreted as unidirectional space hierarchy that carry “from the bottom up” (below-above), “from powerless to powerful”, or “from the body to the globe” imaginaries (Leitner and Sheppard 2009:234; Sheppard 2002:313). Leitner and Sheppard (2009:235) call these associations with scale “nested entities” (Sheppard 2002:313). Predominantly feminist scholars have pointed out that the linear top-down approach relies on and conveys Western assumptions “about space, time, history, and causality” (Gezon and Paulson 2005:14; see also Freeman 2001; Leitner and Sheppard 2009; Mahon 2006; Tsing 2000). The authors have identified a range of problems to such assumptions: first, spaces are

---

<sup>26</sup> Scale analysis has been also important in other research fields, for instance in environmental governance (see Vatn and Vedeld 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Another way is to conceptualise spatial scale according to geomorphological or climatic features, like micro, meso and macro-climate. For the purpose of this research, I maintain a political-organisational understanding.

often connected horizontally, for instance a local farmer's movement collaborates with a urban-based organic food association (Leitner and Sheppard 2009); second, vertical relations can go in various directions also within a single space, for instance a man in a rural household can have more decision-making power than his wife or even than a single woman working in the capital city (Sheppard 2002:322), and local movements can indeed have an impact of global significance (Escobar and Paulson 2005; Hornborg 2005); and third, all scales are socially constructed, potentially according to certain power interests. For instance, the borders drawn between what is urban and what is rural can determine one's access to public services. The resulting power asymmetries are constantly contested and negotiated (Brenner 2001, 2009:45; Gezon and Paulson 2005; Leitner and Sheppard 2009).

One reaction to the above problems has been to completely withdraw from the idea of scale, and to talk of networks instead (see critical discussion of Brenner 2009; and Mahon 2006). But that scale is socially constructed does not mean it does not matter. "The absence of privileged scale does not mean that anarchy prevails, however" (Mahon and Keil 2009:13). Scale differentiation can be drawn without assigning *a priori* certain powers to them, but rather be based on the assessment of particular relations. Sheppard (2002:315) states, "social processes stretch horizontally through space, as well as vertically across scales". And Brenner (2001:605) argues,

the meaning, function, history and dynamic of any one geographical scale can only be grasped relationally, in terms of its upwards, downwards, and sideways links to other geographical scales situated within tangled scalar hierarchies and dispersed interscalar networks.

Agreeing with this relational approach to scale, I will refer to certain "nested scales", which are in correspondence to the jurisdictional boundaries of state organisation (Brenner 2009:38) relevant in my case (discussed below), but I will not presume hierarchies among these or other spatial categories. Analysing power asymmetries in their specific context forms part of the study. I draw on the concept of "politics of space" (Kirsch 2014) to analyse the power of scale making relevant to environmental struggles. For instance, the practice to delimit the "area of direct influence" of an investment project determines the environmental impacts accounted for by the investor. Accordingly, examining contentious politics implies *expanding* the scale of analysis and consider an actor's potential to *rescale*, *upscale* or *downscale* processes as well as to "jump scales" by, for example, making a local issue of water pollution a concern for national security or by translating an international agreement into local agendas (Cox 1998; Goodman

et al. 2008; Haarstad and Fløysand 2007; Leitner and Sheppard 2009; Swyngedouw 2009a; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003). Haarstad and Fløysand (2007:289) point out: “The theoretical debate on politics of scale opens the way to investigate the reconfiguration of scalar organization in capitalism, which has complex and contradictory effects on power relations”.<sup>28</sup>

As already indicated, I make use of certain “nested” geographical scales in this thesis. I shortly describe how: Referring to the *local*, I generally mean the population residing within the affected areas in central Huila and their politics. The “affected areas” are those spaces where people live who experience the dam project placing a personal imposition on their lives (in contrast to the company’s “recognised affected”). When I talk of a *community*, I refer to the population of one rural administrative entity, a village or *vereda* (compound of farms/rural district), which is the basis for local politics. With the use of the term I do not want to suggest any romantic form of cohabitation or unity. I also do not consider the affected people as groups of poor, vulnerable or marginalised people, as the local is often presented (e.g. Hall et al. 2015).<sup>29</sup> The affected population in its majority (but not exclusively) can be considered *el campesinado* (peasantry), characterised by a rural lifestyle and livelihoods strongly linked to the environment. When the lands were fertile, people had a daily income, food and shelter.

With the *regional*, I generally refer to the central (and bordering) municipalities of Huila. With regional or territorial politics, I want to capture the politics on the administrative level of *departamentos* (provinces) and *municipios* (municipalities). I contrast these to centre or national politics, which I spatially locate in the Colombian capital Bogotá. As such, I make a distinction between the *central* state administrations with jurisdiction over the whole of Colombia’s territory and the *regional* state administrations with jurisdiction over provinces and municipalities within Colombian borders.

The *territory*, in its common Anglo-Saxon meaning, is another nested category tightly linked to European ideas of sovereignty i.e. control over defined areas of land claimed by a certain authority (commonly a nation state; Cambridge Dictionary of English 2020; see also Bassett and Gautier 2014; Svampa 2013). Territoriality, in this understanding, is the sovereignty of a nation state over a specific territory, and the construction of its people as nation (Sassen

---

<sup>28</sup> Leitner and Sheppard (2009) distinguish between politics of scale, place, networking, and mobility. I consider politics of place (shaping place), networking (horizontal connection between different places) and mobility (moving across space) as part of politics of space, while politics of scale (scale making) encompass politics of space and time (see below).

<sup>29</sup> The affected people themselves feel offended when being referred to as “poor” and “left with nothing” by outsiders, like representatives of the ANLA, Emgesa and the church (cf.; Interviews 39, 44).

2013:25). Territorialisation is the process of establishing such exclusive authority (Rasmussen and Lund 2018:389). This usually implies a reorganisation of space (and scale) that fosters new orders of rule with the purpose of regulating people and resources (de- and re-territorialisation; Rasmussen and Lund 2018:388) and which often comes along with a contestation of sovereignty (see Sieder 2011; Weitzner 2017). McNeish (2017a) captures local advances towards more self-determined decision-making over resource use with the concept of “resource sovereignty”. These movements generally associate different meanings to the term territory, which are not fixed but relational.

In the Colombian context, the term *territorio* encompasses a diverse range of meanings. For the purpose of this thesis and to avoid confusion, I differ between four descriptive and two analytical uses of the term and, according to meaning, assign a specific translation. First, within the public political discourse, the countryside and (largely rural) administrative divisions are often called *los territorios*. They are taken to mean the periphery in contrast to urban centres.<sup>30</sup> I am translating this meaning into “the regions”. Second, slightly diverting from this rather bounded understanding, but also of descriptive nature, is the reference of the term to describe “containers” of place-specific culture, socio-economies and environments, which is visible in many laws addressing traditional land rights and the Final Peace Agreement (Cairo et al. 2018; Final Peace Agreement 2016). In this thesis, I refer to this meaning as “place”. Third, when I refer to a combination of the above meanings – rural areas with place-specific characteristics and claims for social control over land and resources, I use the English “territory”.

Fourth, “*el territorio*” has significant pluralistic meanings to indigenous, afro-decedent and peasant movements in Latin America. Inspired by their worldviews, decolonial scholars have conceptualised the *territorio* as “socio-spatial relation” (similar to Swiss geographer Raffestin, see Klauser 2012) – a space of belonging and relations among humans and other natures (Blaser 2004; Escobar 2008; Escobar and Paulson 2005; Sawyer 2004:83). To give an impression of what the decolonial meaning of territory can imply, I quote two scholars who have dedicated their lives to communicate indigenous connection to their territories globally, Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend and Mohammad Taghi Farvar (2019:209):

---

<sup>30</sup> Huila is part of the *territorios*. It is a small province with two urban centres: the capital Neiva (north) and Pitalito (south). According to their small size, they are considered provincial cities (Neiva has 350,000 inhabitants, Pitalito 135,000). Thanks to its location, Huila is well connected with Colombia’s centre region Bogotá and Cundinamarca, and therefore not as marginal as the Amazon nor the Orinoco region. It is still considered periphery.

[Territory] is a bond of livelihood, energy, and health, and a source of identity, culture, autonomy, and freedom. It connects generations, preserving memories and practices from the past and linking those to the desired future. It is the ground on which communities learn, identify values and develop self-rule. For many, ‘territory’ also bridges visible and invisible realities, material and spiritual wealth. With territory and nature go life, dignity and self-determination as peoples.

Many Latin American thinkers see *territorio* strongly intertwined with the notion of *proyecto de vida* (life projects; see Blaser 2004; Escobar 2008, 2016; Escobar and Paulson 2005). Blaser (2004:26) defines “place based life projects” close to the indigenous origin of the term:

Life projects are embedded in local histories; they encompass visions of the world [*cosmovisión*] and the future that are distinct from those embodied by projects promoted by state and markets. Life projects diverge from development in their attention to the uniqueness of people's experiences of place and self and their rejection of visions that claim to be universal. Thus, life projects are premised on densely and uniquely woven 'threads' of landscapes, memories, expectations and desires.

In line with this literature, *territorio* embodies the life project and visions of *buen vivir* (indigenous conceptions of good life) and is associated to conceptualisations of belonging that move beyond conventional dichotomies (nature vs. culture, time vs. space, etc.; Escobar 2008:59–62). It has functional as well as symbolic meanings (Haesbaert 2013; see also Copeland 2019; Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar 1998). Especially when studying post-development and anti-capitalist struggles, scholars emphasise *territorio* as the spatial manifestation of power (Manzanal, Arzeno, and Nardi 2011; Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:46; Nardi 2011:40; Svampa 2013). It is the space of peoples’ political project for cultural self-determination and autonomy; the “right to the exercise of being” (Escobar 2008:223). Still in the descriptive sense, if the text refers to these decolonial meanings, I keep to the Spanish word “*territorio*”.

For analytical purposes, I define two further meanings of territory specific to my case study, and which are related to the understanding of *territorio* outlined above. In an attempt to stay closer to the local *campesino* uses of the term (Devine, Ojeda, and Yie Garzón 2020), I first relate it to a perceived strong link between life project and territory. For the *campesinos*, a life project encompasses the place-specific livelihood practices one chooses to commit one’s life to. It expresses personal aspirations, as well as a sense of belonging to community and place as it has evolved with local culture, environment, history and identity. To apprehend this space of being and becoming, to exercise the life project and identity, I refer to it as “life-territory”. Second, I identify territory being used by heterogenous actors related to the resistance against

El Quimbo dam to a space which enables the exercise of autonomy, independent from central state development agendas. To capture this second meaning, I use the term “region-territory”.<sup>31</sup> Why I draw this distinction becomes visible in Part III.

Both life-territory and region-territory are processes, made up of beings, ideas and relations (Nardi 2011:42) always “in motion, flux, and becoming” (Escobar 2016:18; see also Ingold 2011:131). Accordingly, not only a spatial understanding of scale is required but also a temporal one.

David Harvey (2016) points out that time, as space, is a social construct. He distinguishes between three possible conceptualisations of time: the first is absolute (linear and fixed), the second is relative (individually experienced) and the third is relational, in which “every process internalises its own spatio-temporality”. This third way of approaching time opposes the first modern paradigm (Eurochronology; see Cooppan 2019:396) and corresponds more with decolonial ideas (and relational ontology) around time (see Escobar 2016; Lederach 2017). Cooppan (2019:397–98) highlights that there are pluralistic ways of seeing time and considers “multiple imagings of time: Eurochronological and postcolonial, messianic and melancholic, gridded and entangled, hard like the iron hands of a clock, soft like the swells of the sea”.

I am not arguing, nor does it form part of my analysis, that there are radically different ways of seeing time in my case. I agree, however, with Harvey’s (2016) relational approach and that different temporalities co-exists and might clash. For example, fixed office (or factory) hours usually do not correspond with a woman’s and her baby’s lactation cycle. Or to stay closer to the case of this thesis, the profitable water-discharge regime of a dam infrastructure (economic temporality) is different to the reproduction cycle of aquatic species (biological temporality) or the production practice of fisherfolk (*life project* temporality); all these are again very different from a legislation period of a government (political temporality). Accordingly, the control of time organisation can oppress and marginalise (Harvey 1990), can visualise certain aspects (short-term employment benefits), while hiding others (long-term environmental impacts).<sup>32</sup> It can be caused by and result in structural violence (see also *slow violence*, Lederach 2017; Nixon

---

<sup>31</sup> Life-territory and region-territory is not the same as what the network “Proceso de Comunidades Negras” (Process of Black Communities) at the Colombian Pacific coast has conceptualised as *territorios de vida* (territories of life) and “region-territory of ethnic groups” (Escobar 2008).

<sup>32</sup> How memories of the past and diverging visions of the future influence decisions and conflict in the present is very well illustrated by the edited volume *The Promise of Infrastructure* by Anand, Gupta, and Appel (2018) and the “The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure” by Larkin (2013).

2011). The manipulation of temporality for one's own interests is here referred to as the "politics of time", following Kirsch's conceptualisation (2014).

Having discussed key concepts and the theoretical framework of this thesis, I now explain how my research approach is reflected in the methodology.

### 3. Methodology

To describe the research strategy of this thesis, I first outline my own positionality within the research field. Afterwards I turn to a detailed discussion of my chosen methods, followed by some further ethical considerations.

#### Positionality and situatedness

In my research, I am inspired by political ecological and decolonial (post-structural) thinkers who question Western conservative paradigms of science, and advocate for alternative emancipatory applications of science methods that can contribute to social change (Sayer 2000). Such methods do not "extract" knowledge from "informants" but (re)produce knowledge with interlocutors and friends and are relevant to social and political practice through, for example, participatory action research (see Bartolomé 2003; Escobar 2008; Fals Borda 1979, 1999, 2006; Herrera Huérfano et al. 2016; Sousa Santos 2014). I agree with Arce and Long (2000:8) who see the researcher as "part of the rebounding effects of knowledge and experience" and with Herrera Huérfano et al. (2016:95) who suggest that academic ideas are always mutual and reciprocal, the result of interactions with the interlocutors. For this reason, a reflection on my own involvement as a researcher with the research subject is required.

My situatedness determines how I look at the world and how my experience, my knowledge and my beliefs influence my choice of cases, questions, methods and theories. This furthermore reflects on how I analyse and interpret my findings. I am a middle-class unmarried woman in her early 30s. I am of German nationality and employed by a Norwegian University to carry out my PhD project. I have been interested in Colombian politics ever since my time as an exchange student in Madrid, 2009, where I became friends with Colombian exiles. After completing my Bachelor of Science in Geography (University of Kiel, Germany) in 2010, I worked for six months as a peace observer in the Magdalena Medio region, Colombia. I gained an impression not only of the violence that paralysed and traumatised large parts of society, but

also of distinct land-use and environmental conflicts and options for peaceful resistance. In 2011, I started a two-year master's programme: Human Ecology – Culture, Power and Sustainability at Lund University, Sweden. Early on, I joined the Swedish Association for Foreign Affairs and helped to plan and organising a student excursion to Huila, Colombia one year later, in which I took part. This is how I came to know about the El Quimbo dam project.

The first time I came to the El Quimbo valley was in September 2012. After the student excursion, I joined the Neivan-based organisation “Corporación Casa de la Memoria Quipu Huasi” as an intern focusing on forced displacement and food security. During that period, my colleagues introduced me to several regional associations<sup>33</sup> and local offices of national and international organisations dealing with issues surrounding the internal armed conflict.<sup>34</sup> While learning of the internal and external workings of NGOs in conflictive zones, I gathered knowledge for my master's thesis on the impacts of forced displacement (Helmcke 2013). For that purpose, I interviewed people in Neiva who had been forcefully displaced. When I came to know the “Association for the affected of the hydroelectric project El Quimbo” (Asoquimbo), I recognised the possibility of hearing the stories of people who faced eviction before it had actually happened.

Juan Carlos Albarracín Gallego accompanied me to Gigante. As associate of Casa de la Memoria and of Asoquimbo, he knew many people struggling with the dam construction in the area. Together with a local representative of Asoquimbo, we drove into La Honda, at that time (July 2012) still a *vereda* of Gigante. Several members of the resistance movement blocked the road accessing the *vereda*. Former farmworkers and fisherfolk had begun to occupy the by-then sold agricultural lands. No stranger was allowed to enter. I was a stranger and on top of it *gringa*<sup>35</sup> (blonde and blue-eyed), but thanks to my companion, I was welcomed and trusted among the resistance for two days. These people were literally my gate-openers.

In some areas of Latin America, being a *gringa* raises suspicion. Especially in the conflict-ridden peripheries of Colombia, strangers cannot be trusted. Also at El Quimbo, Europeans

---

<sup>33</sup> Consejo Regional Indígena del Huila – Crihu (Regional Board of Indigenous in Huila), Asociación de Afrocolombianos del Huila – Afrohuila (Association of Afro-Colombians in Huila), Asociación de Afectados del proyecto hidroeléctrico El Quimbo – Asoquimbo (Association of the El Quimbo dam affected), unions' and parties' representatives, as well as women organisations.

<sup>34</sup> Asociación Nacional de Ayuda Solidaria – Andas (National Association for Solidary Help), El Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes del Estado – Movice (National Movement for Victims of State Crimes), United Nation's Development Programme – UNDP and United Nation's High Commission for Refugees – UNHCR.

<sup>35</sup> Spanish/Latin American term for foreigners, usually coming from North America and Europe.

have been associated with the company Emgesa, because Endesa (later Enel) sent engineers and other specialists from Spain and Italy. Therefore it was particularly important for me to be introduced by someone known and trusted, and that I could speak Spanish fluently. Four years later, during my fieldwork, I additionally tried to avoid being associated with Asoquimbo, as many affected people had turned their back on the resistance. The positionality of a researcher influences people's responses. Being connected to an NGO can open some doors but can also close others (Mercer 2006). During my fieldwork, I became keenly aware of my positionality on two separate occasions.

On the first occasion, in March 2017, Asoquimbo had invited me to travel with two of their staff (vice-president and lawyer) to the town El Hobo to meet with the fisherfolk association of Betania. The El Quimbo dam had severely affected the fish population downstream and with it, the livelihoods of the fisher community. Because Emgesa continued to deny responsibility, many fishers continued to demand compensation relying on Asoquimbo's assistance. Because I arrived with the other Asoquimbo members, there was a good chance I would be considered part of Asoquimbo, or at least a supporter. Having local intermediaries can determine how people respond to the researcher. Depending on the relationship to the intermediary, it can increase or decrease trust (Brydon 2006:28). Fortunately, I had already met several of the local fishers at the public hearing, who I had agreed to meet after the official gathering was finished. After Asoquimbo had left, I had lunch with some of the fishers and then accompanied them to the old port to see the decreased water level with my own eyes. During that time, criticism of Asoquimbo came up in conversation and this was shared with me.

On a second occasion, in May 2017, I was visiting a family in their home at the resettlement area Montea. It was my third visit to their house. It was late afternoon and I was painting pictures with the family's six-year-old daughter at the table when two of Emgesa's social workers knocked on the door. One of them happened to be a friend of mine from Neiva, a student in Psychology who had recently been employed by Emgesa. We recognised each other immediately but, knowing of each other's work, we both chose to not make our acquaintance visible. The social workers had a short polite chat with the woman of the house and left again. Not all resettled families confided in the social workers who regularly passed by the houses and asked questions. Being known to one of them could have raised suspicion regarding my own agenda (see below section on ethical considerations).

In general, it is a well-known research challenge that interviewees tend to tell researchers what they think researchers want to hear (Willis 2006:150). Moreover, during participant observation, researchers cannot know if the people would behave in the same way in their absence. Consequently, some ethnographers try to stay “invisible”. However, I consider that every observation is always also a participation (see below). Being a blonde single 30-year-old woman in rural Colombia (which is highly Catholic) raises attention. I was often asked where my husband was and why I did not have children. The questions never felt judgemental to me, and were rather an expression of curious interest. After answering that husband and children just had not happened yet, they would often respond with a laugh, joking that it was wise of me to wait. I did not consciously experience sexism in the field. Having presented my own standing in this research, I now move to present my chosen methods.

## Methods

In this dissertation, I assimilate knowledge from a variety of disciplines extending from Anthropology, Sociology, Law and Political Science to Geography and Environmental Sciences. My research is however founded on (critical) Social Science, which is expressed by my research questions (that seek to understand social processes), my chosen concepts and theories (all related to power) and my methodology (hermeneutical). I produce knowledge through social interaction and exchange, putting a variety of qualitative methods in “mutually enriching dialogue” (Paulson 2019:88).

I began fieldwork for my PhD project in September 2016, just in time for the referendum on the peace agreement with the FARC in October 2016. By then, El Quimbo dam had begun to operate and the people resisting at La Honda had long since left. However, what had caught my interest was the recent political development in the province of Huila in combination with the national advances towards peace. Consequently, I chose “the multiple implications of the El Quimbo dam struggle in Huila between 2008 and 2019” as the case study for my PhD project.

### *A case study*

A “within-case” analysis allows “the internal examination of a single case” (George and Bennett 2005:18). “A case is an edited chunk of empirical reality where certain features are marked out, emphasized, and privileged while others recede into the background” (Lund 2014:224). My chosen case is more specifically a *heuristic* case study (George and Bennett 2005:75). Its objective is to identify variables or hypotheses through analysing complex context-specific (social) interactions (George and Bennett 2005:75). It allows one to deal with

issues which are “notoriously difficult to measure”, like power structures or political culture (George and Bennett 2005:19). McGregor explains that case studies can make more detailed observations but require a combination of methods for validation (2006:201). Conversation should always be compared to observation (Donge 2006:184; see also Maxwell 2013:102–4). I used a variety of qualitative methods, discussed below, which I put in conversation with each other (Hesse-Biber 2012:144).

Because variables are not predefined but rather developed and adopted throughout the case study, inductive field research leaves space for the unexpected (George and Bennett 2005:21). My strategy was to look into the literature to find existing theory that can help me understand my observations in the field. I tested various concepts and theories on my case. If they did not contribute to sense-making, I disregarded them; if they made partial sense, I developed them further. Therefore, I combined theory-testing with concept development, not *a priori* but *a posteriori* to my case study.

The limitation of a case study is that the theory generated is derived from the experience of only one case; other cases could lead to different results. I compare my findings with other research cases similar to my case, relying on the academic literature published. This allowed comparison and a certain degree of general reflections (Maxwell 2013:137).

### *Conversation and observation*

For nine months (until the end of May 2017), I lived rotationally in Neiva and in Rioloro (an affected village within Gigante municipality) doing field research. My location in Neiva brought me closer to the politics of the province. I attended public meetings, roundtables and other events (such as concerts, film viewings, exhibitions and protests) on issues surrounding land-use struggles in Huila (complete list of events attended in Appendix 1). I also interviewed academics and students working in relation to the El Quimbo dam at the public university *Universidad Surcolombiana* (South-Colombian University), and visited involved civil society organisations as well as governmental offices. I describe my principal research methods here as event participation and semi-structured expert interviews.

I consider event participation as a type of participant observation that is limited to public events. Instead of conference or event ethnography – where the researcher is studying the behaviour, expressions and/or emotions of people in certain fora, for instance academic conferences (Supper 2012) or music festivals (Holloway, Brown, and Shipway 2010) – my intention was rather to see the actors, networks and discourses at play. I investigated questions such as: what

are dominant topics and discourses, who is talking in what position and with what reactions, how are opinions shared, what is contested and what leads to confrontation, and who supports or opposes whom?

If the event was public, the information shared was also public. If I attended private meetings following a personal invitation, I always presented myself (or was presented) to the other participants so that everyone was aware of my role as researcher and observer. During the events, I took an observer role. While I never made statements, presentations or speeches nor raised my opinions openly on such occasions, I had private conversations on the side. This allowed me to be in contact with other participants such as community leaders at the public hearing and political consultants at round table discussions.

I interviewed 20 people whom I consider to be *experts*. They were not personally affected by the dam project, but were professionally involved in the matter through the positions they held. They were for example key personalities in the university-based anti-dam movement, or were part of a civil society organisation or political entity which made them involved and knowledgeable concerning the project. The selection of interview partners was partly targeted and partly coincidental (complete list of interviews in Appendix 2). I had an initial list of people I was interested in talking to. My starting point was Asoquimbo with its main office at the South-Colombian University in Neiva. I talked privately with most members (some of them former members), but not all conversations were formal interviews and some segments were confidential. At this stage, I started using the “snowballing” technique: members of Asoquimbo either mentioned people (experts and the affected) with whom I might want to talk, or I asked specifically for contacts. In this way I was able to contact other researchers and students at the university who were working on issues related to the El Quimbo dam, some of them funded by Emgesa.

Another entry point was the events I attended. I introduced myself to attendees who again introduced me to others. This is how I was able to meet with the economic consultant of the governor.<sup>36</sup> Thanks to him, I was able to talk with the governor’s legal advisor<sup>37</sup> and several experts within the Huilan government. Without direct reference and personal mobile numbers, it was difficult to get hold of public officials. For instance, my direct interview requests to Emgesa via e-mail remained unanswered.

---

<sup>36</sup> Interview 11, see Appendix 2 for the list of interviews.

<sup>37</sup> Interview 22

I tried to complement my interview material by also interviewing El Quimbo dam supporters. At the time of my field research among the local affected population and experts, there were few people actively and publicly supporting the large scale-investment apart from the company itself, people and organisations paid by the company and central state actors, along with some journalists. In Rioloro, I spoke to a person who had found work at Reforcosta (a national NGO for reforestation and wildlife conservation) thanks to additional funding from Emgesa. Early on in his position he had suffered an injury, but Emgesa covered all medical costs related to the treatment and continued to pay his salary throughout his recovery. As a result he did not want to speak against the company, commenting that “I am not ungrateful”.<sup>38</sup> Like him, my Neivan friend who was employed as a social worker by Emgesa during the time I was in the field shared informally her impressions with me.<sup>39</sup> We also met sometimes for a drink after work in a pub in Garzón, where I met colleagues of hers.<sup>40</sup> These spaces introduced me to the “unofficial” perspective of Emgesa employees, which was valuable for my analysis.

In the last week of my stay in Colombia, I also managed to get an official interview appointment with the ANLA representative for energy in Bogotá.<sup>41</sup> However, from the first sentence, the interviewee made clear that she did not accept recording and that she would not give any more information than that provided by press releases and public communiques. Without me expressing any opinion on the project, my respondent took a defensive stance in a rather hostile manner. This exemplifies how tense the debate had gotten in early 2017. Defenders or employees of the project felt themselves to be under constant attack, which limited to an extent the scope of opinion. However, the behaviour and discourses at public meetings and in statements helped me to complement the picture.

Even in situations where private contact had been established through intermediaries, it was not always easy to meet in person. For example, I managed to interview the mayor of El Agrado,<sup>42</sup> because the boyfriend of the sister of a Neivan friend of mine was one of her personal assistants. I was also able to briefly speak on the phone to the mayor of Gigante. During an event in Rioloro, I was introduced to a municipal council member who, without hesitation, called the mayor on his private mobile number and handed me the phone. The mayor was happy to talk to me and invited me to meet him at another village where he was attending a public

---

<sup>38</sup> Interview 41

<sup>39</sup> Interview 37

<sup>40</sup> Interview 38

<sup>41</sup> Interview 59

<sup>42</sup> Interview 6

event. He explained that he would only be there for half an hour. Because I was dependent on public transport and knew that the mayor would be very busy there, I gave up the hope of talking to him in person. In general, it was the case that if I called someone to ask for an interview, I needed to be prepared to jump into a taxi immediately, because it was often a matter of now or never. It was nearly impossible to plan interviews more than a day ahead.

For each interviewee, I prepared a list of topics and key questions which I was interested in and about which they were knowledgeable or had an opinion on. The list enabled me to keep the interviews focused and to show the interviewees why I had contacted them particularly. The power relations in these settings are similar to those often referred to as “elite interviews” (William Harvey 2011; Hochschild 2009; Richards 1996; Willis 2006). The interviewee expects a certain formality and structure (Willis 2006:145), while the semi-structured format also allows me to adapt my questions in response to unexpected information or topics that might come up during the conversation (Willis 2006:144–45). I always tried to give my interview partners the space to develop on those issues they perceived as most relevant. This was especially important when talking to the affected population. But those interviews were methodologically different.

Being situated in Rioloro brought me closer to the affected population of El Quimbo. Rioloro is the closest village to the El Quimbo reservoir still in existence. It was once one of the entrances to the haciendas in the valley. Many family members of Rioloro found work on those lands. When they were flooded, these people did not lose their homes, but lost their livelihoods. Only few received appropriate compensation; many had to move away to find new employment options. One neighbouring *vereda* of Rioloro is Montea. It became the resettlement area of the former *vereda* Veracruz (see Figure I-6). Veracruz was located within the “area of direct influence”. Many families have relatives in both communities Veracruz and Rioloro.

Although I had already established contacts and friends in Neiva during my previous stay, in Rioloro I had to begin again. My access point was an art festival organised in Rioloro at the beginning of 2017, called *La Alegría Resiste* (happiness resists).<sup>43</sup> Cerbatana, a young organisation founded by students and artists mainly based in Bogotá, organised the one-week-long event in the village. Together with the local school and in agreement with the local council, they staged concerts and art workshops (including theatrical plays, dance and bodily expression). Several street artists, coming from all parts of the country, left their colourful

---

<sup>43</sup> Event 3, see Appendix 1 for list of events.

marks on the formerly grey walls of the village centre (after agreement with the owners). Members and friends of Cerbatana coming from outside Rioloro camped on surrounding *fincas* (farms) and were taken on tours and excursions to get to know the area. The whole event was to help local businesses and to bring attention to Rioloro and its surroundings.

I was one of the outsiders coming to the village in these days. I camped on the *finca* just opposite the road to Rioloro's village square, participated in the events and introduced myself to other participants. One of my first exchanges was with Tea,<sup>44</sup> the sister of two former village leaders who were outspoken critics of the dam. When I told her why I was in Colombia and specifically in Rioloro, she told me directly: "*Rioloro se acabó totalmente*" (Rioloro is completely gone/run down). What was once the community no longer existed. She turned and presented me to an older lady who was observing a dance artist in the middle of the town pavilion, teaching dance moves to young children. Without changing her unemotional expression, the old woman looked me in the eye and said: "*Hasta los monos nos trajeron*". (They even brought us the blond people.)

I later came to learn that this woman had not only lost her home and the lands where she grew up and raised her children, but also her son, who had died on the motorbike he bought with compensation money. I knew that if I wanted to understand the consequences of the dam construction, I was at the right place. The *finca* where I had camped became my more constant accommodation and Diego, the son of the owner, offered me a bed in one of the many empty quarters. The family had long ago moved to Bogotá, where Diego had also attended school and university. He had become socially active with Cerbatana and had initiated the festival in his old home town, hoping to revive the area by making it attractive to tourists. Diego and two other local Cerbatana members became friends of mine.<sup>45</sup> They later took care of me when I was ill, and provided me with necessary insights into the local customs and habits (such as the Easter celebrations, in which I took part).

While sitting at the local shop, drinking *tinto* (a cup of coffee with a heaped spoon of sugar), or helping the shop owner prepare *arepas* (Colombian corn tortillas), I had the chance to talk to many inhabitants and workers passing by. Through contacts established at the little shop, together with contacts from the round table and the public hearing I attended, I was able to talk to and visit people in three of four resettlement areas, the townships of Gigante, Garzón, El

---

<sup>44</sup> Pseudonyms

<sup>45</sup> The son of the local shop owner (former farmworker and struggling to find permanent work close by) and his girlfriend, who came from outside the area and was also facing difficulties in finding a job in the region.

Agrado, La Jaguara (upstream) and El Hobo (downstream). Among them were not only affected persons but also local political and civil society representatives such as the mayor of El Agrado and the lawyer for the Catholic Church in Garzón. With them, I carried out expert interviews, as was the case with my Neivan-based research.

My main methodology in the affected area was to observe, participate, talk to and learn with the resident population. I also recorded in-depth conversations which lasted from half an hour to over three hours. These informed my research as much as other encounters. For example, I listened to a conversation at the lunch table between the anarchistic elaboration on capitalism by Diego and the call for religious faith by Tea's aunt, which led to a consensus that tourism would be the only hope for Rioloro. Another example took place without exchanging many words, when I joined fishermen camping on the reservoir shore to check their *atarrayas* (fishing nets) in the early morning. In sum, my methods here are best described as participant observation and in-depth (narrative) interviews.

Participant observation and case study are ethnographic methods (Donge 2006), but I do not claim to do ethnography (see Ingold 2014). Ethnography takes a holistic approach to the field following the objective to understand the local variety of cultural aspects (Donge 2006). My field research was more targeted. I studied how people reflected on the dam project, its impacts, their situation, the future, and the resistance, not only by talking to them but also by participating in their daily activities, observing behaviours and interactions. Keeping a field diary was key to this process (Donge 2006:184).

During the in-depth (narrative) interviews, I still had certain topics in mind to address, but I let the interviewees choose the direction, to see what they considered as most important and what they wanted to share with me. The description of the interviews as “in-depth” emphasises their purpose in diving deeper into certain topics, instead of covering a broader spectrum of issues. The term “narrative interview” specifies that the interviewer is interested in stories and how, through them, meaning and knowledge is expressed (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:179). I discovered that interviewees, especially at the start of the conversation, would expect specific questions (Willis 2006:145–46). Therefore, I would begin with factual questions about their origin, family, work and civil society or political affiliations. I would however avoid using an interrogation-like format, which many people had experienced when talking with Emgesa. I would soon move on to issues related to the El Quimbo dam project which they could talk about: if they were affected, if they received compensation, how they experienced the first

encounter with the company, if they had joined the resistance at one point etc. These questions were searching less for facts than for narratives that would reflect their perceptions of what had happened. Depending on their responses, I asked follow-up questions that led to deeper reflections on certain aspects such as the role of resistance in the struggle, or the dam's impacts on social networks etc. If an interviewee only offered short answers on a topic, I would move to another one to avoid putting the interviewee in an uncomfortable position (Willis 2006:149).

Before any interview, I would make sure that my conversation partner was fully aware of who I was, what I was doing and why I wanted to talk with them. I always asked for permission to use their shared information for my thesis and related publications. Also, if I recorded a talk, it was after their verbal agreement to do so. If I felt that my counterpart was not entirely comfortable or slightly confused, I would talk more about myself and encourage the interviewee to ask me questions about anything they were concerned about. If the person remained shy and hesitant, I would not proceed with the interview.

The power relations in interviews with members of the affected population differed from the power relations when interviewing experts. While the experts often had a certain opinion and knowledge base that they were used to arguing for and defending, this was not always the case with the affected population, who could be more insecure and inexperienced in sharing their opinions or even in reflecting on certain matters raised for the first time. Therefore, I gave the interviewee enough time, never pressured for an answer and showed empathy when they shared personal traumas. For example, Fernando began to cry while he told me about his eviction from Veracruz and of the death of his wife soon after. I switched off the recorder and gave him time to recover his voice. I offered to stop the interview, but he wanted to continue.<sup>46</sup>

Personal references were crucial in gaining people's trust. Although the snowballing technique was useful, the limitation of the technique is that people might only refer me to people they know share a similar opinion (e.g. Tea introducing me to the elderly woman; Willis 2006:148). For this reason, I used public events to make further contacts and by being in Rioloro and regularly visiting Montea, I also managed to talk more randomly to people in order to achieve diversity in perspectives and opinions (Willis 2006:148). I tried to talk to as many women as men, and to people of different ages and educational groups. For instance, after having met with the male head of a household, by chance I encountered the wife alone on a separate

---

<sup>46</sup> Interview 36

occasion and was able to hear her perspectives without her husband's presence.<sup>47</sup> I also talked to women without getting to know their husbands at all.<sup>48</sup>

Listening to different voices for generating *different knowledges* is as relevant as using different methods and putting findings in dialogue (Nightingale 2003). While observation provides an understanding of circumstances, interviews give insights into people's experience of those circumstances. An analysis of one's narrative, language, speech is usually accompanied by an analysis of one's behaviour (during the interview setting or on other occasions; Maxwell 2013:102–4). For this reason, it is beneficial to visit or accompany the interviewee in a place of daily routine, such as in their house, garden, or work site. One of my interviewees told me about his struggles to receive compensation and find a new income-generating activity after El Quimbo. However, he was living with his family in one of the larger, newer houses of Rioloro and seemed well off in comparison to many others. I found out that he was able to build the house thanks to the compensation he finally received, but which did not cover daily expenses such as food.<sup>49</sup>

### *Secondary material and triangulation*

Before, during and after my fieldwork, I gathered secondary material for analysis. I read theses, articles published in academic journals, and online newspaper articles about the El Quimbo dam project, watched videos uploaded by the affected population during the years of struggle (on YouTube and on Facebook) and short documentaries that were produced by Huilan movie-makers to capture the history of the area. Fortunately, the attention the El Quimbo dam project had received in Huila since 2008 had led to an extensive documentation of what once was. Students of law, economy, natural and social sciences studied the dam project and its impacts related to their disciplines. Students of communication and art devoted their exam projects to documenting the life of people at the *veredas* prior to their resettlement. The Huilan newspapers *La Nación* and *El Diario del Huila* covered the struggles at El Quimbo on a nearly daily basis (during the times of greatest tension from 2011 to 2012 and 2015 to 2016). All this material offered valuable insight additional to my own primary material, and allowed me to triangulate my results.

The concept of triangulation has its origin in positivism. A combination of methods should allow the researcher to cross validate findings derived from each method individually. If

---

<sup>47</sup> Interviews 31, 35

<sup>48</sup> Interviews 13, 25, 27, 54, 56

<sup>49</sup> Interview 34

different results appear, one method would prove to be inaccurate (Campbell 2002: 27). For example, interview information has the limitation of relying on the interviewee's memory and observation is restricted to time and space. Secondary material can then offer valuable validation. Besides this form of cross checking of concrete information (like specific dates of events), for this research I use triangulation in the poststructural (feminist) understanding primarily.

Feminist scholars have developed triangulation into an analytical tool that allows not to devalue certain voices, but to discover and explore "the silences and incompatibilities that become evident when data sets produced by diverse methodologies are brought together" (Nightingale 2003:80). Data is put "in conversation with one another by interrogating the dissonant findings [...] to uncover new knowledge" (Hesse-Biber 2012:144). As such, the tool is used "in the service of pinpointing subjugated knowledge" (Hesse-Biber 2012:139) and of uncovering *different truths*, instead of determining a *single* truth (Hesse-Biber 2012; Nightingale 2003; Paulson 2019). For example in my case, if interviewees state that the fishery in the river had decreased since the dam construction started upstream, but the construction company (relying on its environmental assessment) insists that this would not be the case, the divergence is taken as the starting point for a deeper analysis of how knowledge is produced.

### *Transcription*

Back at my home research institution, I came to know a recent graduate in Environmental Science. She was in Norway for the master's programme but had grown up in rural Colombia (Cordoba). She agreed to help me with transcribing my recorded interviews<sup>50</sup> and typed out what was said by my interviewees and me (always in Spanish) and made notes if something was hard to understand or of particular Colombian meaning. Then she would offer suggestions in Spanish (sometimes also in English) of what this could mean. Because she had heard of the El Quimbo dam struggle but did not have detailed information about the actors, locations and events mentioned, I always checked her transcriptions against the records, to ensure that these were referred to correctly. I also counter-checked the information with the field notes I had taken during and after the interview to see if my reflections then corresponded with my interpretation now (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:204). Sometimes I would also ask the transcriber for her interpretation of a specific response in an interview to compare our understandings.

---

<sup>50</sup> She signed a confidentiality clause beforehand.

### *Interpretation and discourse analysis*

I analysed my raw material – recorded interviews, transcripts and notes, field diary, records of speeches and debates, as well as secondary data – during and after the process of gathering it. Interpretation of meaning is an unconscious automatic process. When I raise a question, the interviewees put a certain interpretation onto it and respond from their lived self-interpretation (first-order hermeneutics). I then also interpret the answer in a certain manner (double hermeneutics; Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:354; Giddens 1976). For example, with the previously mentioned declaration by Tea that Rioloro is totally run down, she puts into words her interpretation of her lived reality. I interpret her statement then as her having lost hope that Rioloro as a community survives El Quimbo.

Instead of seeking hidden deeper meanings in what people shared with me, I tried to present the circumstances of the statements “as fully as possible” in my interview notes and field diary (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:247). In the case of Tea’s declaration, my interpretation was also influenced by the setting. We attended a festival that tried to reverse the process of village deterioration and Tea referred me to the elderly woman, who had lost everything.

Further, I analysed the discourses the people made use of, during interviews but also during informal or formal gatherings, in speeches and debates. I take discourses and narratives as described by Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2008:50–51): “we see both discourse and narrative as shared ways of understanding and presenting a social phenomenon”. Narratives are “social constructions about specific cases”; discourses are “frameworks for construction of broader and more abstract phenomena”. Actors create discourse, but they apply the structures provided by the discourses to interpret social matters (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2008:51).

In the case of the El Quimbo dam struggle, the opposing parties made use of highly charged discourses (with attached meaning beyond the national) to argue for their position. On the one hand, the company (and the central government) legitimised the dam project and related actions with discourses of development and security. On the other hand, the opposition used discourses that attract similar attention to criticise the above and to propose alternatives, like biodiversity or the right to a healthy environment. I was curious to discover what terminology my interview partners, the affected population and the experts used themselves, without putting words into their mouth (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:181). My interview questions would intentionally start generally. I would not mention key actors (like Asoquimbo) or key words (like sustainability or human rights) before the conversation partner had raised them. I tried to avoid questions that

implied some kind of judgement or other leading questions, for instance: “Wouldn’t you agree that ...” (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:199).

## Ethical considerations

*Inconvenient as it may be, we must forever ask what the impact of our analyses might be.*

Brosius 1999a:302

Throughout the research, during the fieldwork as well as before and afterwards, different ethical challenges appear (Brydon 2006:29). Questions arise about with whom to affiliate (if at all), what methods to choose, how to select interview partners, how to present oneself and how much to disclose about one’s research project, how far to get involved in local struggles, what to contribute, how to save the sources and share results, and so on. I have already discussed above the aspects related to selection of case, methods and sources and of my own positionality in the field. Here, I want to reflect upon specific ethical challenges I faced during my fieldwork and on the question of research impact.

As the Brosius epigraph highlights, it is essential for any researcher to consider the possible impact the research study might have once it is published and accessible to a wider audience. He identifies “a kind of naive optimism” among researchers studying environmental social movements (Brosius 1999a:303). Well-intended research projects to empower and emancipate such movements have often proven to have no impact at all, or worse, to result in the opposite – a further marginalisation. Brosius (1999a:302) reminds us (those who study environmental social movements) that we should never disregard “the fate of those we study in pursuit of ‘the truth’”.

My own intention with this research has been to shed more light on the multidimensional impacts of large dams and to understand more contemporary land-use conflicts in Colombia. My ambition, at most, is to contribute to an understanding of the challenges of social movements, and to encourage knowledge production that prevents future potential land-use conflicts by finding more adequate place-specific solutions for energy generation and infrastructure development. A more applied research approach, advocated among others by feminist and decolonial scholars, could have framed the study purpose more around local needs and wishes (e.g. Batterbury 2018; Brown and Tandon 1983; Chambers 1981; Fals Borda 1979, 1999; Maguire 1987). Through participatory methods, those would be identified in a first step and then the researcher, with close local engagement, would work towards possible solutions. Engagements of these kinds had however already been undertaken by civil society actors in the

area as well as public offices, like the National Training Service (*Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje* – SENA) and I sensed some fatigue among the affected population concerning those events. Arriving as a researcher from Norway, I did not believe I was the right person to start yet another intervention. Additionally, the timeframe of my PhD project would have restricted such an endeavour. My purpose was to listen, and to understand the bigger picture. At this point, I should also mention that the scope of this study did not allow the space to consider and apply specifically gender-aware and feminist methods, concepts, and analyses. I recognise this limitation and will prioritise overcoming this gap in future research.

Next to critically reflecting on the limited applicability of my research, I need to consider the risk of my study having a negative impact. In one possible outcome, my results could undermine the anti-dam mobilisation in Huila:

Social movements are in essence dedicated to challenging traditional configurations of power, and what we disclose about them in reporting our findings [...] provides a map for these who seek to suppress them. In short, we undercut resistance when we show how it works (Brosius 1999a:301; see also Said 1989:220).

In another outcome, my results could put my sources at risk. I consider the latter first, before turning in detail to the former risk.

McLafferty (1995:437; quoted in Rose 1997:307) comments that “except in rare cases, the researcher holds a ‘privileged’ position – by deciding what questions to ask, directing the flow of discourse, interpreting interview and observational material, and deciding where and in what form it should be presented”. This holds true in my case study, for example when I chose not to disclose my friendship with one of Emgesa’s social workers. Furthermore, it is sometimes beneficial to not fully disclose what the research objective is, because that could influence the way an interviewee responds. I always said that my research analyses the consequences of the El Quimbo dam project and the resulting conflict. But when I talked to civil society or political representatives, I did not expand on the fact that this would imply questioning how the dam opposition might have contributed to negative consequences of the struggle. As mentioned, I always tried to keep my own opinion to myself and begin any interview with neutral, open questions. Consequently, some of my correspondents would directly go into political or ideological elaborations, while others would provide me with a more pragmatic overview of pros and cons of the dam development.

Before starting an interview, I always obtained verbal consent that the information shared can be used for my research and related publications. An informed consent is achieved when the

participant is fully aware of the research purpose and procedure, with whom information will be shared, and possible personal consequences (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:93). I considered verbal informed consent instead of written consent appropriate because many affected people have trouble reading, or are at least insecure about it. Over the years it was Emgesa which had asked them to sign papers many times, often to the later disadvantage of the signee.

Listening to conversation as part of participant observation can be helpful in gleaning important pieces of information. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015:94) also point out that “it can sometimes be difficult to determine when the more informal interaction ends and an interview begins”. In informal conversation, it is seldom possible to obtain consent prior to the talk. Therefore, I always ensured that everyone I came into contact with knew about me and was aware of my research. If sensitive information came up apart from a formal interview setting, I would ask subsequently for consent to use that information.

The personal consequences that might result from participants’ involvement in the research are twofold. On the positive side, the research results can benefit the participant (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:95–96) as stated earlier. Another form of making participation in a research favourable to participants, is to distribute gifts (see Brydon 2006:30). I did not give gifts to my interview partners and I did not feel it was expected in any way, as is sometimes the case in other cultural settings, where many researchers move in and out of the setting (see e.g. Head 2009). If I met participants at a café to talk, I would pay the bill. If I had more than one interaction with a family, I would bring little gifts for the children (like colouring pencils) or accompany them to the shops and pay for the juice bought. I was motivated by a combination of wanting to show my appreciation for being allowed to spend time with them and of wanting to avoid becoming an additional cost factor.

On the negative side, a person’s involvement in research can lead to personal risks (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015:95–96). In Colombia, being socially active and a publicly outspoken critic of mainstream politics (e.g. inequality, corruption, impunity) can be deadly. For instance, one of the leaders of the fisherfolk association at El Hobo received a death threat from a criminal gang (paramilitary organisation) on the morning before the public hearing in 2016, telling him not to attend the hearing but to leave town.<sup>51</sup> He presented the letter during his speech at the hearing and received a guarantee of personal security from the Minister of the Environment thereafter.

---

<sup>51</sup> Event 2

Hearing of the threat made me even more aware of the sensitivity of what was at stake for the people in these communities.

Activists in Colombia usually appear in media articles or NGO reports with their full names and accompanying images. For this reason, their identity is no secret. This was also the case with the fishermen at El Hobo. Even the online news article about the received death threat published the full name of the threatened leader. Other interview partners of mine have had their names published in the news, and all of them were happy to share their knowledge and opinions with me for my research, with acknowledgement of their full names.

If the interviewee had a public function in which the position was publicly known, I indeed chose to use the real name (e.g. the governor and the mayors). If the person was personally affected by the dam and shared personal experiences with me, I chose to use a pseudonym, which protects their identity to a certain extent. Because the population of Rioloro and the resettlement areas was small, using superficial descriptions of a person, such as “single mother in Nueva Veracruz”, was usually enough information for an insider to identify the person in question. Consequently, when I refer to more sensitive or confidential information in this thesis, I keep it limited to a general description, for example, “a fisherman of El Hobo” (there are around 400 fishermen and women claiming compensation in that municipality). In this way, I hope to protect my correspondents from personal defamation. On the other hand, there was a risk of contributing to the defamation of the social movement.

In this study, I analyse the workings of the resistance, its strategies and allies over time (see Part III). But everything I describe lies in the past. I do not share “insider information” of future tactics nor have I knowledge of secret undertakings whose exposure might put the resistance aim at risk. What I encountered during my field research in central Huila, however, was an expanding critical positioning towards Asoquimbo, the most prominent actor of the resistance. Examining this critical positioning creates a dilemma for me. The association played an essential role in pressuring the company Emgesa and the central government to comply with the environmental licence, to compensation agreements and national and international law. It is also thanks to Asoquimbo that I was introduced to the case, the area and key actors. On the one hand, the purpose of my undertaking is to present the full scenario, which includes the doubts and criticism raised by the local population about Asoquimbo. This is essential in the analysis of what the struggle was and is. On the other hand, I do not want to devalue their work which has been dedicated to raising awareness of impacts, peacefully fighting the dam project

and other large-scale investments, as well as proposing and advocating alternative development projects for the area.

An additional aspect of this dilemma is my relationship with the former president of Asoquimbo, Professor Miller Armín Dussán Calderón (from now on referred to as Miller Dussán). He occupies a particular position in the El Quimbo dam struggle as well as in my research. I came to know him in 2012 and from then on, he was a key source of information for me. As Professor of Education and Communication at the South-Colombian University in Neiva, he initiated and accompanied many research projects on the El Quimbo dam project and wrote a book on the social mobilisation about it (Dussán Calderón 2017).

Miller Dussán combines his academic function with being an activist, blogger and politician. He was the first to bring attention to the El Quimbo dam project among members of the Huilan civil society organisation “Plataforma Sur” in 2008; he was co-founder of Asoquimbo in 2009 and its leader and public representative between 2012 and 2018; he regularly blogged about what was happening at El Quimbo, Asoquimbo’s activities, and his own opinions and political views on his personal blog (<http://millerdussan.blogia.com/>), was often quoted by the Huilan press, and became political consultant and intended to run for governor himself in the regional elections in 2019. Miller Dussán’s influential role not only makes him an important source of information but also an interesting study subject in himself.

Miller Dussán’s blog and other publications were important for me in reconstructing the timeline of the events of the conflict, and the actions taken by the resistance. I also had one private talk with him prior to the public hearing in November 2016 in addition to two (expert) interviews: the first shortly after the public hearing<sup>52</sup> and one in April 2017<sup>53</sup>. I participated in meetings of Asoquimbo at the South-Colombian University and in meetings between Asoquimbo and other parties (affected population, state organs or other civil society representatives). It is therefore necessary to point out that there is a bias in my research towards Miller Dussán’s approach to and perspective on the resistance. This is fostered by the fact that many reports (e.g. from other NGOs), theses and news articles relied heavily on Miller Dussán’s account of the matters at stake. To counter this bias, as far as possible, I have attempted to identify his language in other publications and to listen carefully for other perspectives among critics and former resistance members.

---

<sup>52</sup> Interview 7

<sup>53</sup> Interview 20

Overall, my aim has been to present the full picture, including all the different perspectives I encountered throughout my research. I hope that my analysis can be used constructively, also for social mobilisations in Colombia to reflect on their work.

## II. Damming the River

*Only a specialist can help the masses to analyse space, but only the masses live space,  
and know concretely what it is.*

Riou 2007:37

## Prologue: Engineering reality at El Quimbo valley

The idea of building a dam at the El Quimbo gorge in Huila was not new in 2008. Approximately 15 kilometres downstream of the Magdalena River, Betania dam is located. Betania was put into operation in 1987. The operating public company Betania-S.A. also analysed the viability of a dam at the El Quimbo gorge between 1992 and 1997. After the Spanish energy company Endesa acquired majority shares of Betania-S.A. and the dam in 1996, it contracted the consultancy firm of Colombian Engineers Ingetec-S.A. to take out the feasibility study of El Quimbo (Ingetec-S.A. 2008). It applied for an environmental licence in 1997; however, the then Ministry of the Environment rejected the project because of the immense impacts it would have on the agricultural sector in Huila (Minambiente 2009:1). Only ten years later, this evaluation changed.

In June 2007, the governmental strategy paper “Internal Agenda for Productivity and Competitiveness in Huila” mentioned El Quimbo’s economic potential (Departamento del Huila 2007). In February of the following year, the Ministry of the Environment announced that it would support the project’s realisation. In August 2008, the national government with Álvaro Uribe as president (2002–2010), issued a decree Conpes 3527 “The politics of competitiveness and productivity”, which highlights the importance of hydroelectric projects for the development of the country. Only one month later, the lands of El Quimbo valley were declared a zone of “public utility” (Resolution No. 321; Contraloría General de la República [Comptroller General] 2011; see Chapter 9). Emgesa acquired the rights to the project and started construction in October 2008 without having yet received the environmental licence to do so (Contraloría General de la República 2011).

The people living and working in the valley were taken by surprise; most people had been convinced that the project was not viable in terms of the first evaluation in 1997. For Emgesa to legitimise its project against scepticism, criticism and even revolt, it endeavoured to create a favourable reality for the construction of the mega-dam.<sup>54</sup> In this Part, I start answering my overall research question – *how did Emgesa successfully dam the river in spite of the original negative evaluation and constant resistance?* – by addressing its first dimension: the company’s involvement with the affected area. I answer the sub-questions: (a) *what kind of knowledge*

---

<sup>54</sup> Another important role played of course Emgesa’s (Endesa’s and Enel’s) lobbying on the political level. I elaborate on this in Part IV.

*regime did the company produce around the El Quimbo dam project and (b) how has this knowledge been inscribed onto the affected area?*

I concentrate here on two forms of producing closures: first through producing a knowledge regime of place, and second through spatial organisation and infrastructure. My intention is to contribute to the research being done in geography (and political ecology) on “the *production of space* and on the intersections between geographical [and other] knowledge and technologies for the inscription of that knowledge and how these articulate with *structures of domination*” (Brosius 1999a:282 emphasis added).

While the forms of power analysed here are of a structural nature, I do not want to disregard any intentionality on the side of single actors influencing these structures. I chose the term “engineering reality” to capture the techniques of social engineering to construct a certain reality and to highlight the role that engineers and experts play in this. Strategies originating in the ambition of political elites to design an idealised social order and to prevent revolt, have been captured by the scientific concept of “social engineering”. Researchers in sociology, political economy and political ecology have tried to shed light on the mechanisms used by powerful actors (such as the nation state, colonial powers or transnational organisations) to shape human behaviour (e.g. Agrawal 2005; Dean 2010; Fletcher 2010; Harvey 2004; Jessop 1982; Swyngedouw 1992). Many of them rely on the famous works of Marx and Engels (Marx 2009; Marx and Engels 2008 [1848]), who described the ability of the bourgeoisie to control men by controlling the modes of production, Gramsci (2018), who critically engaged with hegemony and social control, and Foucault (2007), who developed the concept of governmentality to analyse how to conduct the conduct. James Scott (1998) took up the term “social engineering” in his book *Seeing like a State*, where he brings attention to the modern state’s intentions to control all aspects of life of its citizens. He critically engages with what he calls the social engineering project of high modernism. One specific criterion for high modernism is the total faith in science and technological progress, and it concerns the “administrative ordering of nature-society” and the implied simplification of life.

Here in Part II of the thesis, I show how far tactics of social engineering are visible in the case of the El Quimbo dam realisation. I argue that there have been two technologies important to Emgesa’s endeavour to engineer reality at El Quimbo. The first technology, which I call *corporate truth* (Chapter 4), is the knowledge production that discursively supported Emgesa’s actions. The second technology, which I term *dispossession and detachment* (Chapter 5), is the

spatial reconfiguration accompanying the construction of the dam and the compensation mechanisms put in place by the company. I argue that the combination of these technologies produced closures that supported the successful damming of the river.

I begin with what constitutes the groundwork for the dam to be built: the engineering of reality through establishing a “certain economy of discourses of truth” concerning the affected area (Foucault 1980:93). I focus on the role played by the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and its baseline studies in constituting the basis for legitimising (and contesting) the hydroelectric investment project – ten years after it had been evaluated unfeasible.

## 4. Corporate truth

The El Quimbo valley at the upper Magdalena River was home to the first colonial settlers coming to the south of Colombia via the river. Because of its accessibility and fertile lands, this part of the upper stream had always been of strategic importance (see Chapter 1). The creeks, hillsides, forests and beaches as well as farms and roads were well known to the people living among them. However, it was only with increased national economic interest that the characteristics of the valley – its ecosystem and landscapes, its inhabitants and land uses – were recorded, classified and quantified (see epigraph at beginning of Part II).

In 2007, Emgesa contracted the same company who had provided the feasibility study for a possible hydroelectric dam located at the El Quimbo gorge ten years earlier, Ingetec-S.A., to carry out an EIA of the dam (see company profile in Box 1).<sup>55</sup>

An EIA is “the evaluation of the effects likely to arise from a major project (or other action) significantly affecting the natural and man-made environment” (Wood 2003:1). In 1989, Caldwell (1989:9) described the EIA not as a science but as using “many sciences (and engineering) in an integrated interdisciplinary manner, evaluating relationships as they occur in the real world” (quoted in Wood 2003:2). It is a prognosis of environmental risk (Mathews and Barnes 2016) to inform decision-makers about environmental consequences of an investment, so they can take appropriate decisions (Wood 2003:1–2). An EIA is intended as a “tool of accountability” (F. Li 2009), a tool to make companies and state agencies accountable

---

<sup>55</sup> After the environmental licence for El Quimbo was granted, it was also Ingetec-S.A. which was assigned to design, audit and supervise the construction works of the dam (see Pérez Trujillo 2019).

to affected populations. Its components are a description of the technical details of the project, an analysis of the possible impacts on the environment (and the population affected by those impacts), their severity and their manageability (strategies for adaptation/mitigation and contingency plans).

#### **Box 1. Ingetec-S.A. Company profile**

The Colombian consultancy describes itself as follows:

With over 60 years of experience providing engineering services for clients and owners during all phases of projects including: studies, design, technical advisory and supervision during construction, INGETEC has participated in hydro and thermoelectric projects, electrical substations and transmission lines, transportation and ports, disposal and treatment of waste water, irrigation districts and water supply, highways (including tunnels, bridges, and viaducts), massive public transportation (metro, articulated buses), environmental and social studies, permitting and licensing, oil and gas, industrial and mining development projects, among others.

INGETEC provides consulting services to companies of the public and private sectors, during conceptual design, prefeasibility, feasibility, bid designs and detailed designs for the construction of their infrastructure projects. Services extend to project start-up, testing and commissioning.

(retrieved from <https://www.ingetec.com.co/Pagina/firma/> 18 Aug 2020)

EIAs of hydroelectric dams are meant to and have the potential to detect unnecessary major damage to the existing social–environmental system before the project is realised, and to propose strategies for avoidance and mitigation. Ledec and Quintero (2003) identify, for example, the selection of the dam site as significant in mitigating impacts. They see direct correlation between the negative impacts of a dam and two ratios: the number of hectares flooded per megawatt and the number of displaced people per megawatt. They suggest that planners should choose the lowest amount ratio for a dam site in order to minimise other secondary impacts.<sup>56</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, the impacts of dams are multiple and often underestimated. At least since the World Commission of Dams (WCD) report published in 2000, the industry has the ambition to present hydropower as green energy technology. The EIA shall help to limit environmental (and social) damage by the investment.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> The El Quimbo dam project has the ratios of 21.47 hectars flooded per Megawatt and 3.84 people displaced per Megawatt. That makes El Quimbo relatively more damaging than Betania dam (14 and 1 respectively) and less damaging than the Úrra I dam (22 and 18 respectively); see Ledec and Quintero 2003:12).

<sup>57</sup> During the recent years, additional frameworks have been developed to complement the environmental and social impact assessments, for instance the *Strategic Environmental Assessments* (SEA; see Lima Andrade and Dos Santos 2015) and the *Hydropower Sustainability Tools* (Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee n.d.; see last section of this Part). Because neither of the tools have been applied in Colombia, I do not consider them in my analysis.

The first EIAs were introduced in the United States in 1969. Their adaptation into Colombian law followed the formation of the Ministry of Environment in 1993 (Decree Ley 99 de 1993). The EIA as a prerequisite for granting the environmental licence was regulated through the Decree 1753 of 1994. Decree 1728 of 2002 further detailed the licencing process. It states that the EIA must contain information on the location of the project, on the abiotic, biotic and socio-economic elements of the environment that may suffer deterioration by the respective project (for whose execution an environmental license is requested), and the evaluation of the impacts that may occur along the project's utility.<sup>58</sup> This includes the design of prevention, mitigation, correction and compensation plans of impacts and the environmental management plan of the project (Article 17, Decree 1728 of 2002). The law requires the project developer to follow the logic of the so-called mitigation hierarchy: if an impact cannot be avoided, try to minimise or mitigate it. If that is not possible, restore or rehabilitate the ecosystem, and finally if that is still impossible, offset or compensate the damage done (Sullivan 2013).

The law further highlights that “the environmental impact assessment is not an object of approval but of technical concepts, based on which the environmental authority decides on the granting or not of an environmental license” (Article 27, Decree 1753 of 1994 and Article 18, Decree 1728 of 2002). Accordingly, the EIA is considered a value-free, technical tool that informs the responsible environmental agencies about possible environmental risks and the management of the project's impacts.

The EIA of the El Quimbo dam forms essential part of a larger body of studies done relating to the project and its impacts which I call “corporate studies”.<sup>59</sup> These include baseline studies, like the first census, but also their updates. Emgesa updated the socio-economic census in 2009 and again later owing to public pressure. It also caught, counted and classified local species and did archaeological excavations during several periods prior to the reservoir filling. The environmental licence and later adaptations are legal documents, which are founded on the corporate studies. “The Environmental License carries implicitly all the permits, authorisations and/or concessions for the use, exploitation and/or affectation of renewable natural resources, which are necessary for the useful life of the project, work or activity” (ANLA n.d.). It furthermore defines, in general terms, the company's responsibilities connected to the project. For example, it demands the resettlement of those families losing their homes and defines how

---

<sup>58</sup> In Colombia, there is no policy for a separate Social Impact Assessment. The social impacts are to be evaluated as part of the EIA.

<sup>59</sup> Inspired by Kirsch's concept “corporate science” (2014).

many hectares of land should be reforested to compensate for the loss of ecosystems but it does not specify where or how.

The EIA plays a dual role in the conflict around El Quimbo dam construction and subsequently in my research analysis. On the one hand, the EIA describes the area of the project's direct and indirect influence (scales determined by Ingetec-S.A.) in detail before the dam construction started. Together with follow-up studies carried out by Emgesa over the years after the environmental licence was granted, it became the principal source of information not only for the company, but also for governmental agencies, opposing movements and researchers such as myself. On the other hand, the forms of knowledge it produces, as this chapter shows, are highly contested and disputed by opposing parties.

Within six months, a total of twenty-two engineers, eleven biologists, three geologists, two agronomists, five sociologists (plus two social workers) and four anthropologists (three of them specialising in archaeology)<sup>60</sup> had carried out a variety of studies to characterise the population groups and economy (own census, in addition to official demographic statistics and maps of the six municipalities), as well as the environment of the zone of direct (and indirect) influence (own samples of species, water and soil, in addition to satellite images and official geological data; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:76–78).

The resulting EIA is a disorganised compilation of separate smaller assessments of over 2,300 pages (misplaced lists of content, confused chapter organisation and no straightforward page numeration). It is dense with technical language, jargon, contradictions and repetition, and as such, is highly inaccessible and leaves space for broad interpretation. It however carries the authority intrinsic to a scientific study.

During the last centuries, science has come to be portrayed as the superior form of knowledge production, with a constructed “regime of truth” around its own discourses. Foucault (1980:82) argues that this has left “a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or *scientificité* [scientificity, the qualities regarded as scientific]”. These more local popular knowledges (Foucault 1980:82) or what Scott (1998:311) refers to as *métis*, practical knowledge based on experiences, do not qualify as scientific and as

---

<sup>60</sup> There is no indication if the expert had any prior social or professional relationship to the area affected.

a result cannot disqualify scientific discourses.<sup>61</sup> *Scientificité* manifests a power bias between different types of knowledge production (Foucault 1980). It provides a certain representation of truth with an authority intrinsic to its nature, which leaves hardly any space for actors to contest the same, while not following the rules of *scientificité*.

Nonetheless, scientific paradigms have moved beyond positivism and realism; quantitative methods (and empiricism) still enjoy the general perception of being more neutral and objective. This has also left its traces in science-informed decision-making, increasingly common to welfare states (Jasanoff and Wynne 1998). Scientific studies provide essential legitimisation for new policies and reforms (e.g. Burke and Heynen 2014). So-called “evidence-based” policies create an image of neutral and “unpolitical” politics (Wynne 2008:23).<sup>62</sup>

Kirsch (2014) highlights, with his concept of *corporate science*, how corporations have made use of this intrinsic power of scientific knowledge by supporting research that backs up their industry, products and marketing strategies, while simultaneously undermining the funds and publishing of studies that prove the opposite. Goldman (2005:179) observes similar practices connected to environmental impact assessments of World Bank investments and concludes “knowledge is now the greatest asset”. In this chapter, I analyse the techniques used that create an image of the reality favourable to the El Quimbo project’s realisation – which I call “corporate truth” – and contrast it to other knowledge sources. Without denying the importance of the EIA for large investments, I argue in this chapter that the mechanism has produced multiple closures in the interests of the company. I begin with a census and characterisation of the affected population in this case study, before turning to a description of the economy, ecology and culture of the valley.

## The census

In 2007, when flying over the valley of El Quimbo, it was possible to observe a meandering river with sandy beaches guarded by forests and agricultural lands (see Figure II-1). Ingetec-S.A. estimates that 40% of the land was covered by natural vegetation, while 53% was used for

---

<sup>61</sup> Scott (1998:319–20) puts this concept in contrast to the old Greek concept *techne*, which “is based on logical deduction from self-evident first principles.” It is universal (like the logic of mathematics), not context-specific as *mētis*.

<sup>62</sup> “Descriptions of science as distinctively truthful, useful, objective or rational may best be analysed as ideologies: incomplete and ambiguous images of sciences nevertheless useful for scientists’ pursuit [and I would add politicians’ pursuit] of authority and material resources.” (Gieryn 1983:792–93).

agriculture and cattle ranging, and another 7% for human settlements and infrastructure (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1760).<sup>63</sup>

The El Quimbo valley was the most fertile valley in the whole of Huila. Agriculture, cattle ranging, and fishing provided the main income to the region. The valley was divided into 20 *veredas*, i.e. 805 directly affected properties (489 private plots and 320 plots as part of collectively owned agricultural businesses (*empresas comunitarias*, from now on referred to as farmers' cooperatives; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1092). The corresponding municipalities were Gigante (43.91% of the land affected), El Agrado (37.83%), Garzón (16.76%), Tesalia (1.25%), Altamira (0.21%) and Paicol (0.04%; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:102). The largest settlements located in their totality within the valley were La Escalereta (81 houses), Veracruz (76 houses), San José de Belén (50 houses), Balseadero and La Honda (see distribution of affected population in Box 2 and location of *veredas* in Figure I-6).

According to the socio-economic census carried out by Ingetec-S.A. in 2007 (between 14 May and 22 June), the area of direct influence provided home to a total of 1,537 people, or 369 families in 420 individual houses. Of those, 1,056 persons were of working age (354 classified as housewives, 416 as adolescents attending school, and 286 persons who generated an income; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1163).<sup>64</sup> Although Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1164) calculated a labour demand in the valley to be only 1,418 people, 1,970 persons were registered as working in the area of direct influence. These last two numbers serve the argument of Emgesa that employment was inefficient in the area and that more people claimed to be economically affected than the number of employment positions supported.

There are several reasons to contest these numbers and their calculation. First of all, there are later updates of the census showing varying numbers. According to a census in 2009, the area had a “resident population” of 1,764 people distributed among 458 families, and a “non-resident population with economic activity” of 1,801 people in the area (Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015). By 2012, Emgesa regarded 3,036 people as being affected, limiting the number of the non-resident population to 1,272 people (*La Nación* 2013). In general, there are

---

<sup>63</sup> The EIA states 0.7% for human settlement and infrastructure. However, I consider this number to be too low and Ingetec-S.A. does not indicate how the other 6.3% would be used. Seven per cent however seems to make more sense and adds up, with 40% and 53%, to a 100%.

<sup>64</sup> Ingetec-S.A. (2008:26) considers the working age to start with turning 10 years old (after having completed the primary school). Around 315 kids under an age of 10 were living in the “area of direct influence”. The rest probably accounts for the people too old to work.

very few indications of what criteria Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa used to register the affected population.

**Box 2. Distribution of the affected population and veredas in 2007**

El Agrado: A total of 672 people affected in the veredas La Cañada, **La Escalereta**, **San Jose de Belén**, La Yaguilga and Pederal; (resettlement La Galda)

Gigante: A total of 598 people affected in the veredas Matambo, Ríoloro, **Veracruz**, Libertador, La Honda, Espinal; (resettlement Montea)

Garzón: A total of 251 people affected in the veredas Alto San Isidro, Monserrate, **Balseadero**, Jagualito, Barzal, Los Medios, and the town centre La Jagua; (resettlement Santiago y Palacio)

Tesalia: A total of 10 people affected in the vereda Alto de la Hocha (some areas of material exploitation are located there)

Altamira: A total of 6 people affected in the vereda Llano de la Virgen (location of resettlement area La Escalereta)

Paicol: No people directly affected, but the hacienda Domingo Arias is where the main construction is located.



Figure II-1 Google earth image of the Magdalena River valley around Rioloro (satellite picture from early 2015).

A second reason to contest these numbers is that several people in the valley state that they did not know what the first census was for, and were hesitant to register their information. While Ingetec-S.A. mentions meetings with community representatives to inform about the census process and its purpose, two community representatives of Rioloro claim that the company had no interest in enlightening the local population. If people had known that the meetings involved compensation, they would have called all family members and neighbours to make sure everybody registered.<sup>65</sup> Left in the dark, however, many people thought the census was carried out by the tax office to increase property taxes (including increases in taxes on public services). Accordingly, the people tried to appear poorer in the census – contrary to what later proved useful for compensation negotiations.<sup>66</sup>

Third, based on its census data, Emgesa classified each registered worker as holding only one occupation.<sup>67</sup> The people living and working on the *veredas* were classified by Ingetec-S.A. as one of the following: *campesinos* of farmers' cooperatives (peasants as beneficiaries of the agrarian reform programme), *campesinos minifundistas* (peasants as smallholders [less than 50 hectares] or non-owners), recently migrated *campesinos* (later than 2003, with no formal title), *finqueros* (farm owners of 50–200 hectares), *hacendados* (large farm owners of more than 200 hectares), *jornaleros* (day labourers on *fincas* and *haciendas*), *partijeros* (informal partakers of *fincas* (see Ingetec-S.A. 2008:941), *mayordomos* (farm managers of *fincas/haciendas*), or traditional fishermen/women (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:931).

This classification simplifies the diverse productive activities in the valley. Many people relied on several income-generating activities to maintain their livelihood. On the one hand, *mayordomos*, *partijeros* and small landholders grew partly cash crops but also kept fruit trees, pigs and chickens for their subsistence. The EIA lists hectares used for subsistence agriculture (*pancoger*), but it is not clear how this contributes to the calculation of household incomes and informal labour demand. On the other hand, nearly 50% of all people living in the “area of direct influence” owned less than one hectare of land. Around 32% owned less than 50 hectares of land (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1216). The majority of these smallholders worked their land, but also received additional income as *jornaleros* on other farms or as fisher.<sup>68</sup> Putting these people into one labour category ignored alternative sources of income.

---

<sup>65</sup> Interviews 25, 26, 34

<sup>66</sup> Interviews 25, 26; At the time of the census actualisation in 2009, people knew what it was about; however resistance had started, and one strategy was to disobey any interaction with the company (see Chapter 6).

<sup>67</sup> Interview 51 and intervention of Zoila María Nico Perdomo during the public hearing, Nov. 2016.

<sup>68</sup> Interviews 36, 51

A fourth reason to query the census figures is that, following the former logic, Emgesa usually only considered the income of the head of the household when negotiating compensation for the whole family, treating the woman as a housewife and the children as students, without income-generating activity. For example, an interviewee, Fernanda, was working in the cacao harvest and was also registered as such, but later appeared in the census as *ama de casa* (home-keeper).<sup>69</sup> Veracruz was a community of fisherfolk with small properties, who generated additional income as *jornaleros* on surrounding farms. Every person in a household who was able to work, contributed to the family income. School children often helped out after school.<sup>70</sup> This allowed the family members a certain independence from the main earner.<sup>71</sup> Excluding these more informal activities from the equation explains the earlier census numbers: of all persons living in the area of working age, 770 were classified as housewives and adolescents attending school, while only 286 persons were counted as having income-generating activities. This distorted the image of reality and made families appear poorer than they were.

Fifth, the *haciendas* in general specialised in cattle ranching for milk and meat production (around 2,500 hectares of the 8,250 hectares were pastures; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1085) and *fincas* on cash crops. The activities developed by those large farms played a fundamental role in the consolidation of social, economic and productive networks in the region (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1218). Tobacco cultivation in particular demands a significantly large labour force. *Jornaleros* came from all parts of the surrounding municipalities to find employment on the farms. However, agricultural jobs were usually seasonal and the number of employed *jornaleros* varies widely over the year. Consequently, many agricultural workers claimed to have relied economically on the production in the valley, but had not been present during the census periods and therefore missed registration.<sup>72</sup> Also fishermen and women reported having missed being registered because their working hours were during the early mornings.<sup>73</sup> Ingetec-S.A. registered 39 persons engaged in fishing as a productive activity, 31 of them permanently (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1804). However, already Veracruz accounted for 76 households, which identified mostly as fisherfolk (Grupo Kavilando 2011).<sup>74</sup> The above exemplifies how

---

<sup>69</sup> Interview 40; A similar story shared Diana Lorena Fernandez Escobar at the public hearing, Nov. 2016. Also Fernando, fisherman from Veracruz, was included in his wife's compensation, because she owned the house they both lived in (Interview 36).

<sup>70</sup> Even adult children, having graduated from school and worked, but who were still living with their parents, were included in the *núcleo familiar* (household) and not compensated separately (according to Interview 39 and some interventions at the public hearing Nov. 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Interview 39

<sup>72</sup> Interviews 1, 3

<sup>73</sup> Intervention of Leonte Muños Perdomo at public hearing in Nov. 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Interviews 10, 36

corporate temporality (project time frame) does not correspond with seasonal and life project temporalities, but regardless determined the timeframe of census-taking (corporate politics of time).<sup>75</sup>

Finally, many productive activities were left out of the census. Some people had depended on the resources available at the river stream for generating income; they extracted sand, water, wood or other materials (including gold) from the riverbank to secure their livelihood. With the lands being declared of “public utility”, the extraction of these resources became prohibited. Others relied economically on the wider agricultural production chain, which broke down when farmers started to sell the lands to Emgesa. Truck drivers, merchants and manufacturers claimed impairment. Apiculturists lost grounds to place their hives. None of these activities were considered as affected (see Corte Constitucional 2013).

Census-taking is of course a technical procedure demanded by the law and the problems related to the census-taking are certainly not unique to the case of the El Quimbo dam project. For instance, Espeland and Stevens (1998:317) point out that a census always quantifies complex relationships and “renders unproblematic the coherence of the relations among diverse people”. Most quantification and classification, they argue, is a form of commensuration which “creates relations between different entities through a common metric” (Espeland and Stevens 1998:316). Common metrics would be, in this case, the size of household, the formalised income-generating activity, individual assets (e.g. property, livestock). This approach makes families comparable in terms of wealth, and their livelihoods substitutable. It ignores context-specific relationships of exchange and access that exist independent of the formal wealth of households. This has distorted the image of the socio-economic reality of the affected population. In the El Quimbo case, a diversity of livelihood strategies was limited to formal categories, artificially making households appear poorer than they were and employment more unproductive than it was.

By 2014, around 14,000 people demanded that Emgesa recognise them as affected (Contraloría de Bogotá DC 2014). At the public hearing in November 2015, Emgesa stated that it received in total 30,564 claims, of which it compensated 7.7%. The first censuses, 2007-2009, served

---

<sup>75</sup> The concept “politics of time” is not to be confused with Kirsch’s “new politics of time”, which he introduces in the same book, and which describes the strategies of NGOs to prevent negative impacts from happening, here referred to as contentious politics of time (see Part III).

Emgesa to disqualify many claims. But even among those who had received a compensation, many still felt inadequately reimbursed for what they had lost (see Chapter 5).

Consequently, the census (including updates) was highly contested and challenged in courts through the years (see Chapter 6). It became apparent that in spite of its technical nature, the census is not free from conscious decision-making (as other authors have previously shown, (such as Aguilar-Støen and Hirsch 2015, 2017; Kirsch 2014; F. Li 2009; Wood 2003). Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa's lack of transparency around the realisation of the census, suggests certain kind of strategy. The researchers could have ensured that proper information was spread early on among the local population about the census and its purpose. They could have asked people to collect their information and documents in advance, in order to be prepared. And they could have been transparent in the way they collected, characterised and calculated the data. Instead, misinformation had been made use of and part of the information collected had disappeared (see Chapter 5). These points of contestation shed light on the political aspects of the census, which had been rendered technical by Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa (F. Li 2009).

Their practice matches what Kirsch (2014) calls “corporate science”: the manipulation of knowledge to legitimise an investment project. However, it was not only the censuses Emgesa relied on, but also the EIA's characterisation of the ecosystem as fragmented, the economy as inefficient and the culture as eroded.

### The ecology–economy–culture nexus

The natural vegetation, according to the EIA, was mainly forest typical for the particular biome of the region: tropical dry forest. Because of its biodiversity and endangerment, this ecosystem is formally protected. Approximately 95% of the El Quimbo valley was part of the Amazonian Forest Reserve, as constituted in the Law 2° of 1959. The environmental authority for the upper-Magdalena basin – Corporación Autónoma Regional del Alto Magdalena (CAM) – is a regional state agency responsible for the environmental protection and the land-use management of the upper Magdalena river basin including the Amazonian Forest Reserve. However, tight protection measures have never been implemented.

In terms of soil use, the EIA states that 50% of the lands within the “area of direct influence” have no conflict over use, but up to 40% are either under-used or over-used. Ingetec-S.A. argues that human activity (multilevel forest, pastures and crops) had fragmented and destabilised the original biome of the tropical dry forest. Accordingly, the dam's impact on the ecosystem would be low (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:160,194). It follows the logic that previous interventions

justify further alteration of the environment. At the same time, Ingetec-S.A. claims that production in the area has stagnated because of this over- and under-use of the land, and that this would soon lead to an economic crisis (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1758). Therefore, the analysis of the EIA supports the claim that the influences on local ecosystem and economy are easily compensated and the presence of Emgesa would even benefit the region in the long run. The company claimed that it would invest in conserving the biodiversity in surrounding areas and boost the economy in different sectors. In summary, both assessments support the legitimisation of the eradication of the local economy and the degradation of the ecosystem through the dam. Professor of Biology Leyla Marleny Rincón Trujillo (South-Colombian University),<sup>76</sup> the environmental organisation Fundación El Curíbano (based in Neiva) and CAM criticise both these assessments by providing information which Ingetec-S.A. has omitted. In the following sections, I discuss some of the most contested aspects of the EIA.

### *The tropical dry forest*

The tropical dry forest is not only an endangered ecosystem in Colombia, but also worldwide (Pizano and García 2014). Additionally, it is not well studied (Agudelo-Berrío 2016; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:294; Pizano and García 2014). At present, only eight per cent of Colombian surfaces are left which can be classified as tropical dry forest. Most commonly, these ecosystems are found in the Cauca and Magdalena river basin. The tropical dry forest is generally located at an altitude of 0–1,000 metres above sea level in the tropics. It is characterised by an annual precipitation of between 700 and 2,000 millimetres with an extended dry season. The temperature is warm all year round, at above 24 °Celsius (Agudelo-Berrío 2016). And indeed, the climate in the valley of El Quimbo is warm and dry. Approximately 1,571 millimetres of rain fall each year (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:625). The humidity is on average between 76 and 86% (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:707). March is normally the driest period, followed by a rainy season in July. However, the area has experienced increasing weather extremes connected to El Niño and La Niña in recent years (such as heavy rainfalls, which led to floods and landslides, or long dry periods). Further characteristics of the valley are the low winds and the high sun radiation (Ingetec-S.A. 2008: appendix map “PL-EIAQ-39B”).

These somewhat difficult conditions offer a habitat for broad-leaf trees, which provide shade for other species to grow. Epiphytes are a well-known example of the important species in these forests. Epiphytes, like orchids, mosses and bromeliads, live on trees, absorbing moisture from

---

<sup>76</sup> From now on referred to as Leyla Rincón.

air and rain. They provide important ecosystem services to their surroundings by offering habitat and nutrition to birds, insects, fungi and bacteria. They are not parasites because they do not live off the system of another species, like the tree; they only live on it.<sup>77</sup> Many examples of these species are listed as endangered. For instance,

in the studies that have been done so far, it has been reported that the dry forests of Colombia have almost 2,600 species of plants of which 83 are endemic, 230 species of birds of which 33 are endemic, and 60 species of mammals of which three are endemic (Instituto Alexander von Humboldt 2014; see also Pizano and García 2014).

The Cauca and Magdalena River basin is the most populated region in Colombia. Its soils are usually very fertile and are therefore used for intensive agricultural production. Urbanisation and mining activities further threaten these ecosystems, which are fragile to deforestation. Pizano and García (2014) state that 65% of the deforested dry forests underwent a desertification process. Yet, they provide important ecosystem functions:

The forest also provides fundamental services for human communities such as water regulation, soil retention, and carbon sequestration that regulates the climate and the availability of water and nutrients. Finally, dry forests provide forage legumes, ornamentals and fruit trees that are important for the livelihood and well-being of the people who live near them. Because of their location within mosaics of landscapes dominated by agricultural and livestock areas, these dry forests offer the possibility of maintaining insect species that help in the control of pests and vectors of diseases (Instituto Alexander von Humboldt 2014; see Pizano and García 2014).

The authors emphasise the human–environmental interaction and interdependencies, which do not necessarily cause harm but contribute to the constitution of this type of biome. However the EIA, as an example of such assessments in general, separates spheres and fragments its analyses into abiotic, biotic, and socio-economic aspects, which are studied by different experts of different disciplines. Dissecting a complex system into single manageable units is termed a “fragmentation strategy” by Machado et al. (2017:1084). It is a technique common to corporate science. Fragmentation is followed by classification and categorisation (commensuration). Any categorisation originates in a particular value system that allows measurement and quantification, and therefore substitutability (Robertson 2012; Sullivan 2009, 2013).

For example, Ingetec-S.A. classifies the areas with “high canopy” (tree heights of 12–15 metres; 14.8% of the area), the secondary forest<sup>78</sup> (0.1%) and the riparian forests (10.8%), all

---

<sup>77</sup> Intervention of Professor Leyla Rincón Trujillo at public hearing Nov. 2016.

<sup>78</sup> Ingetec-S.A. (2008:247) describes it as the forest closest to the original biome, but intervened through cattle herds looking for shadow.

as natural forests with little human intervention. The multi-level forests (10.4%), together with “low canopy” areas (trees/shrub height approximately four metres; 16.8%), pastures (former cultivations and grazing areas; 31.8%) and crops (transitory: rice, tobacco, sorgo, cotton, sesame, corn etc. and permanent: oranges, plantain, yucca, lime, avocado etc.; 15.6%) are classified as modified systems and therefore of low to no ecological value (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:194).

An ecosystem valuation ideally accounts for “value pluralism” referring to the diverse range of ecological, economic and sociocultural values connected to an ecosystem (see Gómez Baggethun, Barton, Berry, Dunford, and Harrison 2016:100). While economic or monetary values relate to market prices (costs and benefits), ecological values capture the health, stability and resilience of an ecosystem and its contribution to the wider environmental processes (Arias Arévalo, Gómez Baggethun, Martín López, and Pérez Rincón 2018:9; Gómez Baggethun et al. 2016:101). The EIA of the El Quimbo dam does not use the term “ecological value” but refers to it by evaluating the “magnitude of impact” on the ecology. The environmental evaluation concludes that the impact on the vegetation would be low as it has already been altered and fragmented (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:244, 1708, 1710, 1712, 1720). Furthermore, for the calculation of the area to be environmentally compensated for in the environmental licence, the multilevel forests and wooded pastures are taken to be of lower value than the riparian forest, secondary forests and high canopy. Ecosystems of low canopy (disregarding their regenerative capacity), other pastures and crops are not taken into account (Minambiente 2009:61).

This evaluation of ecosystems is limited to the vegetation cover and human use. It simplifies the complex interacting and evolving systems that enable the free circulation of water, air, plants, spores, bacteria, animals, and humans. It allows Ingetec-S.A., however, to measure the categories in hectares, to equate them to surrounding lands (render them substitutable) and to evaluate the significance of their loss. Ingetec-S.A. names the total area of “vegetation cover with similar ecological characteristics” within the “area of *indirect* influence” (70,842 hectares, the total area of all six affected municipalities) in contrast to the vegetation cover actually affected by the dam (5.8%). Choosing this scale of analysis, allowed Ingetec-S.A. to relativise the impact on the ecosystem as low:

The relative magnitude of the impact is calculated based on the vegetation cover with similar ecological characteristics in the area of indirect influence. This area is 70,842 hectares. –The coverage of natural vegetation impacted, respectively to those hectares

existing in the area of indirect influence, has a relative magnitude of 5.8%. –Low: 0.1 (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1712).<sup>79</sup>

By contrast, a detailed ecosystem service valuation, which better accounts for the complex services provided by an ecosystem not only to humans (as suggested by Arias Arévalo, Martín López, and Gómez Baggethun 2017; Gómez Baggethun et al. 2016; Pascual, Balvanera, Diaz, Pataki, Roth, Stenseke, Watson, Dessane, Breslow, Islar, Kelemen, Keune, Maris, Pengue, Quaas, Subramanian, Wittmer, Mohamed, Al-Hafedh, Asah, Berry, Bilgin, Bullock, Cáceres, Golden, Gómez-Baggethun, González-Jiménez, Houdet, Kumar, May, Mead, O’Farrell, Pacheco-Balanza, Pandit, Pichis-Madruga, Popa, Preston, Saarikoski, Strassburg, Verma, Yagi, Ahn, Amankwah, Daly-Hassen, Figueroa, Ma, van den Belt, and Wickson 2017), would probably have provided a deeper understanding of the significance of the life-territory along the river. The narrow perception of values becomes even more apparent in Ingetec’s evaluation of two place-based production activities: cacao cultivation and fishing.

### *Cacao production*

While the environmentally damaging effects of large-scale rice and tobacco plantations is certain (owing to their demand for water, fertilisers and pesticides), the disturbing effect of multi-level forest and permanent crops can be questioned. In these “multi-level forests”, *campesinos* take advantage of shady broad-leaf plants to cultivate cacao and fruit trees in the understorey. Cacao species originate from humid tropical forests. There, plantations are more threatened by fungal attack. Consequently, cacao production moved towards the dry tropical forests. Some of the *labranzas* (local name for cacao cultivations) in El Quimbo valley are over a hundred years old and by now hard to eradicate from the ecosystem and the culture established around it. As Robbins, Chhatre, and Karanth (2015) point out in their study of coffee cultivation in India, these agroforestry plantations can actually increase local biodiversity, while providing a constant employment source.

Cacao is traditionally cultivated in Huila. The *labranzas* require few inputs but signify a stable income almost all year round.<sup>80</sup> The cacao trees need shade, which is provided through mixed cultivation with fruit trees (like banana/plantain trees and avocado), and timber trees (like *matarratón*, *iguá*, *cachimbo*, *caracolí*, *cedro*, *nogal*). One *labranza* of one hectare usually

---

<sup>79</sup> All quotes, which are originally in the Spanish language, are translated by the author.

<sup>80</sup> Alejandra, cacao producer from La Escalereta, said that the cacao trees carried fruits between April and June and between October and December. In these periods, they harvested every two weeks. One week, they were in La Escalereta, the other in El Balseadero. In this way, the inhabitants of both communities would have had a constant income nearly all year round (Interview 56). Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1121) only lists June and December as main harvest periods.

provides space for 1,100 cacao plants, and an additional 140 to 300 shade trees. Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1122) considers this an inefficient use of land: “The cacao cultivation is not profitable”. It argues that farmers could have upgraded their cacao production by implementing newer technologies and that the choice not to do so appears to be the result of poor organisational capacity and adaptability (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1225).

This perception of inefficiency does not necessarily represent the perception of the *campesinos*, who “profited” from the *labranzas* in many different ways. Agudelo-Berrió (2016) describes cacao cultivation in tropical dry forests as an agroforestry technique beneficial to the ecosystem and the human population. The cacao trees have adapted well to the drier climates, where plagues like fungus are less frequent (Agudelo-Berrió 2016). Cacao trees integrate well into the biome and accept typical species such as amphibians, epiphytes and insects (Pizano and García 2014). The mixed cultivation is crucial to the farmer’s subsistence. As such, it contributes to important ecosystem functions which Ingetec-S.A does not take into account in their ecological evaluation of the agroforests.

Moreover, cacao is economically and culturally very important in Colombia. Hot drinking chocolate together with a sweet bun or *Achiras* (crackers made of *Canna edulis* and cheese) is the traditional Huilan breakfast. It is also common practice to put a piece of fresh local farmer’s cheese into the drink to melt it and consume them together. Cacao is part of Huilan culture and identity. This brings to the surface a conflict between value systems. While Ingetec-S.A limited their analysis to purely economic values of cacao production, the local farmers connect the economic value with sociocultural values. Into these values, Gómez Baggethun et al. (2016:102) include spiritual and emotional connection to particular places, as well as sense of community, relationships to non-human beings or things and their virtue for a “good life”. These values I consider as intrinsic to any *proyecto de vida* (life project; Chapter 2) and cacao cultivation has been closely connected with heritage, pride and farmers’ quest for an independent but secure subsistence. Interviewees Don Jaime and Doña Rosa, for instance, built up their skills and knowledge in cacao cultivation, which they connected with aspirations and hopes for the future at La Honda.<sup>81</sup>

La Honda was one of the *veredas* affected by the dam construction where old *labranzas* contributed to the daily income. There, *mayordomo* (farm manager) Don Jaime and his wife Doña Rosa had lived in and worked at one of the old farm buildings for 18 years. On the veranda

---

<sup>81</sup> Interview 2, in 2012

hung a variety of orchids. Right next to the veranda was an old construction to dry the cacao beans once they were removed from the fruit, called *sequeadero*. Some steps further on was the *labranza* itself (see Figure II-2). At first sight, the *labranza* appears to be a natural forest with a variety of species, but one should note the cacao trees protruding as they carry yellow, orange and red fruits on their trunks.<sup>82</sup> The family of the *mayordomo* lived very well from the income of the cacao harvest and subsistence farming (vegetables, fruits, pigs and chickens). However, the farm manager had very little negotiating power with Emgesa, because the farm owner (his employer) sold the land and house to the company early on. Don Jaime was not considered a resident with resettlement rights, but merely as a labourer with the right to *capital semilla* (financial compensation; see Chapter 5). His classification as a labourer and his wife as a housewife, both without property, puts them into a category that ignores the specific circumstances of their former life. This categorisation conceals the fact that the couple lost not only their income and subsistence but also their home, their identity as cacao farmers at La Honda and hope for future stability. Being already advanced in age made the couple less confident about finding new employment.<sup>83</sup>



Figure II-2 Finca at La Honda. Above: Don Jaime and his partner Doña Rosa with their dog in front of the house and the *Sequeadero* (to the right). Right: Don Jaime opens a cacao fruit at the *labranza*. (Taken by the author, July 2012).

<sup>82</sup> Interview 2 and field visit 2012

<sup>83</sup> Interview 2

In sum, the narrow perception of efficiency together with simple labour categorisations allowed Ingetec-S.A. to provide an easy solution to the loss of the cacao cultivation in the area. It projected the establishment of other more profitable economies related to the project's realisation (e.g. the construction sector), in which people could find new labour activities. Ingetec-S.A. outweighs environmental and sociocultural values with economic value, ignoring the issue of incommensurability and rendering essential aspects of life invisible or irrelevant (Espeland and Stevens 1998:314). This proves true also for fishing activities along the river.

### *Fishing*

As much as the valley in the central Huila region was known for its cacao, it was also known for fresh fish. Ingetec-S.A. identified 59 species of fish (distributed in 43 genera, 18 families and six orders) typical for the upper basin of the Magdalena River (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:479). Most commercially used fish in the upper-stream of the Magdalena River have been the *bocachico* (*Prochilodus magdalena*), *capaz* (*Pimelodus grosskopfii*), *peje* (catfish, *Pseudopimelodus*), *mojarra*, *tilapia* and *cucha* (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:484). However, Ingetec-S.A. only registered 24 species (of ten families and four orders) during its fieldwork in the "area of direct influence" carried out in 2007 and it merely considered *capaz* and *tilapia* of commercial value (2008:497) with a market price of between 3,000 and 4,000 Colombian Pesos per 500 grams in 2007 (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:499). The highest natural distribution Ingetec-S.A. noted was among *capaz* and *cucha*.

After the erection of the Betania dam, 35 kilometres further downstream in 1987, the distribution of migrating species dropped. Twenty years later, the reservoir was intensively used for fish farming. The EIA states that by then, only one main fish species was found in the Betania reservoir which could be used commercially: the *capaz*. Many other species dependent on migration for reproduction had disappeared (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:481). The most prominent of those is *bocachico*, which is in critical danger of extinction and the *pataló* (*Ichthyoelephas longirostris*), which is endangered. As the Betania dam had already seriously affected these populations, Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1188) did not foresee much additional harm in another dam construction further upstream: "Taking into account that in the Magdalena River there is already an artificial lentic ecosystem downstream from the El Quimbo project (Betania reservoir), it is considered that the vulnerability to this impact is low" (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1742). Again, former interventions are used to devalue ecosystems and to justify further alterations.

Emgesa continued to catch fish in the “area of direct influence” during the construction period and funded their breeding in fish tanks run by researchers of the South-Colombian University. The objective is to repopulate the reservoir once the conditions for survival can be guaranteed. The fish caught before and during the dam construction allowed the researchers to estimate the commercial fish population existent prior to the dam’s realisation. One of the involved researchers stated that based on this estimate, they were able to calculate how many fishers could have potentially lived off these fisheries – a number far below the number of people claiming to have worked as artisanal fishers in the “area of direct influence”.<sup>84</sup>

While disregarding much of the fishing activity in the “area of direct influence” prior to the dam, Emgesa considers the downstream fisherfolk (490 fishers were registered at Betania reservoir, as identified by Ingetec-S.A. in 2007) to be beneficiaries of the dam project. The experts reported a poor water quality in the Betania reservoir, which it attributes not to the age of the dam, but to the irregular and intensive use of the water for fish cultivation. At the same time, it argues that the construction of El Quimbo dam would improve the water quality at Betania because the run-off water would be filtered, and extreme run-off rates resulting from weather events would be regulated by the dam (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1616). It suggests that the El Quimbo reservoir would further provide conditions for fish cultivation.

The experts disregard the direct impact the dam construction would have on the water quality downstream and upstream owing to sedimentation, as eventually it would improve. Expanding and narrowing temporal and spatial scales according to the argument it wants to make, make Ingetec-S.A.’s knowledge practice highly political. Environmental impacts can be disregarded, if nature can mitigate them in some point in the future (corporate politics of time; see Kirsch 2014), or they are ignored if they do not reach the surface of visibility within the period of the project’s operation, but potentially only in its aftermath and/or in a different geographical location (corporate politics of space). It allows Ingetec-S.A. to make contradictory statements. On the one hand, irregular fish cultivation is presented as the main environmental polluter; on the other hand, another dam construction could improve water quality and provide new space for the same activity. This serves to underline the wider utility of the El Quimbo dam.

Corporate politics of scale played also a significant role in the habitat analysis. Professor Leyla Rincón criticises Ingetec-S.A. for relying only on selective field visits, inventories and animal traps for their species analysis. The samples and registers of flora and fauna taken in the valley

---

<sup>84</sup> Informal talk with scientist at the South-Colombian University, Interview 17.

would not reflect the ecosystem as a whole, because less accessible areas were not covered, and local knowledge of the existing species was largely ignored. Furthermore, Ingetec-S.A. concentrated on trees and commercially used species, leaving out species used for subsistence (like other aquatic species) and the high ecological value of mosses, herbs, mushrooms, epiphytes and insects.<sup>85</sup> Here, Ingetec-S.A. chose to narrow its scales of analysis deemed relevant.

In addition to mentioning *capaz*, *bocachico*, *mojarra*, *peje*, *cucha* and *pataló*, the fisherfolk at el Hobo (along the Betania reservoir) also mentioned *maya*, *carpa* (*Cyprinus carpio specularis*) and *viscaino* (*Curimata mivartii*) as fish they used to catch and live on before the El Quimbo dam.<sup>86</sup> Also, during the elaboration of the EIA, the sporadic catch of *bocachico* and *peje* was observed and a fisher mentioned the possible appearance of *pataló*, gilthead seabream and sardines. The experts of Ingetec-S.A., however, attributed their appearance to the fish cultivation in the Betania reservoir, some of which might have escaped (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:481). This exemplifies how data generated through scientific methods for quantification is regarded as superior to knowledge generated through qualitative local assessments, which is simply disregarded. Together with putting the focus on certain species which are easier to value monetarily, Ingetec-S.A. ignores non-market species and values and leaves essential blind spots (Kirsch 2014). Further gaps appeared in the evaluation of the social organisation in the valley.

### *Social organisation*

As the practices of cacao production and fishing suggest, the population of the *veredas* at El Quimbo have strongly depended on the lands and the river for their subsistence. Ingetec-S.A. acknowledges that the land has allowed the inhabitants to survive and to support their families independently for generations, as detailed here:

They manifest a deep rootedness in the territory, to the extent that a large part of the population is native to the area, born and raised on the *veredas*, where they currently live, or born in the region, adapted to the climatic, geographical and spatial conditions in which they have lived and established social networks. They are communities that have remained united for years, some for several generations, consolidated as united communities with ties of consanguinity, trust, solidarity and godparenthood (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1177).

Further, the EIA states that this rootedness is motivated by inheritance and productivity, but also by the political circumstances:

---

<sup>85</sup> Interview with Professor Rincón Trujillo (24), and her intervention at the public hearing Nov. 2016.

<sup>86</sup> Interviews 13, 14

Other factors that have motivated the permanence and rootedness of the inhabitants in the communities – and that are constituted as preponderant sociocultural characteristics of the *veredas* within the reservoir area – are the political conditions of the area where they are settled. There are no problems related to the armed conflict or to common crime; it is a peaceful and calm region.

Equally the strategic location of these communities in a productive and commercial area with good access and communication routes, as well as the healthy coexistence and solidarity that occur between the members of the communities and among them, constitute a kind of rootedness (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1178).

In a survey carried out by Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1179–80), only 10 of 183 interviewees stated that they do not enjoy staying in their home community. If a reason for leaving was expressed, it was connected to the wish to access higher education or to change employment (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1176). Ingetec-S.A. also asked 507 people for their opinion of the project in 2007 and 75.7% expressed an unfavourable opinion concerning the project (2008:1379).

After centuries of violence and forced displacement, the central region of Huila had become one of the few peaceful areas in the country. The rural people highly valued the peacefulness and independence of their lives on the lands.<sup>87</sup> They never worried about leaving children playing on the streets, letting the doors and windows stand open or leaving the house alone – a trust that cannot be taken for granted in rural Colombia.<sup>88</sup> Also the urban population of Huila appreciated this part of the river for recreational activities and several stories important for Huilan folklore relate to the upper stream of the river and its surrounding mountains (see Chapter 1).

Ingetec-S.A. argues that, thanks to this sense of belonging, most communities are adaptive enough to overcome impacts of resettlement, especially if it happens collectively and in consultation with the local population (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1172, 1350). As the majority of people were smallholders or landless (more than 50% owned less than one hectare), the compensations would increase their living standards (they would receive each five hectares; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:2010–11). Ingetec-S.A. discounts the territorial dimension of rootedness and suggests that more hectares automatically create a better living standard. The farmers' cooperatives in particular would benefit from the compensation schemes.

The agrarian reform which aimed to diminish the discontent of *campesinos*, granted land titles during the 1970s and 80s, leading to the establishment of farmers' cooperatives (community-

---

<sup>87</sup> Interviews 31, 32, 40, 53, 56

<sup>88</sup> Interview 31

owned agricultural businesses).<sup>89</sup> One group of approximately ten families (130 people) occupied the abandoned *finca* today known as La Escalereta in the El Quimbo valley during that time. After they had been forcefully evicted from the property four times, they received legal title to the lands, thanks to the agrarian reform. These lands were thereafter legally owned by their farmers' cooperative. However, by 2008, the population had increased and the families had distributed the land informally among themselves through inheritance. Seven additional community businesses were established during the 1970s and 80s at El Quimbo valley (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1209), which share similar histories. They are located at the *veredas* La Cañada and Matambo (a total of 499 people).

La Escalereta is the biggest farmers' cooperative with the strongest organisation. It is the only community business which has been able to repay its debts, resulting from the loans granted through the agrarian reform. The other seven enterprises have not achieved this. They faced difficulty in increasing their production, especially on the less fertile lands of Matambo *vereda* (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1209). This served Emgesa as an argument for the inefficient economy and poor organisational capacity of the communities of the valley (as in the case of cacao production), notwithstanding the former assessment that the communities have enough adaptive capability to overcome challenges connected to resettlement. These rather contradictory statements exemplify how the characterisation in the EIA can be interpreted according to one's own interests. This is also noticeable in the case of political organisation.

All *veredas* have a *junta de acción comunal* (community action council) which is an elected leadership that, in consultation with the community (at council meetings), manages local institutions and matters such as schools, road systems and water treatment, and is in contact with municipal institutions to communicate problems, strategies and to realise projects. It is an important body of democratic self-management and identity.<sup>90</sup> This is acknowledged by Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1326) as follows: "These organisations promote citizen participation in the management of their communities and at the same time serve as a means of dialogue with governments and seek to create spaces for participation that mark development in the *veredas*". At another point, it states: "The community action boards are the fundamental axis of the

---

<sup>89</sup> Farmers' cooperatives are first defined by Article 121 of Law 135 of 1961. It is an associative enterprise owned and managed by a number of people (*socios*), who meet the conditions to be beneficiaries of the agrarian reform programmes. They receive financial support (loans) that shall help them in carrying out "the economic exploitation of one or more rural properties, the processing, commercialisation or marketing of agricultural products and the provision of services [...], in order to distribute among themselves the profits or losses that result proportionally to their contributions" (Decree 561 of 1989, Article 1).

<sup>90</sup> Interviews 10, 25, 39.

vereda's relationship with the institutions through which institutional programs and projects are developed” (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1175).

Accordingly, Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1312) argues that the councils would be good channels for distributing information and receiving “representativeness” as a fundamental element in implementing the El Quimbo project management plans. “Through telephone calls, the presidents of the community action councils will be informed about the economic census, its objective, [and] the start date” (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:821). However, in a later evaluation in the EIA, it says:

Situations that prevent real participation due to lack of belonging, awareness, selfishness and *politiquería* [politicking, political chicanery], and due to the deficiency of an administrative entity that supports them are evident in these meetings. [... Furthermore,] Due to the lack of autonomy vis-à-vis regional politicians and organizational and political independence towards the State, the JAC [Community action councils] present weaknesses in their actions and in their management to successfully complete the projects of the communities they represent, which is why it is frequent to find in these Councils, inconclusive projects and inactive representatives (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1326).

The community action councils as line of communication had its weaknesses as many people claimed to have been left in the dark regarding the census (discussed in the above section). While devaluing their political organisation, Ingetec-S.A. still considered the councils as being the appropriate space for achieving participation. Again, the EIA allowed contradictory statements that supported the dam project’s cause. Next to political disintegration, the EIA detected cultural decay among the *veredas*.

The majority of the population identifies with the Catholic religion, and Huila is known for its religious celebrations of the saints San Pedro and San Juan. During the celebration in the last week of June every municipality crowns its most beautiful woman (*reina, el reinado*), who join the parades and dances in the streets while wearing traditional dresses. Traditionally decorated *Chivas* (Colombian rural transportation vehicle) drive along in the parades. People dance the traditional dances (*Bambuco*) and eat traditional foods (e.g. *el asado huilense*). Additionally, every *vereda* has its own patron saint, which safeguards the community and is worshipped by its members.

Because more and more people celebrate the traditional festival of San Pedro in the municipal centres instead of at the *veredas* themselves, Ingetec-S.A. argues that a disintegration of the community was already taking place (2008:1170–71; 1174). However, San Pedro has always been a festival that is more important for urban centres, while San Juan continues to be the

celebration of the rural *veredas* (Salas Ortiz 2011:76, 80). Neglecting this detail creates a significant blind spot.

As another measure of the cultural relevance of the valley, Ingetec-S.A. considered historic objects. Apart from the chapels of San José de Belén (over 200 years old), Veracruz and La Escalereta, the EIA also identified several *metates* (prehispanic moulding stones), ceramics and rock engravings as cultural artefacts found in the “area of direct influence” (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1300). Their archaeological value was considered to be relatively low by the company. Only a few pieces were collected prior to the project’s realisation. However, the historic chapel of San José de Belén had been recognised as a cultural heritage site in Huila and was in the process of receiving its formal title as part of the cultural heritage of Colombia. Ingetec-S.A. suggested dismantling and transferring the chapel to maintain this heritage of cultural and religious identity. Again, this is a very technical approach which ignores the interdependency of place, culture, spirituality, history and the environment.

In sum, the EIA limits cultural values to traditional festivities celebrated among the population and to archaeological artefacts found within the area. Both can be easily relocated. In line with commensurability, culture is abstracted from its historic and place-specific context and put into measurable and detachable units. The EIA consequently leaves essential gaps in understanding and makes contradictory statements. On the one hand, it presents the environment as already degraded, the social organisation limited and the economy inefficient. On the other hand, it sees enough sense of community and adaptability for successful resettlement. In addition to its blind spots from the required technical assessments, Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa avoided two important tools of accountability: a contingency plan and a diagnostic of alternatives.

## Accountability

Neither the EIA of Ingetec-S.A. nor the environmental licence incorporate a detailed contingency plan in case of accidents affecting the main dam structure. Ingetec-S.A. considered the seismic activities in the region to be of low to intermediate range, which would not damage the primary dam structures as they were built to be seismically safe. Consequently, the contingency plan in the EIA describes only ways of evacuating employees from the work site in case of an earthquake. However, a body of water puts additional weight on the lithosphere with the potential to increase seismic activity (Chutubtim 2001; Tullos, Brown, Kibler, Magee, Tilt, and Wolf 2010). An accumulation of earthquakes and landslide in and around Huila in

2017<sup>91</sup> together with rumours of leakages at El Quimbo (which were later confirmed; see *La Nación* 2015b) and the near collapse of another mega-dam project in Antioquia,<sup>92</sup> as well as collapses of dams in Latin America due to extreme climate events, have increased the distrust of the stability of the dam among the Huilan population. Alternative studies done by geologists of the Colombian organisation Terrae in 2017 highlight that there are indeed risks related to the fault lines and planar fractures in the rocks underneath the reservoir (especially when considering a geological temporality instead of the economic temporality in accordance with the profitable lifespan of the dam).<sup>93</sup>

Not considering the possibility of dam-damaging events in the contingency plan follows the strategy of what Leifsen (2017) calls “enclosure”. It confines risks “within a scientific and technical vision of the management of anticipated consequences” (Leifsen 2017:346), addressing only those risks to which the experts find technical solutions (Kirsch 2014; F. Li 2009) and externalising others. A similar observation is made in the case of large dam development in the Indian Himalayas by Huber (2019), who speaks of institutionalized strategic ignorance common to hydropower risks assessments. As Wood (2003:3) highlights, mitigation of environmental impacts is so central to EIAs, because “decisions on proposals in which the environmental effects have palpably been ameliorated are much easier to make and justify than those in which mitigation has not been achieved”.

In fact, it has been more important for Ingetec-S.A. to support the viability of the project than to discuss alternatives to the project, which could have fewer impacts. To the astonishment of the Huilan population, neither Ingetec-S.A. nor Emgesa ever considered different project proposals as normally provided in a *Diagnóstico Ambiental de Alternativas* (environmental diagnostic of alternatives). Decree 1753 of 1994 states in Subsection IV that an environmental diagnostic of alternatives is required for hydroelectric dams. It should also be noted that Betania-S.A. considered a variety of alternatives for El Quimbo’s design in the 1990s – none representing the final scenario chosen by Emgesa. However, the Environmental Ministry decided in favour of Emgesa’s request to dispel this diagnostic from the list of requested studies

---

<sup>91</sup> Earthquakes in the north of Huila early 2017 and destructive avalanches in Campoalegre, south of Neiva (February 2017) and Mocoa, Putumayo (April 2017).

<sup>92</sup> Hidroituango dam disaster (see e.g. Daniels 2018; and Chapter 1).

<sup>93</sup> Results presented at a roundtable meeting in April 17 (Event 8). Five fractures exist directly along the dam valley. All fractures showed activity over the years preceding Ingetec’s evaluation. The EIA (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:557) states that ground activities lead regularly to avalanches along the Páez River, which flows into the Magdalena just downstream of the built dam. This could block the river Magdalena partly and rapidly increase the water level.

in 2007 (Minambiente 2009:1). The population received no coherent argument to explain why the dam had to flood the most fertile lands of Huila, had to be the size it was and needed the amount of land it ended up taking. El Quimbo needs more than twenty hectares to generate one gigawatt while most other large dams use on average less than ten hectares (many even below two hectares; Dussán Calderón 2017:46; Ingetec-S.A. 2008; Ledec and Quintero 2003). Leaving out this information creates a significant blind spot that limits the discussion of (if not the imagination of) alternative scenarios.

Emgesa successfully avoided using two important tools of accountability that should have provided additional “answer[s] to citizens and the state and [...] evidence to show that certain outcomes have been achieved” (F. Li 2009:220). Ironically, this is a *practice of accountability* in itself, according to Fabiana Li’s (2009:225) definition. This author writes that corporations reveal only the risks that they are able to manage; corporate studies themselves identify the terms and scales against which they are checked. This practice is also visible in the existing corporate studies and it contributes substantially to the production of closures.

### Knowledge of place

With the EIA, Ingetec-S.A. created a scientific knowledge of place to be affected by the dam. On the one hand, it provided actors with information that allowed discussion and decision-making. On the other hand, this information was kept within the frame of the calculable, accountable and manageable. As Hébert notes, environmental risk is “treated not as an arena for political struggle but as an objective entity that can be known through scientific investigation, calculated through probabilistic modes of assessment, and controlled through managerial techniques” (Hébert 2016:112; Wynne 2002).

In using the term “technoscience”, Hébert (2016) emphasises the increased technification of knowledge and language in public debates around project developments and decision-making processes. Her example is the dispute surrounding risk scenarios of a proposed pebble mine at the Alaskan coast (Hébert 2016). The technical methods and language used by both sides (supporters and opponents) promises precision and accuracy, as well as neutrality towards political or economic interests. This however disregards or assimilates values and types of knowledge which do not fit into the scheme (are incommensurable), as seen with Ingetec’s characterisation of economy and environment.

In the case of the development sector, Ferguson (2003) calls this artificial abstraction from power relations the “anti-politics machine”. While he suggests intentionality as the engine of

the machine, Tanja Murray Li (2007) sees a genuine “will to improve” and links failures of development initiatives, not to the lack of expert knowledge, but to the false or misleading trust put into this knowledge, which ignores other perspectives, local practices and experiences. As Colombian scholars Soler Villamizar, Duarte Abadía, and Roa Avendaño (2014b:111) formulate it, “Those who are elaborating [the assessment], ignore and are unable to understand the intercultural relationships and the dynamics of life that are woven into the territories”.

Kirsch (2014) looks at the knowledge creation of corporate industries and sees strategy behind it. He chooses the prominent example of the tobacco industry, which managed to obscure the negative health consequences of smoking for over half a century. His own case is an open-pit copper and gold mine in Papua New Guinea. In line with high modernism, the mine operating company intended to create a reality in which there is a technical fix to every problem. He points out that

comparative research on the accuracy of these assessments indicates that the environmental impacts of mining projects are systematically underestimated and the efficacy of mitigation practices are systematically overestimated (Kirsch 2014:212; Kuipers, Maest, MacHardy, and Lawson 2006).

Following this strategy, the corporate studies of El Quimbo created an optimistic view of the environmental and social risk of the investment (Kirsch 2014:133; Mathews and Barnes 2016). The “corporate truth” set the stage for problem perception and alternatives for solutions. The technical language, corporate politics of scale, the multiple blind spots, and contradictory statements created closures. It was a way of exercising power, limiting the scope of the possible actions of others. As Foucault (1980:93) emphasises:

There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.

Racine and Raffestin (2007:31) link this view to the knowledge of space: “In geography, the knowledge linked to the ‘scientific’ analysis of central places has been transformed into strategy and, very precisely, into a technique of dominating and even occupying economic, political and geographic space”. They emphasise that whoever has knowledge of space can dominate that space. As mentioned before, the local population has an intimate knowledge of the place, but technoscience outweighs their understanding.

The logic of equivalence, which Fabiana Li (2013:19) observes to be “a political relationship that involves constant negotiation over what counts as authoritative knowledge”, plays therefore an essential role in producing closures and openings. Movements against extractive industries worldwide have called for the inclusion of local knowledges and the participation of the affected population in the decision-making processes involved in the investment projects. Also, Wood (2003:1, 6) considers consultation and participation as integral to the environmental evaluation process. However, in Colombia, this is limited to public hearings, which merely have the purpose of informing the population about a project that affects their environment.

In the case of the El Quimbo dam project, the company Emgesa and the Ministry of the Environment held public hearings before the environmental licence was granted (see Chapter 6). Despite many critical contributions, neither the EIA nor the resulting environmental licence were adapted accordingly.<sup>94</sup> Because of the lack of alternative information on the place (and the project), which would be classified as scientific, the EIA together with its baseline studies became the basis for granting an environmental licence in May 2009, and for legitimising Emgesa’s actions in response to possible contestation and conflict. The private actor has, as such, dominated the knowledge production of space (Eren 2016).

With this first technology of damming the river, I have analysed the epistemological work of Emgesa to understate the impacts the dam would have on local economy, ecology and society. It created a certain image of the reality which was favourable to their investment. Corporate truth therefore constituted the groundwork for the dam to be built on. With the second technology of spatial reconfiguration, I turn to the transformations the company brought to the area when the dam started to materialise. I argue that the impacts felt in and around the valley signify a complex interaction of capitalist processes around dispossession and detachment.

## 5. Dispossession and detachment

The people in central Huila felt the first impacts of the El Quimbo dam project as soon as the land was declared a public utility in 2008. This political act sets aside private property rights in

---

<sup>94</sup> The environmental licence only demanded the renewal of the socio-economic census in response to claims made by participants of the hearings to be recognised as affected (see also Chapter 6 – Closed spaces of participation).

the name of the national interest. Originally intended to expropriate large landowners who do not use their land for production, the law was used to centralise land and resources into the hands of a multinational company (see Chapter 9). The buying of land and the material interventions connected to the dam construction brought major changes to local infrastructure and social institutions. The compensation mechanisms established in the environmental licence were meant to prevent or reduce negative impacts for the environment and the local population. However, in practice, the resulting spatial reconfigurations initiated a complex process of *dispossession and detachment* that went beyond the local. In this chapter, I show how this process created further closures for the people affected.

Having discussed the first aspect of controlling space, namely acquiring and producing knowledge of place, I now turn to the second aspect, which is spatial reconfiguration. Space has been widely identified as being a materialised social relationship (see Swyngedouw 1992:417–18): Social life has historically configured space, while the character of space has influenced daily life (see e.g. Goonewardena, Kipfer, Milgrom, and Schmid 2008). But Swyngedouw (1992) highlights that space also plays a role in the production of capital. The power of space is that it is a prerequisite of production (Swyngedouw 1992:418; see also Harvey 1999:395–400). Private appropriations of parcelled space for capital accumulation imply the private appropriation of social space (Swyngedouw 1992:427). As such, capital expansion is about the command of the powers of space, and the “control and organization of the socio-spatial fabric of daily life” (Swyngedouw 1992:428). This can lead to a contradiction in territorial organisation: “a struggle over the command of space as a force of production or as ‘living’ space”, i.e. life-territory (Swyngedouw 1992:425).

In this chapter, I argue that the El Quimbo dam project signifies a further expansion of capital, and that the spatial reconfigurations intrinsic to the project involve gaining command over the land and the people. I continue to look at the corporate actions to engineer reality and produce closures for people at El Quimbo. For the analysis, I combine the concept of social engineering with theorisations around accumulation by dispossession and infrastructural power. I identify processes of dispossession and detachment as main forces behind the spatial reconfiguration, which can be attributed to five distinct (but interrelated) developments: (1) land enclosure, (2) erosion of local infrastructure, (3) contamination, (4) erosion of the social fabric and (5) new built environments. I begin with the new enclosure of the land.

## New enclosure

The land affected by the El Quimbo reservoir was divided into 809 plots, according to the EIA. While the reservoir flooded an area of 8,250 hectares, all properties affected made up a total of 19,974 hectares (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1093). The EIA did not identify any *tierras colectivas* (collective lands, e.g. indigenous reserve) within the “area of direct influence”, but did identify *áreas comunitarias* (common ownership properties) which belong to any of the eight existing farmers cooperatives. A total of 320 plots fall under common ownership, which leaves 489 plots under the private property regime (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1100).

It is important to note at this point that, in general, the private property regime is the dominant system of land regulation in Colombia.<sup>95</sup> It was introduced to most of Latin America by the colonising powers (Velásquez Ruiz 2018) and manifested a first enclosure of the lands. Enclosure is the process of restricting people’s access to the commons, such as through the privatisation of land and water sources. Part of the process is that land, labour and products of labour turn into commodities – or *fictitious commodities* (Polanyi 2001) – to be sold on the market. The “old enclosure” in Europe marked the origin of the primitive accumulation of capital, expelling farmers from their land and creating a labour force for industrialisation (Marx 2009). Primitive accumulation in the Americas was linked to the expulsion and eradication of the indigenous population and the distribution of the lands among the *colonos* (colonisers; Harvey 2004:74). The process was “completed” in the affected municipalities: no indigenous groups were inhabiting the area any longer and all land was registered under the private property regime. However, the existing informal practices among the local population present a much more diverse picture.

As previously indicated, many land titles had been granted as a consequence of the agrarian reform in the 1970s to prevent or to calm discontent among Colombia’s poor rural population. This meant a redistribution of land to farmers’ cooperatives. Consequently, the private property regime is not straightforward. According to the census in 2007 (see Figure II-3), 111 plots of the *áreas comunitarias* already had an individual title; 135 were privately owned but had not

---

<sup>95</sup> Only indigenous and Afro-descendant population groups (in some rare cases also *campesinos* communities, see “peasant reserve zones”, Chapter 6) can claim “collective lands” in Colombia. These territories are called *resguardos* (indigenous reserves) or *palenques* (Afro-Colombian territories) and are limited to legally binding borders. They are managed by a *cabildo* (indigenous council) or *consejo* Afro-Colombian council). As with “common ownership property”, there is one entity that is legally responsible for the land and these encounter constant conflict with other “legal frameworks used to regulate land use and tenure, particularly those associated with environmental protection and economic exploitation” (Velásquez Ruiz 2018:6). Accordingly, one might consider all forms as part of the private (imperial) land tenure system.

received a formal title by then. Land was further distributed through inheritance or other informal purchase and sale contracts. Furthermore, the management of the plots in some areas was still collective, or characterised by informal and reciprocal relationships. There were private often informal agreements between neighbours regarding the land use (e.g. based on work: *partijeros*, *mayordomos*, *jornaleros*; based on kin: inheritance, marriage; based on subsistence and non-market exchange).

One household might own a few hectares of forest which it did not use and therefore allowed the neighbours' cattle to seek shade under the trees or beehives to be erected. Cacao producer and former partaker of La Escalereta cooperative Alejandra explained:

They [Emgesa's employees] do not value the economic affectation that happened at a general level. Because we depended on other people as well; because if one produces the money, he moves and produces for others, and if he has nowhere to work, there is something to give him work and he will eat from that. It is a *cadena* [chain].<sup>96</sup>

And farm worker Javier from Rioloro emphasised, "Here people give each other, you do not have to buy the *platano* or the *yucca*".<sup>97</sup>

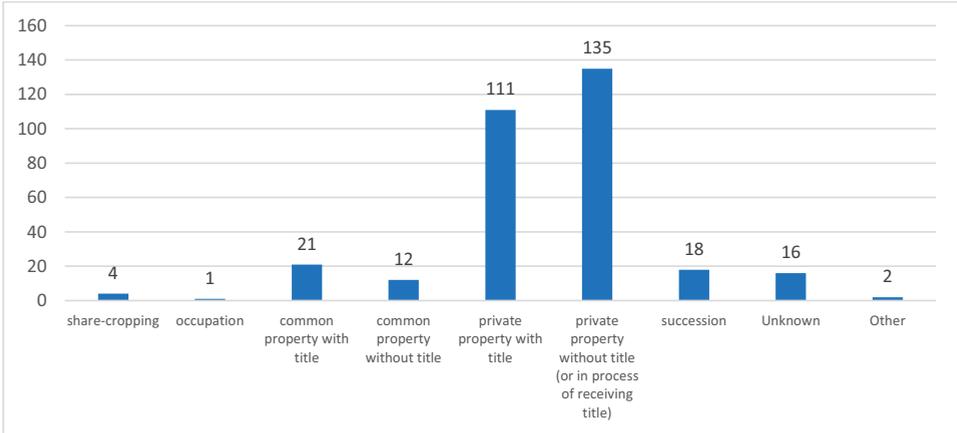


Figure II-3 Farmers' cooperatives: Land tenures in 2007 (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1101; Census May–June 2007).

Disregarding the old enclosure and certain dependency on the regional markets, life at El Quimbo rested to a large extent on non-market reciprocal relationships among community members. This changed, however, when the central government declared the lands at El

<sup>96</sup> Interview 56  
<sup>97</sup> Interview 32

Quimbo to be a public utility. Property owners lost their rights to take out loans, invest in or sell their properties. Emgesa became their sole negotiation partner. Smallholders without formal title had difficulty in proving their ownership. And even before landowners started to sell their plots, the new restrictions and uncertainties led some farmers (*finceros* and *haciendados*) to leave their crops unattended.

Emgesa further restricted access to former areas commonly used such as the beaches and the river itself, and prohibited all the work connected to the extraction of organic materials (like wood<sup>98</sup> and fish, sand or other minerals along and in the river).<sup>99</sup> People who continued with their productive activity and resisted their displacement were forcefully evicted (see Chapter 6). A former fisherman from Veracruz exclaimed: “They removed/extricated us from the river!” (“*Nos sacaron del rio!*”)<sup>100</sup> and one farm worker from Rioloro explained that guards with dogs prevented people from entering the former accessible sites after they were handed over to Emgesa.<sup>101</sup> The resulting high competition for employment diminished wages and labour standards, while the decrease of agricultural goods caused their prices to rise locally.

This centralising of ownership and access can be understood as “new enclosure”. Rosa Luxemburg (2003 [1913]) highlights that capital needs to expand constantly for survival, and in order to do so, there must always be something external or peripheral to capitalism that it can integrate. Primitive accumulation must be an ongoing process, as with further enclosure and the constant extension of the commodity frontier – a “zone beyond which further [capital] expansion is possible” (Moore 2000:412), for instance in integrating reproductive work (unpaid labour), river runoff (unpaid energy) or ecosystem functions (unpaid nature) into the market exchange (Purcell and Martinez 2018).

David Harvey (2004) expands on these ideas, arguing that contemporary capitalism (neoliberalism) relies primarily on accumulation by dispossession, the constant increase of wealth through the redistribution and ultimate centralisation of capital. This involves further privatisation of, for example, public services or intellectual property, and financialisation and speculation in terms of the credit system, gentrification, business mergers and bankruptcy (Harvey 2004). During this process nothing is necessarily produced, but value still increases.

---

<sup>98</sup> Even property owners were not allowed to cut down trees on their plots to make last-minute profit out of the wood, as Emgesa claimed ownership of all resources connected to the lands (Interview 2).

<sup>99</sup> Access was traditionally granted through informal agreements with property owners, or in case of the river site, managed as commons (Interview 53).

<sup>100</sup> Interview 36

<sup>101</sup> Interview 32

Here the “new enclosure” plays an important role, where goods (or lands) already under the private property regime change ownership from public to private (see Christophers 2018) or from many hands to only a few (see T. M. Li 2009), as in the case of the El Quimbo dam development.

The state transferred the lands, waters and resources of the valley into the hands of a private company, centralising ownership for the sole purpose of generating energy. This accumulation by dispossession restricted people’s access to resources, which had formed the basis of their livelihoods, and therefore created closures. Further dimensions of dispossession then resulted from impacts on the local infrastructure and increased contamination through the construction activities.

### Erosion of local infrastructure

Emgesa started construction activities at the El Quimbo gorge in October 2009, seven months before the environmental licence was granted. Even though the company stated it would only carry out *estudios de factibilidad* (exploration works; Molano Bravo 2009), local residents noticed the first negative impacts. The road traffic increased rapidly; large machines and trucks rolled up and down the rural roads. The heavy traffic damaged the roads leaving them in a muddy and uneven condition. This was as much a restriction in mobility as an increase in the sense of insecurity felt especially by parents whose children walked the roads to school every morning.<sup>102</sup>

Ingetec-S.A. admits in the EIA that, during the construction period, there was increased traffic of construction vehicles related to the extraction and transportation of materials for the dam wall (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1675). However, the company considered the resulting negative impacts as only periodic and localised, ignoring the fact that vehicles travelled over longer distances affecting the road conditions negatively, as well as the security of the people using the routes routinely. Temporal delimitation served to disregard these ever-so-tangible impacts on the local people. This again signifies an aspect of the corporate politics of time.

On 8 August 2011, the bridge “El Paso del Colegio” collapsed. The bridge had connected the western municipalities of Huila (Tesalia, Paicol, Pital and La Plata) with Neiva and the South–North route (Figure I-5). Without the bridge, these municipalities became isolated. El Paso del Colegio is situated over the Magdalena River just downstream of the dam construction (see

---

<sup>102</sup> Interview 10

Figure I-6). Construction vehicles of Emgesa had used the passage intensively. Opponents of the dam argued that the daily circulation of loaded tippers going to the El Quimbo site had exceeded the capacity of the bridge and caused its collapse (*Diario del Huila* 2011). Furthermore, the company had extracted materials for construction from the river bank, which had caused sedimentation affecting the stability of the bridge (Contraloría General de la República 2011; *Diario del Huila* 2014).<sup>103</sup> Emgesa countered that the bridge was already poorly maintained, and therefore the collapse would fall under state responsibility.<sup>104</sup> Redirecting the blame to other actors (especially state institutions) has been an important strategy for Emgesa to distract attention from its own responsibilities, as will become more apparent in the discussion of the compensation mechanisms (section on new built environment below). As nothing was done, truck drivers, merchants and cooperatives, who depended economically on the connection, blocked several roads several times in protest. As a short-term fix, Emgesa put a ferry into operation, which allowed the transfer of two passenger cars at a time, during specific hours of the day.<sup>105</sup> People not seated in a vehicle had to cross the river by canoe (Contraloría General de la República 2011; *La Nación* 2012c, 2012b). After 17 months the bridge was partly useable again and only in December 2015, the government opened a new bridge to replace the old one (*La Nación* 2015c).

Emgesa dismantled and flooded a total of eight bridges within the “area of direct influence” (and three cable-cars to cross the river, *tarabitas*; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1754). It substituted them with one large bridge over the reservoir. The Viaduct El Balseadero connects the left flank of the reservoir (El Agrado) with the right (Garzón; see Figure I-6). Reaching a length of 1.7 kilometres, it is Colombia’s longest suspension bridge. As such, the national government and Emgesa celebrated it as a symbol of prosperity and development (see Chapter 9; Darío Puentes 2015). Emgesa, I argue, tried to “enchant” the public (Harvey and Knox 2012) with ideas of modernisation often connected to infrastructure projects (Appel 2018). Larkin (2013:332) sees this as connected to the belief that “by promoting circulation, infrastructures bring about change, and through change they enact progress, and through progress we gain freedom”.

---

<sup>103</sup> Emgesa extracted sands from both river banks. After the bridge had collapsed it probably concentrated on the western bank to avoid the need for river crossing. Also new locations for sediment extraction were included in the environmental licence later on, without taking out necessary studies first. Emgesa and Ingetec had in general difficulty finding the appropriate materials (Pérez Trujillo 2019).

<sup>104</sup> “The situation of the Paso El Colegio bridge, which is within the competence of the National Government to resolve, is due to the deformations that historically have occurred in the foundations of the infrastructure, recently accelerated by the heavy rains and large flows of the Magdalena River” (Emgesa 2012).

<sup>105</sup> Emgesa’s newsletter “*La Buena Energía de El Quimbo*”, Edition 1, June 2012.

And indeed, infrastructure “enables communication, travel, and the transportation of goods” (Gupta 2018:65).<sup>106</sup> It is the groundwork that organises economies and society (see Part IV; Meehan 2014; Rodgers and O’Neill 2012; Scott 1998). Working as a *technology of engagement*,<sup>107</sup> the state can reach its peripheries by building roads and power lines and subsequently engage the local population into the building of a nation (Penny Harvey 2018; Murton, Lord, and Beazley 2016). This dazzling picture is of course connected to several problems.

On the one hand, infrastructural development does not always bring what it promised. The suspension bridge over the El Quimbo reservoir connected only what it had previously detached, the west flank and the east flank. Furthermore, the lighting which Emgesa installed four months after the inauguration in October 2015, lasted only 90 days. The length and straightness of the lanes turned the bridge into a perfect racecourse. Soon residents and local mayors complained about parties, races and excesses taking place on the bridge during night-time hours. There were three accidents with five fatalities during the first three months of 2018. Accordingly, the Huilan newspaper *el Diario del Huila* described the Viaduct El Balseadero as the viaduct of sex, drugs, alcohol, anger and death (Perdomo 2018). Intended as a symbol of technological genius and progress, it became instead a symbol of shame and insecurity.

On the other hand, infrastructural development can impede connectivity rather than increase it. In August 2019, another road structure collapsed. This time, the record high water level at El Quimbo reservoir caused the erosion of parts of its banks. One segment was carrying the motorway connecting the north to the south of the country, between Gigante and Garzón (see Figure I-6). For 21 days the connection was shut down completely and people had to travel via the west flank of the reservoir (Paicol–La Plata–Pital–El Agrado), a route which is mountainous and poorly maintained. As part of the environmental licence, Emgesa had a commitment to invest in the (western) road infrastructure by building a ring road (*via perimetral*) to connect the municipalities of the left bank (linking Paicol directly with El Agrado; Minambiente 2009). At the time of the road collapse, the highway was still only a plan on paper; its realisation in

---

<sup>106</sup> I concentrate here on economic (or hard) infrastructure which facilitates economic activity (e.g. roads, canals, ports or electricity). Social (or soft) infrastructure provides common metrics, education, health and cultural standards (Fourie 2006) which I refer to as institutions. For many countries in the northern hemisphere the responsibility of providing infrastructure has fallen traditionally to the state. In line with the welfarist, social democratic and socialist ideals, it should be equally distributed and accessible to everyone as a public service (in contrast to consumption/private goods; Fourie 2006).

<sup>107</sup> Penny Harvey and Hannah Knox (2012:529) call it “technology of integration”.

negotiation with regional and national administrative divisions lasted until the end of 2018 (Medina Torres 2018).

In total, the impacts of the dam construction on the local road infrastructure restricted people's mobility and activities beyond the zone Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa had classified as of direct impact. It raised the travel costs in time and money and had lasting consequences on the economy, especially for small businesses who depended on the connections. The disruptions fragmented geographies and temporally detached certain population groups from their productive activities and exchange with other parts of the country.

Apart from road infrastructure, the reservoir construction affected local energy and water infrastructure. Prior to the dam development, the majority of households were connected to the regional power distribution grid (provided by Electrohuila) and most *veredas* (14) accounted for aqueducts. Two community reservoirs in San José de Belén and one wastewater collection system at La Escalereta, in addition to several ditches and four irrigation districts in the valley, facilitated water management and agricultural production (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1753–54). Because the reservoir had the sole purpose of energy generation, water extraction in the valley became illegal; consequently, the irrigation system constructed and maintained by the communities over generations decayed. Local power grids were dismantled and the connection over the reservoir restored. But this did not improve the existing local power distribution, which is known for its regular blackouts.<sup>108</sup> The instalment of a mega hydroelectric power plant next door has given these outages a certain irony. Because the new infrastructural project did not increase engagement of the place but rather detached it through its impacts on existent infrastructure, I consider the dam in itself a *technology of detachment*.

Several researchers have shown that certain population groups often experience exclusion from accessing or using infrastructure, or are even further marginalised through its construction (e.g. Bichsel 2016; Dunlap 2018; Harvey and Knox 2012; Loftus, March, and Nash 2016; Mains 2012; Powell 2010; Strang 2016; Uribe 2019). Especially when the state trusts the market to provide necessary infrastructure to its population, the investments commonly increase existing inequalities (the market responds not to need but to profit; see for example Fourie 2006; Mains 2012). Rodgers and O'Neill (2012:404) refer to "infrastructural violence" when infrastructure becomes the instrument to produce a landscape that reflects and reinforces harmful social

---

<sup>108</sup> During my time in Rioloro, I witnessed several power outages. The longest outage I witnessed affected the households for two whole days in April 2017.

orders, like inequality or racism. “The notion of infrastructural violence seeks to squarely identify the political economy underlying the socio-spatial production of suffering” (Rodgers and O’Neill 2012:405).<sup>109</sup>

While localised marginalisation can be considered an unintentional side-effect of a project which otherwise serves the “greater good”, the concept of infrastructural violence sees purpose behind these impacts. Powell (2010) shows in her work *Landscapes of Power*, how energy infrastructure development in the Navajo territory (First Nation, US) is used to create not only new “objects”, economies and markets, but also new modes of production, knowledge, relation and identity:

the Navajo attachment to place was seen by federal administrators as one of the central barriers to modernizing the Navajo. [...] Policies] were enacted not only to usher in new infrastructure, but in effect to transform the entire Navajo economy from subsistence to dependence on wage income and integration into ascending American capitalism. Therefore, creating *technologies of detachment from place* via new infrastructure and equipment, new modes of labor, new economies, and new identities (Powell 2010:107; emphasis added).<sup>110</sup>

Infrastructural development meant in this case the forceful assimilation of local cultures to the capitalist project of the state, as also described by Dunlap (2018). Politicians and planners are well aware of this power which is intrinsic to infrastructure. Governments use infrastructural objects as tools for social engineering, subjugating their population to control and discipline in line with their biopolitical project (Gupta 2018:65).<sup>111</sup>

At El Quimbo this power was partially visible. As a technology of detachment, the dam project directly restricted people in their mobility which further impeded their productive activities. It is an extension of the process of dispossession, initiated by the new enclosure. Because it increased uncertainty, insecurity and marginalisation in the area, I see the impacts as expression of infrastructural violence. Emgesa avoided additional costs by not covering for these “externalities” (see Swyngedouw 1992). By producing spatial closures for the local population, it restricted their range of actions (to “voluntarily” moving away) and made them dependent on

---

<sup>109</sup> They elaborate the concepts on the base of Michael Mann’s “infrastructural power” (1984), and Stephen Graham’s “infrastructural warfare” (2010).

<sup>110</sup> I take her idea to contrast the two faces of infrastructure: technology of engagement and technology of detachment. I chose the terminology, because engagement and detachment go beyond an analysis of inclusion and exclusion. Inclusion/integration might suggest that I talk about the formalisation of the informal and the incorporation of human nature into the capitalist system. This however I see as a usual source for detachment. Furthermore, inclusion and exclusion assume a passive role as the “receivers” of infrastructure, which I consider misleading.

<sup>111</sup> marketing them as a “symbol and index of future becoming” (Gupta 2018:63; see also Chapter 9).

outside intervention. Similar happened, I argue, with the contaminations resulting from the dam project.

## Contamination

After the dam construction had started, fishing downstream of the site became more difficult. In general, as described in the EIA, the fish population had decreased during recent years at Betania, because of over-cultivation of fish (and related production of organic matter) and ongoing sedimentation. Several avalanches along the Páez River in 2007 and 2008 caused an additional load of sediment, which decreased water levels. Together with a period of drought, the oxygen level became so low that many fish species (wild and cultivated) died.

The start of the El Quimbo dam construction, coinciding with the drought and avalanches, intensified the unfavourable conditions. The excavation of the deviation tunnels and the piling up of materials for damming further contaminated the water (for a detailed account of the early impacts see Contraloría General de la República 2011). At the beginning of 2011, dead fish covered the shores along Puerto Seco (the entrance to the Betania reservoir). While the regional environmental authority CAM was in the zone taking water samples and detecting toxins related to dynamite use, the director of the National Agency of Environmental Licences (ANLA) stated in a television interview that the project El Quimbo was the only dam project worldwide where no fish had died (*Noticias Uno Colombia* 2012). However, even Emgesa had to admit soon afterwards that there were unforeseen environmental impacts because of the increased water level of the river at that time.<sup>112</sup>

As a result of CAM's denouncements, the Ministry of the Environment stopped the construction works (and the buying of lands) to allow the causes of these "unforeseen impacts" (*impactos no previstos del proyecto*, Resolution 1096, June 2011) to be investigated. However, in September the same year the resolution was set aside (Resolution 1826). Instead, ANLA decided on "preventive measurements" for Emgesa to take in October (Resolution 0025), but this was also set aside within a month (Resolution 0123). Emgesa continued with its activities in the same way as before (Contraloría General de la República 2011; Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015).

A third wave of fish death occurred with the first waters going through the El Quimbo turbines. Because of legal matters (see Part IV), Emgesa was not allowed to start operation after it

---

<sup>112</sup> "La empresa admitió que la mortandad se produjo por 'un efecto ambiental no previsto', por las crecientes del Magdalena" (RCN La Radio Colombia 2012; cited by Vanegas Galindo 2018:Anexo C).

completed the filling of the reservoir in September 2015. Together with the El Niño weather event which resulted in a drought, the water level of the Magdalena River decreased severely. When water finally ran through the turbines in January 2016, it carried no oxygen but contained large quantities of bacteria, leaving offensive odours for the population downstream and no fish alive (*Canal Uno* 2016; *RED MÁS Noticias* 2016).

Emgesa had committed in the environmental licence to remove parts of the “biomass”<sup>113</sup> from the valley before the filling of the reservoir. However, the amount deemed necessary was decreased during adaptations to the environmental licence. In 2015 the director of Emgesa, Lucio Rubio, stated that they had to remove at least 210,000 cubic metres and that they had removed an additional 260 cubic metres (Güesguán Serpa 2015a). The trees, which were removed by Emgesa, were left to pile up on the western shore of the reservoir. Because they were fenced off with barbed wire and have rotted ever since, the local population refers to the area as the “tree cemetery” (see Figure II-4).<sup>114</sup> Next to it remained a huge amount of biomass not removed. Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1530) calculated the total amount of biomass to extract (cultivations excluded) to be 894,982 cubic metres. The biomass left at the bottom of the reservoir began to consume all of the oxygen in the water after the filling, as a result of its slow decomposition.



Figure II-4 The tree cemetery. Located at the west flank of the reservoir, visible from the hanging bridge (taken by the author, February 2017).

To improve the water quality in the reservoir, Emgesa installed a few oxygen pumps to provide the upper strata of the reservoir with air.<sup>115</sup> However, residents claim that the employees only

---

<sup>113</sup> *Biomasa*: Ingetec, Emgesa and CAM use the term to refer to all the dead organic matter originating from the former vegetation of the valley, now under the surface of water.

<sup>114</sup> The local population was not allowed to extract any materials (e.g. wood, sands) from the valley since the lands were declared of public utility. Emgesa consequently owned the rights to the resources, even though it had no use for them.

<sup>115</sup> In general, engineers prefer a low oxygen level in the lower strata of the reservoir because gas makes dam turbines less efficient. More air signifies more compression and therefore a reduced energy output per volume.

put the pumps into operation when measurements of water quality are taken right next to the pumps.<sup>116</sup> As a result, aquatic life has little chance of re-establishing itself. Emgesa renders the problem manageable, arguing that it is just a question of time until the water quality improves, and they finance projects at the South-Colombian University to reproduce fish in tanks for later repopulation of the reservoir water.<sup>117</sup> However, as the expert on fishery for the Huilan government (Agriculture Section) explained, the re-population of fish, which is used to artificial nutrition and breeding in tanks, is difficult.<sup>118</sup>

The fishery had not recovered in 2017 and the water level was still too low to fish at the traditional fishing grounds of El Hobo (see Figure II-5). The local fisherfolk see the main responsibility lying with Emgesa and the dam construction, but Emgesa, relying on the EIA,<sup>119</sup> states that the situation at Betania has nothing to do with the El Quimbo construction, and that the water quality of Betania had already been poor because of several landslides and unregulated fish farming in the reservoir (Areiza 2017b, 2017a). Emgesa naturalises the problem, as described by Kirsch (2014:148) in a case of the OK Tedi mine. In a letter to the fishermen at el Hobo in 2017,<sup>120</sup> Emgesa maintained its conclusion that the fisherfolk would benefit from the project instead of losing out in any way.

With the negative consequences of the water quality, the decomposing organic matter simultaneously releases large amounts of methane – climate gas emissions – which the EIA does not consider an environmental impact.<sup>121</sup> Emgesa promotes hydroelectricity as a renewable and clean energy source, similar to all promoters of hydroelectricity (see Chapter 1). However, there have been several studies on dams worldwide, which show that a large water body, in comparison to a flowing stream, influences the climate and consumes fresh water. It is known that the flooding of tropical soils releases high levels of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide over several decades (Deemer, Harrison, Li,

---

<sup>116</sup> According to Luis, fisherman in the El Quimbo reservoir, Interview 30.

<sup>117</sup> Intervention by the director of Emgesa in Garzón, Jhon Jairo Huertas, at the public hearing in Nov. 2016. In general, Emgesa keeps most of its studies on water quality and fisheries confidential and it restricts access to data for independent research on the dam construction, on the current state of the reservoir and on the advances with the mitigation/compensation mechanisms.

<sup>118</sup> Interview 18

<sup>119</sup> The EIA states that there should be only a low short-term impact (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1616). In the long run, El Quimbo dam should have a positive influence on the water quality at Betania reservoir, because the water is filtered beforehand (ibid.:1661,1740).

<sup>120</sup> A fisherman showed me the letter – an official answer of Emgesa to his request to be included in the census – in which Emgesa argues that their studies do not support his claim to be affected. Thanks to the El Quimbo dam, the fishery should have increased by 43% downstream. Interview 12

<sup>121</sup> The climate gas emissions connected to construction works also go unrecognized.

Beaulieu, Delsontro, Barros, Bezerra-Neto, Powers, Dos Santos, and Vonk 2016; Fearnside 2015, 2016; Fearnside and Pueyo 2012; Rocha Lessa, Dos Santos, Lewis Maddock, and Dos Santos Bezerra 2015). The increased surface area of the water and its exposure to the sun increases the temperature of the water and the evaporation rate. The microclimate experiences an increase in temperature (water absorbs and emits heat) and humidity (water vapour is another climate gas). This also fuels winds. Toxins and bacteria accumulate in the stagnant water body. Fresh water gets irreversibly lost to the river and the lands downstream (Berger and Finkbeiner 2010:921; Fearnside 2016).



Figure II-5 Former fishing ground at el Hobo (taken by the author, February 2017).

Without scientific proof, but with practice-based experience, farmers cultivating coffee in the surrounding hills of El Quimbo noted hotter temperatures soon after the filling of the reservoir was completed.<sup>122</sup> Coffee plants need colder temperatures and are sensitive to warmer climates. Nevertheless, for Emgesa, the rise in temperature as well as its link to the dam reservoir is not supported by scientific evidence. Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1694) compared climate data taken around the Betania dam since the 1970s to argue that an artificial lake of around 8,000 hectares has no crucial impact on the surrounding climate. However, the weather stations Emgesa relied on are not in the immediate vicinity of the Betania dam; the nearest was “El Rosario”, three kilometres away (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1694) and the meteorological data they generated prior to the dam building was incomplete.

Claims that animals which had fled the water found new habitats in the coffee cultivation, are also not scientifically proven. Farmers noted an increase of snakes and bats among their trees, which damaged their crops.<sup>123</sup> Additionally, residents around the reservoir spotted endangered

---

<sup>122</sup> According to a *cafetero* (coffee farmer) in El Agrado, Interview 60, and interventions of Luis Alberto Martínez and Alfonso Barragan at public hearing in Nov. 2016.

<sup>123</sup> Stated, among others, by the mayor of Garzón at the public hearing in Nov. 2016

species such as the *tigrillo* (endangered ocelot of the tropical dry forest, *Leopardus pardalis*) after the filling of the reservoir began. At least one was killed on the nearby highway. The EIA had reported that this species had been extinct from the area, because of hunting activities (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:16). These are some of the other “unforeseen impacts” which should have been mitigated by providing environmental compensation zones for moving species to new habitats, as suggested by the EIA (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1732) and manifested in the environmental licence. Disregarding potential problems to such an endeavour, these zones had not been put in place when Emgesa initiated the filling of the dam.

In sum, the accumulation of pollutants and the change of the ecosystem (accumulation of pests) caused by the construction works and the dam operation had led to the depletion of people’s livelihood bases (i.e. fresh water, fishery, coffee crops) beyond the local and the temporal scales of influence set by the company. This is in line with what Perreault (2013) describes as “dispossession by accumulation” or Leifsen (2017) as “dispossession by contamination”.

Perreault (2013) reverses David Harvey’s concept of accumulation by dispossession to explain people’s loss of access to resources through the accumulation of sediments, waste and toxins in soil and water. This *dispossession by accumulation* leads to the accumulation of capital, because these “externalities” are ignored by the contaminating industry, which increases the corporate profit (Perreault 2013). In Perreault’s case, the lands in question could not be integrated into the process of capital accumulation, because they were within the limits of an indigenous reserve. Therefore, they were wastelands in the eyes of capital and treated that way. A similar observation is made by Leifsen (2017) in his article “Wasteland by design”. He describes “a change of the material properties of water” as *dispossession by contamination*, because it “reduced, restricted, or disrupted access to water as a vital substance for human and non-human use, owing to contamination” (Leifsen 2017:345, 347). Even without regarding land outside the “area of direct influence” as “wastelands”, Emgesa was able to deny responsibility and to disregard the impacts on the environment. This again spared them substantial costs.

Considering the former analysis, I identify three dimensions of dispossession connected to the El Quimbo dam project. A first dimension regarded the assigning of lands for public utility, which integrated the place into the transnational energy market. This resulted in the enclosure of land and resources from the residing population (and agricultural workers). A second dimension had to do with the erosion of infrastructure that the dam caused. This infrastructure

was not adequately replaced and therefore caused detachment and further dispossession, also of people living outside the “area of influence”. The resulting pollution could be considered a third dimension. It implied a further extension of dispossession in space and in time (long-term impacts). These three dimensions of dispossession combined drastically obstructed productive activities in central Huila. Many people lost their jobs or indebted themselves, and consequently felt forced to move away. This spatial and economic closure also destabilised social networks – a point I focus on in the next section.

### Erosion of the social fabric

The dam investment brought major uncertainties for the population in central Huila, primarily connected to the processes of dispossession and the loss of employment mentioned above. Emgesa and Ingetec-S.A. promised that the dam project would boost other economic sectors instead. The jobs available to the residents were in construction: unqualified, short-term (three- to six-month contracts), long shifts, on minimum income and without security beyond the minimum required by law.<sup>124</sup> The promised employment of better conditions was not accessible to those having lost their livelihoods, as they usually lacked the required education and experience. Emgesa brought approximately 3,200 specialists to the region. Ingetec-S.A. estimated that together with the families of the specialised workers, the population would increase by 9,510 people during the construction period (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1812). Those families would contribute to the local economies as consumers of products and services (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1811). However, Emgesa accommodated its employees in a newly erected camp, which was equipped with its own facilities, supermarkets and service providers. It also did not contract many local businesses. It employed larger firms as well as *empresas fantasmas* (shell companies) such as CODEIN.<sup>125</sup>

The increased unemployment together with the new labourers coming to town was accompanied by a spread of drug use, prostitution and crime in Garzón and Gigante.<sup>126</sup> In April 2015 the newspaper *Diario del Huila* interviewed one psychologist and several locals from

---

<sup>124</sup> Interview with former *jornaleros* in Gigante 2012 (Interview 1), and interview with a *jornalero* in Rioloro in 2017 (Interview 32).

<sup>125</sup> A shell company is only a business on paper but has no office or employees. It is often set up by other firms to avoid taxes or to hide illegal activities. Emgesa apparently contracted CODEIN to consult Emgesa and the municipality councils on necessary changes to the land-use plans (see later section on new built environment). However, Miller Dussán stated that the company does not really exist (Interview 7). Indeed, there is no online presence of any firm called CODEIN in Colombia. A possible explanation for forming a shell company could have been that Emgesa wanted to create the image of a neutral expert being present in the negotiation around the land-use plans with the officials. This however is only conjecture.

<sup>126</sup> Interviews 1, 11

both towns, all of whom saw an acceleration of these activities disproportionate to the towns' size, as directly linked to the El Quimbo dam project and the increased petroleum exploitation. In the article, prostitutes report that they would now earn much more in Gigante, than they would in the provincial capital Neiva, owing to the high amount of men coming with the industry (relative to women). Many of their clients would be Emgesa employees.<sup>127</sup> Next to clandestine brothels, many clubs had opened up since 2010, which increased the presence of drug and alcohol abusers in both towns (*Diario del Huila* 2015).

Former *jornaleros*, who generated new income by providing a taxi service on their motorbikes in Gigante, described the changing sense of security connected to the development in the town. Previously people had known each other, but by 2012 many strangers walked the streets, and no one was to be trusted.<sup>128</sup> This view was shared by two young mothers in Rioloro in 2017, who consequently did not want to move to Gigante or Garzón.<sup>129</sup> Dunlap (2018:561) describes this development as common to large-scale investment projects:

Businessmen, representatives, engineers and other workers from around the world flood these small towns for about one and a half to three years. Not only does this influx bring promises of prosperity, jobs, social development and images of modernisation that create enchanted visions of development, it also seems to be changing the prices in the town, increasing drug use and altering social composition at an accelerating rate.

The new social and economic configuration in the towns Gigante and Garzón caused certain social detachment among the residing population, as acquaintances and relatives increasingly moved away and strangers arrived in their place, bringing money, but with different demands and habits. This dismantled local networks of trust, which could have been useful in confronting unemployment and compensation negotiation with the company. It produced social closure. In the following, I discuss how this closure was intensified by the erosion of community space in the area and by the individual compensation negotiations.

### *Community space*

The former *veredas* of the valley accounted for five primary schools, a health post at La Escalereta, two soccer fields, four community houses/halls, a park in San José de Belén, four chapels (Veracruz, La Escalereta, San José de Belén and Domingo Arias Bajo), an old cemetery in San José de Belén, and three religious caves (two caves with religious images in San José de

---

<sup>127</sup> The newspaper *La Nación* reports in an article in 2012 on “the sex corridor” Gigante and Garzón, listing as the origin of increased prostitution, big development projects like El Quimbo and petrol exploitation, as well as growing tourism (*La Nación* 2012a).

<sup>128</sup> Interview 1

<sup>129</sup> Interviews 31,32

Belén and one in La Escalereta; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1753–54). Each *vereda* was managed by a community action council, whose members were the inhabitants and the president elected by the members. Most communities each had their own patron saint which they regarded as their custodian, and would worship accordingly.

With the displacement and the drastic decrease in employment, much of the social infrastructure disappeared. The four resettlement areas built by Emgesa were each equipped with a school and some form of community space – a park or sports field. Three of the communities received a chapel, to replace those previously in existence. But because the number of households in the resettled communities decreased (see section on new built environment below) only a few of the facilities had been used by 2017. Additionally, the previous independency of the communities was lost because their councils were merged into the pre-existing ones in the new *veredas*. In the remaining *veredas* such as Rioloro, unemployment caused many people to migrate to the towns. The drop in population size led to Rioloro’s health centre closing down, as well as its kindergarten. Its primary school was merged with a public school in Gigante. As a result, the rural population became more dependent on the public facilities provided by the towns: areas that were increasingly considered insecure, as described above.

When a community lacks meeting grounds and independent institutions that demand cooperation, the development of a sense of belonging among community members is affected. Spatial reconfiguration can therefore have a direct impact on social networks. The decay of the four irrigation districts as part of the erosion of local infrastructure, serves as a good example. Irrigation systems not only connect lands to water but also *campesinos* to their neighbours. As Fabiana Li (2013) describes in the case of the Tupac Amaru Canal in Peru, irrigation canals are routes of engagement and interaction between people, landscapes and history (see also Rasmussen 2016). Also at El Quimbo, the communities had built the irrigation system and maintained and managed it over generations. This required constant teamwork and the exchange and extension of environmental knowledge. With the disappearance of the canals, these networks dissolved.<sup>130</sup>

One significant impact not only on community space but also on the cultural heritage was the loss of the historical chapel San José de Belén, the last remaining proof of the first colonial settlement in the region. Emgesa had committed in the environmental licence to relocate the

---

<sup>130</sup> The system at La Honda had been explained to me during my visit in 2012 (Interview 3).

original chapel, but it then chose to build a replica instead. When the dam gates were closed in June 2015, the water flooded the original chapel of San José de Belén (see Figures II-6 to II-8 and Atarraya Films 2015). For the community who had taken care of the chapel for generations and who connected the chapel to memories of weddings, baptisms and funerals, it was a loss of heritage, customs and tradition. The picture of the flooded chapel turned into the symbol of disrespect towards the local culture. Its replica had not been accepted by the Catholic church in 2017.



Figure II-6 The San José de Belén chapel before the dismantling (taken by Asoquimbo, retrieved from Calle 2015).



Figure II-7 The replica chapel at the resettlement La Galda (taken by the author in April 2017).



Figure II-8 The demolished and slowly flooding San José de Belén chapel (taken by Juan Carlos Albarracin Gallego, retrieved from International Rivers 2015).

The vanishing of former social and cultural anchor points such as the chapels, bathing sites at the river and other meeting grounds, disrupted customs which had traditionally connected community members. The spatial reconfiguration together with the decrease in population size in the area contributed to social (and cultural) detachment and therefore to social closure. However, detachment cannot be attributed only to the impacts of the dam construction itself. Detachment also comes with those mechanisms which were meant to mitigate it – the compensation policies put in place by the company. I begin here by outlining the social implications of the compensation negotiations, before analysing in the following section the newly built environment resulting from the compensation.

### *Compensation negotiations*

When the dam construction commenced, Emgesa initiated private negotiations for land acquisition first and foremost with larger landowners of impacted plots.<sup>131</sup> The environmental licence considers direct sale of properties larger than 50 hectares appropriate, instead of compensation. Landowners who had already moved to the city and left the management of the land to employees, agreed to sell early on (as was the case of the farm managed by Don Jaime).<sup>132</sup> Having acquired larger properties, Emgesa was then able to put more pressure on smaller farms to cooperate (by accepting the offered payment).<sup>133</sup>

In parallel to these negotiations with plot owners, the local population reported the appearance of “*gente de Emgesa*”,<sup>134</sup> who questioned inhabitants and workers and asked them to sign papers. Apparently, these papers stated that the signing party had been informed about the dam project and the compensation schemes, and agreed to the terms. However, many of the

---

<sup>131</sup> Interview 39

<sup>132</sup> Mayordomo at La Honda. Interview 2

<sup>133</sup> According to Miller Dussán, Interview 20, Emgesa keeps the negotiated prices secret. But it is said that they bought the lands below the market price.

<sup>134</sup> Employees of Ingetec-S.A. were also referred to as “Emgesa’s people”.

*campesinos* did not know how to read or write. Those who were sceptical did not sign; those who did, stated later that they did not fully understand what it meant for them.<sup>135</sup>

By being on site and questioning people early on, Emgesa sought to gain knowledge of the families, not simply to make a compensation assessment. The company soon knew about internal family difficulties, such as a sick member of the household or a disagreement concerning living in the town or at the *vereda*. Therefore, if a household head would not agree to Emgesa's offer during the compensation negotiation, Emgesa could make use of the additional information, for instance to argue for benefits the family would have by moving to a township (closer to medical treatment), or the company would seek to talk with a family member who was more positive about the idea of moving.<sup>136</sup> The affected population found different expressions for the strategy of creating incentives and offering what people wanted to hear. Fernando, displaced from Veracruz, remembered: "*Nos pintaban pájaros de oro*" (They painted golden birds)<sup>137</sup> and Pablo from Rioloro said: "*Crean películas en la cabeza con el dinero*" (They create pictures in your head with the money).<sup>138</sup> This is what Dunlap (2020:4) classifies as the soft technology of social intervention that aims at "disciplining, enchanting and engineering the 'hearts' and 'minds' of target populations" of extractivist industries, promising social development. Creating auspicious scenarios for the future forms part of the corporate politics of time.

In cases where the company did not encounter easy cooperation, it turned incentives into pressure. It would then use the information gathered to make household heads feel guilty for not cooperating (e.g. that they disregard the needs of a sick wife), or feel ashamed that they would hinder the ability of the family or community to thrive (e.g. that their children could receive much better education in the town). Here the company turned towards (covert) coercive tactics to manipulate behaviour, which begins to approach what Dunlap (2020:11–12) identifies as hard technologies of social pacification. These are more violent or forceful interventions, such as false arrests, surveillance and intimidations of activists.<sup>139</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> Conversations with affected population at La Honda in 2012, Interviews 2, 3

<sup>136</sup> Fernando, who resisted his resettlement from Veracruz, said that when he was not home, Emgesa came to talk with his sick wife to convince her to cooperate. As a result of the stress of the "eviction" in 2015, she had a diabetic shock leading to blindness and her later death early in 2017 (Interview 36).

<sup>137</sup> Interview 36

<sup>138</sup> Interview 34

<sup>139</sup> A tactic of the company which is somewhat located between creating incentives and formulating threats is what they said to Alejandra, outspoken dam critic of La Escalereta: "What is it that you want? How much is your silence worth?" (Interview 56).

Also, on the community level, Emgesa looked for internal disagreements. One former fisherman of Veracruz described the strategy with one hand. He stretched out all five fingers, showing that everybody in unison stood against the displacement. But then Emgesa would find a weakness within the first family and pushed it until that family accepted negotiation. Only four fingers left. Then Emgesa would see a conflict between two of the remaining families, and a moment later, both choose to relocate. Now the two remaining families no longer have a strong position and are more inclined to give in, too.<sup>140</sup>

La Escalereta, for example, experienced a total break between members of the farmers' cooperative, because the president of the community action council was "bought" by Emgesa and therefore agreed to their terms and conditions, while the majority of members were opposed to them (Salcedo Montero 2014).<sup>141</sup> In this way, Emgesa increased distrust among the population, which eroded the existing social ties and in part dismantled the social unity against the project. Key to this process was the prioritisation of private encounters.

Emgesa refused to negotiate with whole families, neighbourhoods or *veredas*. Usually only a single person was invited for an "interview" (referred to more often as "negotiation" and also described as "interrogation" by a fisher in El Hobo).<sup>142</sup> There the person, generally the head of the household, would be questioned by two or three employees of Emgesa. A wife who had no formal employment was registered as housewife without income-generating activity. Children were registered as students, regardless of their subsistence work and/or informal employment. Ana María, a young woman from Rioloro, was one of few wives who was able to receive individual compensation separate to the compensation of her husband, only because she had suffered from an injury some years back and had acquired documentation of her employment at that time for her insurance. These documents helped her to prove her income-generating activity before El Quimbo dam began.<sup>143</sup>

The best chance for being acknowledged as an affected person by the project was to have formal documentation (official register and certificates) regarding one's possessions and employment before the project's initiation. However, many labour activities in the region, as well as land access, were managed informally and were based on relationships of trust and inheritance. Accepting only formal documentation of the economic activity is drawing a clear boundary

---

<sup>140</sup> Interview 10

<sup>141</sup> Also remembered by former resident of La Escalereta, Alejandra, Interview 56.

<sup>142</sup> Interview 12

<sup>143</sup> The documents were only acknowledged after one year of intensive protest in Veracruz. Interview 31

around practices that are diverse and transgress the formal and informal. This is, once again, an example of how knowledge matters.<sup>144</sup>

Sometimes other written statements or pictures showing a person's profession or possessions, in combination with other verbal accounts verifying the information, would satisfy Emgesa's prerequisites. Nevertheless, people who claimed compensation were usually invited to several interviews spread out over long periods. In each setting, the interviewee would be confronted with statements that the interviewee or others had previously made, in order to test them. For example, if a former *jornalero* stated that he had worked in the valley at least six months annually, Emgesa would ask for the exact dates. For some people who do not live according to the calendar but according to the seasons, it can be difficult to remember exact dates. Consequently, the *jornalero* might be inclined to make up the dates. At a later interview, Emgesa would ask the same question again and if the exact dates did not match the former statement, it was taken as a sign for Emgesa that the whole employment was made up. Hamer Garzón Vásquez said during his intervention at the public hearing in November 2016, "They treat one as a criminal, put a camera in front of you, without the right to be mistaken in what you say".<sup>145</sup>

Emgesa always counter-checked information with former employers.<sup>146</sup> For instance, Pablo worked as *moyordomo* on one of the *fincas* at El Quimbo valley. While he was still working in this position, Emgesa (or Ingetec-S.A.) questioned him about the people he had employed over the years. Because he was not aware of the importance of his statement at that time, he only named those who came to his mind at that moment. However, even of those people he did name, many did not appear in the later census.<sup>147</sup> Only after a legal demand to access the original documents of his interview, Pablo was able to prove that he had indeed given the necessary information for many to receive compensation. By that time, he had fallen out with many former friends.<sup>148</sup> There were also accusations that employers did not provide all the

---

<sup>144</sup> As the case of the fisherfolk at Betania shows (see Chapter 4 and above section on contamination), formal documentation is not always enough. While many fishermen and women were able to document their status as fishers at Betania, they still had a hard time proving that the El Quimbo dam affected their income. Again, a "scientific study" was considered of higher value than the daily experience of the practitioners.

<sup>145</sup> One activist affirmed that Emgesa would treat the affected like criminals and it would use legal persecution (e.g. against Asoquimbo leaders) and defamation to damage one's credibility (Interview 44).

<sup>146</sup> According to former farm workers of Rioloro, Interviews 26, 32, 34

<sup>147</sup> Javier, *jornalero* in Rioloro, also remembers having been registered in the first census but later he did not appear as affected (Interview 32).

<sup>148</sup> Interview 34

required information about their labourers in order to receive more compensation money themselves.<sup>149</sup>

Combining spatial and discursive power, Emgesa designed the negotiation settings in a way that would make the interviewee confused and insecure. This was achieved by allowing only one person to the negotiation table, who would face several “experts” and a camera, by presenting many apparent facts to the person that he or she had not been aware of. This person would then be made to feel foolish or uneducated (for not knowing about all the facts in the first place) or even framing the person as a liar and thief who was trying to take advantage of the company. Such defamation is another strategy of counter-insurgency (see e.g. Brock and Dunlap 2018).

Accusations were particularly targeted at “non-resident” *jornaleros* and fisherfolk. Emgesa used the demographic numbers collected in the EIA to argue that there had been a much lower labour demand in the valley than claimed by the people who had worked there. Also, Emgesa used the estimated numbers of fisheries existing in the river prior to the project, to argue that there had never been enough fish for all the fishers who claim to have been affected.<sup>150</sup> As noted in Chapter 4, there are many reasons to question these numbers.

Additionally, Emgesa referred back to the adaptability of seasonal workers identified by Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1219-1220,1226), to claim that enough new jobs had been created for people to readjust their livelihoods. Ingetec-S.A. (2008:1814) in fact spoke of the possible generation of employment through the establishment of tourism and aquaculture in the reservoir, similar to Betania.<sup>151</sup> However, for Emgesa, the El Quimbo and Betania dams are *uniproposito* (of single purpose), that being energy generation (see the implications in Box 3 and Figure II-9). By 2018, this situation had still not changed.

---

<sup>149</sup> Interview 26, 32

<sup>150</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 4, a scientist at the South-Colombian University, funded in parts by Emgesa, emphasised that there are no studies supporting a big variety of fishes in the “area of direct influence” and further argues that the part of the stream was too cold for reproduction (consequently the reproduction of the fish could not be affected by the dam; Interview 17).

<sup>151</sup> Emgesa reproduced this narrative in their public communication. At a project presentation in Neiva, 2008, it listed aquaculture and tourism as additional benefits of the dam project. On the final PowerPoint slide it clarified: “Several of the topics mentioned here are posed as proposals and not as actual deeds [*hechos cumplidos*]” (Emgesa 2008).

### Box 3. Single-purpose water

Some *Riolo*reños managed to receive a compensation for their loss of income in the form of one-time payments and invested the money in equipment for a new income-generating activity. Some bought a moped and offered taxi services. Some bought a boat and a net and went fishing. In early 2017, around 40 fisherfolk tried their luck at El Quimbo reservoir regularly. They would go out with their boats to anchor their nets (*atarrayas*) in the evenings. In the mornings, they would get the catch. A good morning brings around 15 fish. However, often there are no more than five trapped in the nets (Interview 30). Emgesa is interested in repopulating the reservoir. It funds projects at the South-Colombian University in Neiva, where scientists breed local fish species in tanks. By 2017, some fish had already been released to the reservoir, however, the oxygen level only allows life in the upper strata and fishing activities hinder their long-term survival. Accordingly, Emgesa does not welcome fisherfolk in the reservoir. The company owns the reservoir area, as much as the water within it. No water can be extracted without permission (even for stopping a fire). The 40 fisherfolk going to the reservoir each day do the activity illegally (as the *moped-taxis*), with the constant risk of facing fines and losing their equipment. Emgesa announced on the local radio that it is not to be held responsible for whatever happens at the reservoir. Shortly after the reservoir filling, two youngsters of Rioloro had tried to fish in the stagnant water body and drowned (local accounts in 2017).



Figure II-9 Fisherman in the El Quimbo reservoir with the catch of the day, May 2017 (taken by the author).

The censuses and the outcomes of the negotiations determined the compensation people received and whether they were included in the collective resettlement scheme (see next section on new built environment). The results varied widely; some families received much more than others equally affected while others received nothing. This led to suspicious questioning among community members, wondering, for example what the head of a household may have told the company in order to receive more money than other households. This is another corporate strategy to create distrust and envy, which further hinders social unity. Ana María considered the company as “messing around” with the affected families by giving *partecitas* (compensation in small amounts), during several *sorteos* (drawings). She claimed to have been

compensated in the fifth drawing. She described the constant questions Emgesa asked as a *fachada* (façade) to occupy the people and make them fatigued.<sup>152</sup>

If a farmworker or fisher was considered worthy of compensation, it was generally a one-off payment, also referred to as hush money. Once agreed, the person also accepts future (not yet noticeable) impacts resulting from the project. In theory, Emgesa calculated the sum of money paid out to people according to their former monthly salary. For a minimum monthly salary,<sup>153</sup> a worker received a one-off payment of 25-28 million Colombian pesos (around USD 14,000), for two minimum monthly salaries 32-35 million pesos, and for three minimum monthly salaries, 45-48 million pesos.<sup>154</sup> Most of the payouts could be enough to let a family survive for a few months. However, a farmworker usually lives off weekly payments, therefore he or she is not used to dealing with larger amounts of money. There are many stories in and around the area of El Quimbo of people having spent all their compensation money at once.<sup>155</sup> Some fulfilled a long-held dream or spent the money in games of luck (gambling) in the hope of getting even more money. Others tried to invest in equipment that would allow for a new income-generating activity as exemplified in Box 3. However, the possibilities were limited and many struggled.

While the “non-resident” *jornaleros* at least did not lose their homes, the *mayordomos* lost employment and home without being offered resettlement. Because *mayordomos* did not own the houses and land they were living on, they were not the ones Emgesa negotiated with. However many *mayordomos* had been living for several years on the farms (some over ten years) and had no other home to go back to.

One example provides again the case of Don Jaime and his partner at La Honda. Both faced great difficulties as they were already too old to re-establish themselves.<sup>156</sup> Emgesa offered them participation in their capacitation programme (“Capital Semilla”, created together with SENA, the government institute for learning/education). The participant commits to attending

---

<sup>152</sup> Interview 31

<sup>153</sup> A minimum monthly salary was 570,000 Colombian pesos in 2012 (around USD 300 at that time).

<sup>154</sup> According to Andrés, who received compensation as fisherman in Rioloro (Interview 51, also 32, 34, 36, 40). Emgesa talks officially of a payment between 25 and 40 million pesos (*El Espectador* 2012a).

<sup>155</sup> There are rumours of families’ misfortune with the compensation money in Rioloro. One of these is the story of the oldest son of a single mother, who received monetary compensation in Rioloro and took most of the money to buy a motorbike. Shortly afterwards, his mother had to indebted herself to pay for the funeral of her son, who had died in an accident on the same motorbike. Another woman of Rioloro ran away with the compensation money leaving her husband behind. After she had spent all the money in the city, she suddenly returned and moved back into her husband’s house. It is also said that many “beneficiaries” spent their compensation on alcohol (Interview 36).

<sup>156</sup> Interview 2

a re-schooling programme over three to five months, during which Emgesa pays the calculated compensation money in instalments.<sup>157</sup> Afterwards, the beneficiary is expected to find new employment. But Don Jaime had no hope that the programme could help him and his partner to establish a new livelihood. It was said that during the programme one is taught to plant corn. He already knew how to plant corn; what was missing was land on which to do so.<sup>158</sup>

The assumption that “one scheme fits all” follows the technical approach of compensation practices. The quality of life is made quantifiable by measuring the livelihood assets (such as access to resources, property and income-generating activity). Then, this capital is translated into a monetary value that would determine the compensation. Also at El Quimbo, Emgesa made a complex system of socio-economic relationships quantifiable and comparable or substitutable in line with the logic of commensuration. The quality of an entity is determined by and subordinated to one common standard of value (Espeland and Stevens 1998; F. Li 2013). Emgesa deployed the abstract category of “*núcleo familiar*” (domestic unit; household) which allowed them to ignore diverse sets of social relations, several sources of income and subsistence strategies. The resulting categorisation was measured and valued in minimum monthly incomes.

In summary, personal possessions and documentation, as well as social networks and access to knowledge determined the outcome of the private compensation negotiations. It was overall about what source of knowledge counted as qualified. This process led to further social detachment as it spread insecurity, envy and distrust among community and even family members. With increased unemployment and social networks eroding, families opted more easily for collaboration with the company. The individual compensation scheme contributed to producing closures, damaging people’s credibility and limiting their scope of action.

Together with the loss of community space which brought people together and was a source of common identity, the compensation negotiations caused the erosion of social institutions and, in the words of the local population, “*se rompió el tejido social*” (it broke the social fabric). Next to individual compensations, the environmental licence accounted for two other compensation mechanisms: an environmental compensation zone and collective resettlement

---

<sup>157</sup> The full amount of the compensation money would only be paid after attending all the courses. Capacitation classes could also cover “how to handle the money responsibly” (Interviews 40, 51). Andrés, a former fisherman at Veracruz explained that he and a group of fishers were expected to attend such a class. They went twice: the first time they were taught how to manage money; the second time they were asked if they still had the money. Most did not. Therefore the teacher did not see any point in continuing the class (Interview 51).

<sup>158</sup> Interview 2, 3

areas. These resulted in a new built environment, infrastructures and institutions, apart from the dam structure itself.

## New built environment

### *Environmental compensation*

As the environmental impact of the dam was difficult to avoid, mitigate or restore, Emgesa had committed to invest in a “zone for environmental compensation” along the hills to the west of El Quimbo reservoir, which would supply local (terrestrial) species with new alternative habitats.<sup>159</sup> The dam reservoir is not in conflict with any national or regional park; however, the project flooded around 7,000 hectares of the Amazon Forest Reserve, constituted in the law 2° of 1959. The law highlights the ecological importance of the Amazon forest and aims to conserve natural renewable resources.

Facing the prospect of the El Quimbo dam materialising in 2007, the CAM criticised the possible impacts the dam would have on the environment in two main ways. First was the fragmentation of the corridors of conservation, the transformation of ecosystems, and the loss of biodiversity that they accommodate. Second was the loss of the regulatory capacity of the watersheds, the decrease in surface water supply, the deterioration of water quality and inefficient use of water resources (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:179). As previously described, Ingetec-S.A. saw the damage already done through the increased human settlements in the area and the inadequate and inefficient resource use. Tobacco and rice are particularly water-intensive crops and together with coffee plantations in the hills, contaminate water sources. The EIA (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:244) describes an inefficient (and in parts illegal)<sup>160</sup> use of large quantities of water, poor water treatment and poor waste disposal as well as high rates of deforestation (slash and burn practices). This would be connected to the lack of local environmental consciousness (see Ingetec-S.A. 2008:792). Emgesa argued it would reconnect habitats and provide environmental education to the local inhabitants to decrease contamination (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1999, 2069–72).<sup>161</sup> The EIA (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:177) states:

[At an expert meeting] It was indicated that the El Quimbo hydroelectric project is an opportunity to conserve ecosystems in the area, which otherwise – given the degree of intervention necessary – would have been very difficult to realize in the short term.

The project aims to compensate, restore and convert an extension of approximately 3,363 hectares into conservation areas. The objective would be the mitigation of the impacts the

---

<sup>159</sup> The aquatic life should be restored within the reservoir once the conditions allow it.

<sup>160</sup> Illegal connections of irrigation canals (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1173).

<sup>161</sup> and see, for example, Emgesa’s newsletter “*La Buena Energía de El Quimbo*”, Edition 11 of 2015.

dam would have on wildlife. Successful management would increase their chances to transfer to nearby areas, where they would find ecologically appropriate conditions. Another objective is to create similar ecosystem conditions to those affected, which would be best achieved in an immediate environment where the physical variables are similar. This would increase the ecosystem connectivity of the area, with the ecosystems of the flanks of the mountain ranges, and longitudinally with the upper valley of the Magdalena River.

The EIA suggests the subtraction of the reservoir area from the protected area determined by law and the reimbursement of the lost area in the form of restoring and conserving an area of the same size in the proximities of the dam. The environmental licence agreed to these forms of environmental compensation but extended the area needed for conservation to 11,079.60 hectares: the hectares of affected ecosystems regarded as of high ecological value were calculated by a factor of 5, the ones of lower value were taken as equal (factor 1) and of no value were disregarded (factor 0; Minambiente 2009:61).

Emgesa acquired the lands needed for this conservation zone easily, as the hillsides west of the reservoir (towards Matambo Mountain) were large cattle ranches. The owners were willing to sell and not much employment was lost. However, at the time of the reservoir being filled, the area was still pasture. Emgesa contracted the NGO Fundación Natura in April 2014 to run a pilot area of reforestation (see Figure I-6). By May 2017 the restoration of 140 hectares, 1.26% of the total 11,079 hectares, was close to completion. By that time, the Fundación Natura did not know if Emgesa planned to continue funding the project, and how it would proceed with the remaining hectares.<sup>162</sup>

So far Emgesa has invited officials, journalists, school and university classes to participate in tours through the nursery and the reforested areas called Finlandia, promoting it as the “biggest ecological restoration project of Colombia” (see Figure II-10 and Emgesa’s Newsletter, Editions 11 and 13 of 2015). It can be seen here the way in which scientists share their advances and findings is in line with Dunlap’s (2020:13–14) soft technologies of pacification: public communication and “green washing”. They present a beautiful place recreated on pastures.<sup>163</sup> However, it did not provide a refuge for animals at the time of the filling, nor does the reforestation of 140 hectares so far, make up for the dry forest ecosystem or river ecosystems lost. Furthermore, inhabitants of Rioloro and Veracruz used hiking tracks through the area to

---

<sup>162</sup> Interview with public spokesperson of Fundación Natura (Interview 52).

<sup>163</sup> Event 12

climb Matambo before the project's initiation. Now Emgesa does not allow trespassing.<sup>164</sup> This is a form of enclosure which resonates with so-called fortress conservation: the physical and in parts violent creation of “people-less lands deemed to be natural” and to protect the “proper state of nature” (Brockington 2015:2).<sup>165</sup>



Figure II-10 Guided tour at Finlandia, May 2017 (taken by the author, Event 12).

What was once part of a social–environmental system, has been turned into an abstract category “nature”, which should be protected from human use, but is good to look at. As discussed in Chapter 4, Ingetec-S.A. detached its impact analysis of “the biotic” and “abiotic” characteristics from the analysis of social, cultural and economic impacts. This implied the individuation and abstraction of an interconnected system into single units that ultimately facilitated their compensation (see Castree 2003; Robertson 2012:387). I argue that the environmental compensation mechanism has created what Robertson (2000) termed an “incomplete capitalisation of nature”, in his case of the United States artificial wetland restoration (see also O’Connor 1994).

Many scholars, first in political economy (e.g. Polanyi 2001) and later in political ecology and ecological economics, have critically discussed the commodification of nature and the expansion of capitalist frontiers into all regions of the earth and all aspects of life (e.g. Bakker 2005; Benjaminsen and Kaarhus 2018; Dunlap and Fairhead 2014; Gómez Baggethun and Muradian 2015; Rasmussen and Lund 2018; Robertson 2006, 2012; Sullivan 2009, 2013). Commodification, in the most general sense, is a process of applying the logic of the market

---

<sup>164</sup> According to two young men in Rioloro, Interviews 44, 46.

<sup>165</sup> See also Adams and Hutton 2007; Büscher, Dressler, and Fletcher 2014; Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015, 2017; Dunlap and Fairhead 2014; Holmes and Cavanagh 2016; Lunstrum 2014.

onto non-market relationships, values and norms (Benjaminsen and Kaarhus 2018; Gómez Baggethun 2015). When referring to the commodification of nature, scholars commonly mean the attachment of price to a service provided by nature and its trade on the market. The carbon trade (Benjaminsen and Kaarhus 2018; Robertson 2012), biodiversity offsets (Sullivan 2013), and the valuation of ecosystem services (Arias Arévalo et al. 2018; Gómez Baggethun et al. 2016; Pascual, Muradian, Brander, Gómez Baggethun, Martín López, and Verma 2011; Robertson 2012) are examples of this nature commodification.

The environmental compensation zone at El Quimbo can at the most be seen as incomplete commodification of nature (see Castree 2003), as there are limits to assigning a monetary value and to exchange it on the market.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, I argue that Emgesa's restoration project can be seen as an offsetting strategy. Biodiversity offsetting accounts for measures taken to compensate for any "significant residual adverse impacts on biodiversity" that cannot be avoided, minimised or rehabilitated on site (according to the mitigation hierarchy), in order to achieve "no net loss or a net gain of biodiversity" in the region (Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme 2009:15; Sullivan 2013:83). At El Quimbo dam, a zone of environmental harm – the reservoir – was traded with a future zone of environmental health, the revitalised hillside. In Sullivan's words, the "development impact" is traded with "the future conservation value of a designated offset area. It is this constructed commensurability between places and times that allows for both off-site mitigation of development-related environmental harm and for temporal delay in offset provision" (Sullivan 2013:84). It follows the strategy of corporate politics of space and time – manipulating scales of reference to make issues seem less problematic.

In line with the capitalist logic, Emgesa rendered a life-territory commensurable, drawing artificial boundaries between ecosystems, categorising them according to vegetation cover. It measured and quantified the unique environment, its biodiversity and its ecosystem services in hectares. Finally, it attached the value of ecological importance based on degrees of former interventions. Through this, it disregarded the ecosystem value of vegetation resulting from human intervention, and the socio-economic and cultural values these ecosystems have for the local people. Without a market, the riverine ecosystem is traded for an "ecologically restored" hillside. With the environmental compensation, Emgesa inscribed to the place the human–

---

<sup>166</sup> Disregarding the future potential for eco-tourism.

nature division which it had already manifested in the EIA. What this meant in terms of closures becomes more apparent when looking also at the collective resettlement scheme.

### *Collective resettlements*

According to the environmental licence, all households residing in the “area of direct influence” qualified for the collective resettlement scheme. This included not only owners (*propietarios*), but also families, who have had temporal titles to lands (*poseedores*) or were occupying (informally) land for at least five years while using it for agricultural production (*ocupantes*). The licence suggests that properties of below five hectares with a house were to be compensated with five hectares of fertile (irrigated) lands and a new house. Properties above five hectares but less than 50 hectares of size were to be compensated with the same amount of fertile land. While the former were free to ask for individual resettlement or sell directly to Emgesa, *finqueros* and *hacendados* (owners of properties above 50 hectares) were advised to sell directly (Minambiente 2009:247–50).

Development projects are often accompanied by involuntary resettlement. Cernea (2000) developed the impoverishment risks and reconstruction (IRR) model as a way to avoid impoverishment among the displaced population. He identifies the following eight widespread risks, in response to which he suggests strategic direction of actions to be taken: a) from landlessness to land-based resettlement; b) from joblessness to reemployment; c) from homelessness to house reconstruction; d) from marginalisation to social inclusion; e) from increased morbidity to improved health care; f) from food insecurity to adequate nutrition; g) from loss of access to restoration of community assets and services; and (h) from social disarticulation to networks and community rebuilding (Cernea 2000:15).

Also, the collective resettlement at El Quimbo was meant to restore housing, to maintain the social fabric and to re-establish economic activities for the directly affected by providing new agricultural production schemes, education and technology. In practice, however, “occupants” of lands struggled to prove their permanence in the area and their right for compensation, and Emgesa tried to avoid resettlement completely by negotiating direct acquisition of properties with all owners. For instance, as Felipe, who resettled in Nueva Veracruz, declares: “Everything is a fight with Emgesa; they do not give anything voluntarily”.<sup>167</sup> Also Pablo, who

---

<sup>167</sup> Interview 10

owned a piece of land at Veracruz but lives in Rioloro, explains: “They did not pay me for the damage; they only paid for the property”.<sup>168</sup>

This was problematic for the majority of smallholders. The selling price offered by Emgesa was generally below what was needed to rebuild a new livelihood somewhere else (land prices outside the valley increased and life in the city was expensive). For them, resettlement was the only option. But Emgesa faced difficulties in finding adequate lands for resettlement. First, there was no land equally fertile and within the according administrative jurisdictions (municipalities); second, if there were good lands, they were not necessarily for sale, and third, Emgesa and the owner did not agree on a price. Some affected families searched for good properties in the surrounding areas themselves, which they would demand from Emgesa in exchange. However, during my research, I heard of only two cases where this was successful.<sup>169</sup> In both cases, the heads of negotiation were female community representatives and outspoken dam opponents. Their activism provided them with a stronger position against Emgesa (see Chapter 6).

In the end, only owners of lands below five hectares and with close community ties successfully demanded collective resettlement, in total four *veredas*. La Escalereta (formerly 81 households, located in the municipality of El Agrado) was moved to the *vereda Llano de la Virgen* located in the municipality of Altamira. It is the largest resettlement area with 45 houses. San José de Belén (formerly 50 households) was moved to *La Galda* within El Agrado (now 19 houses). Families of Balseadero (also Barzal and Alto San Isidro; 51 households in total) resettled to *Santiago y Palacio* within Garzón (now 15 houses). Finally, Veracruz (formerly 76 households) was resettled to *Montea* within Gigante (now 19 houses; Ingetec-S.A. 2008:1000, 1181; see also Figure I-6).

The communities were not consulted about the location, design and planning of the new resettlement areas. The promise of the environmental licence to improve one’s living conditions meant, for Emgesa, a new house. Sofia, resettled from San José de Belén, said: “For them ‘better’ means to have a new house”.<sup>170</sup> The white new buildings connected by a miniature urban street structure (including cross-walks) in the middle of a rural landscape made the resettlements appear as model villages, to look at but not for use. Nueva Veracruz (Montea) is

---

<sup>168</sup> Interview 34

<sup>169</sup> Emgesa states that 27 households opted for individual resettlement (Emgesa newsletter “*La Buena Energía de El Quimbo*”, Edition 13 of 2015).

<sup>170</sup> Interview 39

surrounded by hilly pastures and only one dirt road connects it to Rioloro (and to the main route), which takes around 15 minutes to walk. Trees have been planted in the front gardens of the houses, but most were still too small to provide shade in 2017.

The location and the distance between buildings as well as the layout of the streets were decided by the company. The families were only able to choose among a set of house models, which merely differed in the ground plot. There was no flexibility in size, room number and style. For a stranger, these white houses might look prettier than the shed-like houses many families used to live in before (see Figures II-11 to II-12). And indeed, the quality of the material had improved.<sup>171</sup> Many families in Veracruz now have more separate rooms than before (e.g. four instead of two rooms). But this does not automatically increase utility. Felipe in Nueva Veracruz noted: “The house, I cannot eat”.<sup>172</sup> and his neighbour Fernando agreed: “I cannot live off the house”.<sup>173</sup>



Figure II-11 Nueva Veracruz (taken by the author, March 2017).



Figure II-12 Chapel of Nueva Veracruz (taken by the author, March 2017).

---

<sup>171</sup> According to resettled women, Interviews 35, 39, 56

<sup>172</sup> Interview 10

<sup>173</sup> Interview 36. Similar said Alejandra from La Escalereta: “They gave us some houses in good conditions, but that doesn't produce to cover expenses.” (Interview 56).

The former houses were quite open and wide, while the new rooms are closed up. As a result, they provide a different sense of space for each family member. Alejandra from La Escalereta explained, “They turned out so compact ... not appropriate for farm life”.<sup>174</sup> They provide no space for chickens to run through (as they often do on *fincas*) and the neighbours would complain about the noise and smell: “There are confrontations caused by the nearness of the houses”.<sup>175</sup> Sofia for example did not move into the new house. She was one of the household heads who Emgesa resettled individually, close to the collective resettlement of San José de Belén (La Galda). Emgesa built a new house onto the *fincas*, but the family chose to stay in the old farm building already existing on the property. It is traditionally shaped (c-form), open with patio and many plants (see Figures II-13 to II-15). Sofia, who shares the home with her mother and her mother’s uncle, said that they would not feel comfortable in the new house.<sup>176</sup>



Figure II-13 Traditional *fincas* in Rioloro, front (above) and patio (below; taken by the author, March 2017).

---

<sup>174</sup> Interview 56

<sup>175</sup> Interview 56

<sup>176</sup> Interview 39, 40



Figure II-14 Old rural house of *bahareque* (clay) in San Augustin, Huila (taken by the author, February 2017).



Figure II-15 Former chapel of Veracruz, June 2015, before the reservoir filling started (taken by Pablo, see Interview 34).

The former fisherman Fernando from Veracruz had no option. When Emgesa finally dismantled his former house, he was attending appointments in the city and had no other place to return to despite the new white house in Montea. He says that the building is not convenient for him; he has nowhere to leave his tools and equipment and there is no workspace.<sup>177</sup> Also, quoted in an article of *La Nación* from 18 December 2015, Harvey Flórez points out that in his former house he was able to have a workshop to run a business, but that the new house does not allow this activity (*La Nación* 2015d).

---

<sup>177</sup> Interview 36

The lands the resettled families of Veracruz received from Emgesa are located further away from the houses and only allow grazing for cattle. Doña Lucia explains that she shares a household with her two brothers, but they have to stay with their eight cows day and night. Therefore, she spends most of the day alone in the house.<sup>178</sup> In general, passing through the resettlement areas during the day, one gets a sense of desertion. The lack of shade does not invite people to mingle outside their houses, and many leave the area for school and work during the day. The new isolated neighbourhood invites burglaries. The people of Nueva Veracruz noticed strangers entering twice during the first year of their resettlement. This makes Doña Lucia especially cautious to leave her house alone.<sup>179</sup> Beforehand, the people of Veracruz lived mostly in traditional houses with dirt floors and walls of perishable materials such as wood, *bahareque* (traditional construction of interwoven sticks and clay) or *guadua* (bamboo). These buildings did not attract thieves as many people had their productive activity close by and they did not promise much of material value worth stealing.

The design of the houses and the greater distances to the fields have enforced gender division. Women who formerly earned additional income outside their home, might now, like Doña Lucia, be restricted to work being done around the house. Additionally, the gardens and fields do not offer much potential for subsistence or informal jobs. An elderly woman of Rioloro spoke of the pindo palm tree that used to grow beside the river and of women who used to bind the leaves into artisanal farmers' hats to sell at the market.<sup>180</sup> With the rising water level, the pindo palm habitat disappeared.

Laura was resettled to Nueva Veracruz (Montea) as part of her husband's compensation. Because she herself owned a shop between Rioloro and Veracruz beforehand, a little corner shop was built into her husband's house. There she offers packaged goods for daily needs, like toilet paper, chewing gum, lemonade and beer. Laura explains how bored she is, sitting on the terrace in front of the shop each day waiting for costumers who do not come. Formerly her shop was the main meeting point for the labourers going in and out of the valley. In the morning, they would pass to get a *tinto* (coffee) and in the evenings, they would mingle to have some beers and listen to music. In Nueva Veracruz, however, there are no labourers passing and the

---

<sup>178</sup> Interview 55

<sup>179</sup> Interview 55

<sup>180</sup> Interview 29

residents buy what they need in the towns.<sup>181</sup> Laura says she is now much more dependent on her husband's income.<sup>182</sup>

Some women who feel obliged to keep the house tidy, have experienced an additional domestic workload. The new houses have white-tiled floors. The former dirt floors allowed an open entrance and a moving in and out of animals and humans. Now the inside and the outside are in clear contrast to each other, and every leaf and grain of sand is instantly visible.<sup>183</sup>

The detachment of living and work space as well as the monotonous design of the houses and neighbourhoods limits people's range of actions (Suárez Gómez 2017:48) and forces the beneficiaries of resettlement to adapt to the new circumstances (e.g. women staying in the house). It shows that architecture is a potential tool for social engineering and what Wilson (2014:109) calls a "spatial technology of power". Taking "millennium villages" as examples, Wilson (2014:107) analyses the model village paradigm that led to the spread of "model village-style experiments" around the world. The author defines the resulting villages as utopian projects that "aimed to produce an idealised society – a model embodying a specific vision of social order". More specifically, it would be about the integration of the capitalist mode of production into the everyday life (Wilson 2014:110).

Although not applying the model-village ideal in the case of the resettlement areas around El Quimbo, the separation of living space and workspace as well as the limited space for subsistence is characteristic of capitalist organisation (Harvey 1985; Tyner 2012:31, 2016). Accordingly, the design of these areas as the provision of infrastructure, is an important tool to reconfigure space towards a more rational, capitalist order and to produce closures. It can be seen as another corporate action which disrupts further social organisation, independence and alternative visions for the future. This was intensified in the case of El Quimbo by the issue that the new lands did not allow much variation in production strategies.

Without irrigation technology in most of the resettlements, inhabitants are only permitted to keep a handful of cattle – an occupation new to many of the inhabitants and without much prospect. The limited availability of land keeps the herd small. Fernando, former fisherman of Veracruz, declares: "For me it is a thousand times better to work down there [along the river] to my preference in a house of *bahareque*, but free. By contrast, here [in the resettlement] one

---

<sup>181</sup> Javier from Rioloro says, "It is very boring up there [in Nueva Veracruz]: no music and people do not leave their houses" (Interview 32).

<sup>182</sup> Interview 54

<sup>183</sup> Interview 35

is like enslaved. Because, with the cattle project up there, it's slavery for one to be behind the cattle all day".<sup>184</sup> The former flexibility was lost and former experiences and acquired skills became, in part, superfluous. For example, cacao cultivation was considered a much more enriching practice. Andrés, *jornalero* of Rioloro, said that he enjoyed working with cacao because one would always learn more; it would be always a challenge.<sup>185</sup>

In terms of Cernea's IRR model (2000), Emgesa responded to two impoverishment risks directly by providing new housing and land. These were however neither socially appropriate nor did they provide much potential for re-establishing livelihoods. The new lands drastically limited the production strategies of the beneficiaries. The situation resembles what Santos (2017) terms "territorial alienation", where the new land use (in the case of Nueva Veracruz, cattle herding) is foreign to the habitants (primarily fisherfolk). Furthermore, the product of their labour (milk, meat) had the single purpose to be sold on the market. Most products of daily consumption had to be bought at a "distant" market (Gigante or Garzón). On the former lands, this was only partly the case and subsistence combined with informal exchange formed an essential part of the livelihoods. An inhabitant of Nueva Veracruz says, "We were taught to live in the countryside, to live in a community, where what one lacked was supplied by the other. But here no one has anything" (*La Nación* 2015d). Furthermore, the resettled population lost the feeling of independence, having no alternatives and relying on essential services outside their decision-making capacity (as mentioned above).<sup>186</sup>

The large-scale displacement and land enclosure led to the drastic decrease of employment in the remaining *veredas* like Rioloro, which caused further migration and the shutdown or merger of many rural public institutions. Nueva Veracruz (Montea) however still relied on services provided by Rioloro. As the number of households in Veracruz came down to 19, it became difficult for Veracruz to be considered as an independent *vereda* with its own community action council. It also could no longer claim an own school or kindergarten. Consequently, even though Emgesa provided certain social infrastructure in the resettlement area, like school and church ("restoration of community assets and services" according to Cernea above), these remained unused while requiring constant maintenance (similar to La Galda).

---

<sup>184</sup> Interview 36

<sup>185</sup> Interview 51

<sup>186</sup> Alejandra, resettled from La Escalereta, uses the word "*miseria*": "We live in misery" (*estamos viviendo una miseria*; Interview 56).

For Eva, *jornalera* of Rioloro and the sister of Laura (shop owner of Nueva Veracruz), these problems of the resettlements are problems of the spoiled: “They are ungrateful. [...] The place which suffered is Rioloro”.<sup>187</sup> Eva has always lived in Rioloro and worked in the valley. For her and her colleague Juan, it is astonishing that the former fisher community of Veracruz now lives in new houses, while Rioloro, the former prosperous entrance to the agricultural fields of El Quimbo valley, is left behind, forgotten.<sup>188</sup> Inhabitant Tea confirms, “Rioloro is totally run down” (ceased to exist; “*se acabó totalmente*”)<sup>189</sup> and neighbour Ana María says it is in “standby” mode.<sup>190</sup>

Pride and envy have enforced former disagreements between the sister communities. Neither of them likes to be dependent on the other. However, now also as a result of the dam project, Nueva Veracruz happens to have a new and technologically advanced water treatment plant, in contrast to Rioloro whose tap water comes directly from the heavily polluted Loro River (Figure I-6).<sup>191</sup> By 2017, the plant at the resettlement area had not yet been put into operation. The problem is that it is a very modern and technically elaborate plant, which could provide water for around 500 people.<sup>192</sup> Financially it makes no sense for Nueva Veracruz to activate the plant. The community would need to employ a technician to run the plant (currently one employee of Emgesa keeps the plant maintained). It would also demand too much energy for only 19 households.

The people of Nueva Veracruz hope to use the plant together with Rioloro and share costs. Rioloro has had drinking water issues for many years. Some inhabitants claim that they once had a well-functioning treatment system but the construction of the dam damaged the pipeline network and the plant decayed.<sup>193</sup> Others state that the water has never been drinkable.<sup>194</sup> In 2016, the community action council of Rioloro appointed a water committee to take charge of resolving the issue. The committee’s position was that the plant in Nueva Veracruz is too expensive and that Rioloro has a functioning plant itself; it just needs to be put into operation.<sup>195</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> Interview 25

<sup>188</sup> Interviews 25, 26. Emgesa used this to confront the communities further. A representative said in a meeting with the community in May 2017 that Rioloro’s only problem is that it needs to accept that Veracruz is no longer the poorer community of the two (accounted by Diego, Juan, Alisa and several other participants).

<sup>189</sup> Event 3

<sup>190</sup> Interview 31

<sup>191</sup> The river serves for sewage and waste disposal for upstream settlements. The river also receives the run-off water from the coffee plantations on the hills, which carries chemicals from herbicides and pesticides (Ingetec-S.A. 2008:478).

<sup>192</sup> Interviews 25, 26, 10

<sup>193</sup> It oxidised; Interviews 25, 26, 44

<sup>194</sup> Interview 41

<sup>195</sup> Interview 27

Emgesa denies responsibility, but the municipality of Gigante has assigned funds for the project. However, the realisation seems more complicated. By June 2017, Rioloro was still relying on water tanks coming to town as well as to Nueva Veracruz, hopefully every week.<sup>196</sup>

In light of the poor infrastructure of the area, one might ask why Emgesa decided to concentrate on one water treatment plant, while ignoring all the issues surrounding it. The most obvious reason is symbolism. Together with the “longest suspension bridge of Colombia”, the technically advanced water treatment plant lends enchantment to the area as a symbol of progress and modernity. It is the soft technology of promising social development (Dunlap 2020:13). Emgesa used these single projects as showpieces to underline their social investment in the region and to distract from the other problems it neglects. I see the water treatment plant as well as many of the new community spaces of chapels and schools, in Gupta’s (2018) terms, as “ruins of the future”. These are infrastructural projects which were never finished or never used as intended. Their function was primarily symbolic or aesthetic, to reflect an idea of progress, order and beauty (Gupta 2018:67). They do not serve their intended purpose as in the case of Nueva Veracruz; however, they work as technologies of detachment in that they fuel resentments between the resettlement and Rioloro. In general, the lack of adequate public service provision leaves many people feeling abandoned, not by Emgesa, but by the public administration.

The new urban structure of the resettlement areas would put properties into a higher tax category at level 4. Level 4 tax is typical for urban residential areas (upper middle class), while the houses these people used to live in were at level 1. This category is typical for rural houses; taxes and public services are partly subsidised. While being confronted with these potential higher costs, most of the resettled households still lacked their legal title in 2017. Especially Nueva Veracruz faces difficulty in the formalisation of the resettlement. Emgesa built the houses on agricultural lands. The municipality of Gigante had agreed to change the land use plans accordingly, as stated by Emgesa.<sup>197</sup> However, by May 2017, this had not been done. The council at that time refused to make these changes to the plans, because as soon they did so and Emgesa handed over the resettlement to the inhabitants and the municipality, the public administrations would become responsible for the shortcomings of the resettlements. This implies the adequate provision of public services and infrastructure. The municipality would

---

<sup>196</sup> Curiously, it is apparently the oil company that drills for petrol in the eastern hills, Emerald Energy, which sends the water tanks (according to inhabitants; no information could be found online). During Easter in 2017, no water tank came to Rioloro for three weeks.

<sup>197</sup> Intervention of Emgesa representative Jhon Jairo Huertas at the public hearing, Nov. 2016

be responsible for improving the road connecting the resettlement to main roads, and for providing drinking water and energy.<sup>198</sup>

Another argument for the council of Gigante not approving the new land use plan is the presence of a major oil pipeline, only few metres away from the resettlement of Nueva Veracruz. The pipeline is owned by the oil company Emerald Energy, which operates an oil treatment plant just above the resettlement. An inhabitant of the resettlement explains:

The Mayor says that this resettlement should not have been built here, because if an explosion occurs in the pipe, we are very close to it and we have no contingency plan. In addition, the tanks, where the oil is stored, are close by and this could be harmful to our health (*La Nación* 2015d).

It can be assumed that Emgesa had been aware of this issue, but the company experienced problems in acquiring lands for Veracruz. Those who owned fertile lands and good infrastructure did not sell.<sup>199</sup>

Also, the resettlement area of La Escalereta in Llano de la Virgen faced a problem of administration. The community was moved from the jurisdiction of El Agrado to that of Altamira. However, also here the lands had not been officially handed over, and the inhabitants still needed to go to El Agrado to receive medical treatment and other services (increased transportation costs) in 2017.<sup>200</sup> In general, the new residents do not feel accepted by the already existing *vereda* of Llano de la Virgen and the administration of Altamira, who demanded financial compensation from Emgesa for the additional workload the new population requires.<sup>201</sup> Also the resettled families from San José de Belén feel like “invaders” in their new home. Older residents of La Galda claimed that the new neighbours would contaminate and take away their water sources.<sup>202</sup>

While the collective resettlement scheme was meant to maintain and rebuild community structure, and achieve social inclusion, it became apparent that it further contributed to processes of fragmentation and detachment between people, communities, humans and their environments, production and consumption. The spatial separation of environmental

---

<sup>198</sup> Also most inhabitants of the resettlement area Llano de la Virgen have decided not to accept titles before Emgesa has complied fully with the basic infrastructure that allows productive activity that would sustain the community (Interview 56).

<sup>199</sup> According to the son of a farm owner, who was approached by Emgesa for selling, but who declined to sell (Interview 44).

<sup>200</sup> Interview 56

<sup>201</sup> Intervention of the Altamira mayor at public hearing, Nov. 2016

<sup>202</sup> Interview 39

compensation zone and resettlement areas together with the spatial distance between workplace (production), consumption and housing, resemble a capitalist vision of social order (Wilson 2014:110). The compensation schemes are what Suárez Gómez (2017:48) calls “a new device of capital subalternization” that created “extremely fragile and disposable communities”. Both the new built environment resulting from compensation schemes and the dam itself disrupted life-territories, communities and other life spheres and consequently produced spatial, economic and social closures for people to counteract or to act in ways other than the company’s vision.

### Reconfiguration of space

The landscape that resulted from the El Quimbo dam project in central Huila is today marked by the extension of (neoliberal) capitalism (as a socio-economic system) into life and life-territory. While capital had played a significant role in the socio-economic organisation in and around the valley long before the company arrived (in terms of wage labour, private property, market exchange and so on), non-market mechanisms such as informal agreements, subsistence and reciprocity still contributed to the daily life of the people. But even before the dam reservoir was filled, the infrastructural investment initiated a process of dispossession and detachment that disrupted these alternative interrelations.

Throughout this chapter, I have brought to the surface different processes initiated by the multinational’s interventions in the area which resulted in spatial reconfigurations that more and more resembled the capitalist order. Emgesa accumulated land and resources for profit generation through the new enclosure, but also restricted additional costs by ignoring further chains of dispossession connected to the erosion of infrastructure and the contamination of surrounding ecosystems. It fragmented spheres of life – the environmental, the social and the economic – and detached and abstracted species from ecosystems, livelihoods from life-territories, persons from families and households from communities. This made non-human entities exchangeable, humans and culture relocatable and life dependent on the market.

All this created lasting closures for the affected population. The loss of fertile lands, homes, employment opportunities and community space in combination with strangers coming to the area created instability, uncertainty and distrust. The erosion of local infrastructure and the contamination of environments extended those impacts in time and space. The compensation interviews enforced the insecurity and distrust. This weakened the negotiation position of the affected people. Emgesa used hard and soft technologies of “pacification” to prevent opposition

and to limit its compensation expenditures (Dunlap 2020). These actions contributed therefore to the corporate accumulation process.

## Epilogue: Dammed river

*Emgesa wins or it wins*<sup>203</sup>

Over the years of discursive and structural interventions by the company, the El Quimbo valley underwent a fragmentation process that increasingly resembled the reality presented as already existent in the EIA: impoverished lands, an inefficient economy and detached communities. In this Part II of the thesis, I describe the multiple social, economic and environmental consequences of the El Quimbo dam construction, and the change brought by the mitigation and compensation strategies. Responding to sub-questions (a) *what kind of knowledge regime did the company produce around the El Quimbo dam project* and (b) *how has this knowledge been inscribed onto the affected area?*, I show the creation of a corporate truth that shaped space and produced *structures of domination* (Brosius 1999a:282), or in other words, inflicted closures, that ultimately allowed Emgesa to engineer a reality favourable to the energy project and to *dam(n)* the river.

The resulting bleak picture is not unique to the El Quimbo dam. The EIA in combination with worldwide guidelines for dam-building, such as the WCD (2000), and for compensation, for example the IRR model of Cernea (2000), are meant to limit the damaging effects of the industry and to improve its image. Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa designed and implemented the El Quimbo dam project long after the publication of these prominent studies regarding preventive measures. Nevertheless, both companies failed to integrate many of the “lessons learned” into their schemes. They also disregarded more recently developed assessment tools to support decision-making on large dams.

A new tool, called the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) can be used to complement the EIA. It promotes “higher sustainability in policies related to the energy sector” as it requires a more long-term, multi-scale, multi-actor analysis of impacts and alternatives (Lima Andrade and Dos Santos 2015:1420). The European Commission had already adopted a related protocol in 2003 (put into force in 2010).<sup>204</sup> Lima Andrade and Dos Santos (2015) see a potential of

---

<sup>203</sup> Alfredo, resettled to Nueva Veracruz, Interview 53

<sup>204</sup> See <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/sea-legalcontext.htm> Retrieved 04 Aug 2020.

applying the SEA in the hydropower sector of Brazil to make up for the shortcomings identified in the EIAs. There are also three complementary tools directly targeting hydroelectricity.<sup>205</sup> The International Hydropower Association manages the council and committee responsible for the development of these tools. Members of the committee are representatives from several institutions of international corporation (governmental, private and non-governmental) such as the World Bank, the International Hydropower Association, the WWF and Norad (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation).

Notwithstanding the experiences gathered from hydroelectricity developments worldwide, it is questionable whether their consideration in the case of the El Quimbo dam (or similar large dams) would have improved many aspects of the lives of the people affected. After all, it has always been a project of national interest, for the national energy security and not for the local benefit (see epigraph above).<sup>206</sup> Considering the corporate politics of knowledge, space, time and scale behind such projects and related technical mechanisms, Ingetec-S.A. certainly had an interest in making the project viable as it was later contracted to supervise the construction works. It appears that Emgesa, as part of a multinational energy conglomerate, follows the strategy of profit-making while trying to uphold a “green” image worldwide.

Making the project viable and profitable included the debilitation of local opposition. I have argued that there have been two main technologies of social engineering necessary for successfully damming the river, which produced closures each in their own way. I analyse corporate knowledge production (discursive power) and dispossession and detachment (spatial power) as a combined force which engineered reality at El Quimbo dam to the advantage of the development project. The company first drew an image of community and environment favourable to the project’s realisation by fragmenting complex place-specific and history-specific human–environmental systems into singular quantifiable categories and by evaluating these apart from each other and in terms of economic efficiency and natural virginity. By creating disposability and substitutability, it provided then the legitimisation for drastic alterations of the human and natural environment in and around the valley. The corporate studies of El Quimbo engineered a reality that depoliticised multiple impacts (Budds 2009; F.

---

<sup>205</sup> the “Hydropower Sustainability Guidelines on Good International Industry Practice”, the “Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol” (HSAP) and the “Hydropower Sustainability ESG Gap Analysis Tool”; See <https://www.hydrosustainability.org/hydropower-sustainability-tools> Retrieved 04 Aug 2020.

<sup>206</sup> At the public hearing in Gigante, February 2009, the project was presented as protecting the country against future power outages (see Molano Bravo 2009). However, the country was already a net-exporter of electricity (Dussán Calderón 2017:37; see also Chapter 9).

Li 2009; Wood 2003) and allowed the company to disregard severe impacts on the livelihoods of many as “natural” (from causes other than the dam construction), as “unforeseen” and “manageable” (owing to unpredictable events but with technical fixes possible) or as “unproven” (no scientific evidence of an impact). Ingetec-S.A. rendered issues commensurable and disregarded alternative perspectives and visions.

These corporate politics – or corporate *anti*-politics as Suzana Sawyer (2004:118) fittingly expressed it, referring to Ferguson’s anti-politics machine (2003) – represent social engineering in line with high modernism and neoliberalism. Thomas Lemke (2001:13) sees “neo-liberalism not just as ideological rhetoric or as a political-economic reality, but above all as a political project that *endeavors to create a social reality that it suggests already exists*” (emphasis added). On the one hand, this limited additional costs for the investors and on the other, created economic constraints and social conflicts among the population, making them potentially more receptive to the changes inflicted by the company (e.g. accepting money more easily and moving away; Brock and Dunlap 2018).

However, the local population had a general distrust of *la gente de Emgesa* from the outset. Some of the affected people had put their hopes in Emgesa’s promises of money, land and new houses, but were soon disappointed. So far, the affected population has been presented as somewhat passive receivers or targets of the company’s actions. In the next Part III I will show how the local and regional actions against the company and the dam project have accelerated during the years of the dam’s development and analyse their effects on the industry. I will approach these contentious reactions, investigating how they created *openings*, and the political implications which the resulting conflict brought about.

## III. The Resistance

*To resist is not to withstand but to construct.*

Colombian social leader

## Prologue: Mobilising against the dam

On 26 July 2009, the people who felt threatened by the presence of Emgesa<sup>207</sup> in the area, came together at the meeting grounds of Rioloro to hold an assembly. They discussed the already experienced impacts of the El Quimbo dam project, disagreements with the energy company, and the potential future consequences of the project on their lives. Together with civil society actors from Neiva, they decided to form Asoquimbo (the “Association of the affected people of the El Quimbo dam”). Their proclaimed aim was to peacefully resist the dam’s realisation (Dussán Calderón 2009, 2017:150).

Throughout Part II of this thesis, I have analysed how Emgesa has produced closures through knowledge production and spatial reconfigurations that supported the realisation of the hydroelectric project despite all its impacts. However, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault 1990:95) and “where there is resistance, there is power” (Abu-Lughod 1990:42). In this Part III, I bring the second dimension of my overall research question into the picture: the resistance movement. I answer the sub-questions: (c) *how have local and regional reactions to the dam project changed over the years of struggle* and (d) *what has the resistance achieved?*

Through answering these questions, I will illustrate that certain reactions aimed to produce *openings* – to expand the range of actions and the imagination for alternatives – in order to ultimately challenge the investment project and related environmental politics. Targeting sub-question (c), I will first analyse the actors involved in the resistance and the alliances made between the years 2008 and 2017; second, illuminate changing motives and strategies over time, and how these have influenced regional politics; and third, argue that the filling of the dam reservoir in 2015 was a tipping point for the social movement, when the main motivation of the movement shifted from resisting change towards triggering change. While the movement referred to itself as a “defence of life and territory” – a proclamation made by many social environmental movements around Latin America, I draw an analytical distinction between two aspects of the movement, which I call the *defence of life-territory* and the *defence of region-territory*. I argue that the first aspect played a bigger role in the start of the resistance, while the second became predominant after the reservoir filling.

---

<sup>207</sup> From now on, when I refer to the energy company Emgesa, I include actors related to its parent companies, Endesa and Enel, as well as to its contractor Ingetec-S.A. In the eyes of the population, they are all “*gente de Emgesa*” (Emgesa’s people), who follow the same aim: damming the river and making a profit.

To answer question (d), I go beyond the notion that the impact of a movement can be measured by its direct political results, to examine how its demands, discourses and practices began to circulate in larger institutional and cultural arenas (Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar 1998:16). In doing so, I reflect on the claim of a social leader that resistance means to build something (see epigraph above), in spite the fact that, in this case, the mega-dam was successfully realised. With the analysis I relate to one of the theoretical questions raised by Hall et al. (2015:483): “What explains successful resistance, and what does resistance produce?”

I use theory on resistance and participation and discuss those aspects in relation to power theory, specifically concerning the use of discourses and narratives, the extension of networks across scales, and the access to decision-making entities. I critically examine the potential (and limitations) of participation and legal mechanisms in bringing about change through social movements.

Most of Part III is chronologically arranged and presented. In Chapter 6, I begin with the participation mechanisms as part of granting the environmental licence, critically discussing their limitations for citizen involvement. I then turn to the formation of a local resistance against the dam. I map out their motivation, alliances, strategies and discourses during the years until the dam reservoir was filled in June 2015, including the responses from the company and the state that they triggered. In the subsequent Chapter 7, I describe the circumstances of the filling of the dam reservoir and explain the transformation within the movement as a consequence. I show what new alliances formed that led to new agendas, bringing their own strengths and weaknesses. I discuss further participation mechanisms activated by the movement and their potential for change. Finally, I reflect back on what the resistance has achieved over the years.

## 6. The Defence of Life-Territory

### Closed spaces of participation

The political decision to declare the lands of El Quimbo a public utility in 2008 happened at national government level with little consultation or consideration of the local administrations and population. Also, the data necessary for the elaboration of the EIA was mostly collected in a non-transparent and exclusive manner, as shown in Chapter 4. It was only after Emgesa applied to the Environmental Ministry for an environmental licence in October 2008 that the

company was required to carry out formal mechanisms of participation: public hearings and *mesas de concertación* (roundtables to reach agreement).<sup>208</sup>

The organisation of public hearings was done to bring together the different stakeholders of the project (including the affected population and local public authorities) to inform them about the dam, and present the EIA and the compensation policies that would mitigate the impacts on the affected area (Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015:15). Four public hearings took place in different municipalities of direct influence on 4 July and 16 December 2008, and on 21 January and 12 February 2009. The last hearing was the largest, with 1,500 participants in the town of Gigante. With about 170 interventions and the representation of many local and national state actors, it was also considered the most important space of participation prior to the granting of the environmental licence (Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015).

The hearings were open spaces, according to Gaventa's classification (2004:35). They were organised and designed by the authorities (Environmental Ministry and Emgesa), being open to the public to listen and to speak up about the investment project. Indeed, the events revealed the different positions of the actors at that point. Some fully supported the project with their interventions and highlighted the dam as a guarantor of progress and investment for the region (among them the then governor of Huila, the Minister of Agriculture, two representatives of the Huilan chamber, and the mayors of Altamira and Garzón). Others raised doubts and demanded certain commitments from the company, such as a higher share of profits with the local administrations (among them Carlos Julio González<sup>209</sup> and three other senators, a councillor of El Agrado and the mayors of Gigante, Pital and Paicol). Again others totally opposed the project, emphasising the impact on the agricultural sector and related economies (among them the representative of the Huilan assembly, the mayor of El Agrado, the professor Miller Armín Dussán Calderón<sup>210</sup> and a representative of the environmental agency, CAM; Salcedo Montero 2010). A commentator of the national newspaper *El Espectador* stated that in total 80 per cent of all interventions during the final hearing expressed a position in disagreement with the dam project (Molano Bravo 2009). Professor and resistance leader Miller Dussán estimated that around 90 per cent were against it (Dussán Calderón 2017:177).

---

<sup>208</sup> Because the project did not affect indigenous or afro-descendent territory, no prior consultation process was required by law.

<sup>209</sup> Member of the national senate at that time, but soon to become governor of Huila and prominent opponent of the El Quimbo dam.

<sup>210</sup> From now on referred to as Miller Dussán.

However, as the law on environmental public hearings (Decree 330 of 2007) specifies, during these events no decisions are made; the raised opinions and shared information is “taken into account” by the authority granting the environmental licence (see Article 2, Minambiente 2007; more in Chapter 10). Participation is limited to being informed about the investment and voicing one’s opinion on it.

The roundtables, organised by Emgesa in parallel to the hearings, did not make up for the shortcomings. In general, these meetings should facilitate dialogue and consensus among the different stakeholders. In this case, they were determined to negotiate the terms of conditions of the project, specifically to define commitments by the different parties (ministries, receiving administrations and Emgesa). The first three roundtables (in December 2008 and January 2009) were open to the public; however, the events took place in Neiva and Bogotá (Salcedo Montero 2010:78). For members of the affected communities, this entailed a long and expensive trip to attend only one meeting.<sup>211</sup>

The final roundtables (February and March 2009) were closed. Closed spaces, as defined by Gaventa (2004:35), pretend to be participatory but allow only certain guests to attend. According to Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero (2015:16), Emgesa only invited leading politicians of Huila and the affected municipalities to the final meetings, to make room for private negotiation with these local decision-makers. It is telling that during the last meeting on 16 March 2009, the Huilan governor and the mayors of all six affected municipalities signed an agreement with Emgesa (Salcedo Montero 2010:73). This included only superficial commitments by the company and did not address key issues such as the single purpose of the reservoir or the lack of an environmental diagnostic of alternatives (see Chapter 4; complete list of commitments Salcedo Montero 2010:82–85).<sup>212</sup>

The resulting document was essential for the issuing of the environmental licence to show that local authorities had been consulted and were in favour of the project’s realisation (Salcedo Montero 2010:74; Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015:16). When inhabitants from the affected village of Rioloro asked their mayor (of the municipality Gigante) why he had signed

---

<sup>211</sup> From Gigante, it takes about an hour to get to Neiva by bus. From Neiva, it takes at least six hours to get to Bogotá by bus.

<sup>212</sup> Furthermore many promises made were not kept (see Salcedo Montero 2010:85–86). By 2020, resistance and authorities are still demanding the realisation of commitments. One contested issue is the promise to provide irrigated lands to reactivate agricultural production in the region (see Areiza 2020); another is the building of a ring road in the western municipalities.

the document having promised not to collaborate, he stated that “they” had cornered him and made offers, so he signed (Salcedo Montero 2010:81).

In the public hearings, contributors had raised many concerns and had proposed ideas for improving the conditions for the region. With this private agreement, however, these earlier efforts lost their meaning. Salcedo Montero (2010; Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015) described the participation spaces therefore as spaces where opposing positions came to the surface, but which neither changed the conclusion or content of the EIA, nor had much impact on the outcome of the environmental licence granted three months later.<sup>213</sup>

Participation was of a symbolic character, similar to what Sherry Arnstein (1969) classifies as processes of tokenism, far removed from active citizen involvement. In light of many similar experiences of participation in the licencing process of hydroelectric projects in Colombia, researchers Soler Villamizar, Duarte Abadía, and Roa Avendaño (2014a:150) describe “participation for exclusion” in the following way: “it is evident how participation has become a discourse of the companies, where spaces are opened to summon only those who agree with the projects” (see also Suárez Gómez 2017:154).

This echoes a wider critique of participation in the development sector emerging in the 1990s and 2000s in response to a mainstreaming of participatory mechanisms for development projects around the world. An edited volume by Cooke and Kothari (2001) brings these earlier critics together, coining the now famous phrase: “the tyranny of participation”. While forms of citizen participation are widely considered as democratic tools to find compromises and solution to disagreements or even conflict, often the opposite is the result:

Participatory processes are, however, not necessarily contributing to tame dissent. In many cases, new types of conflicts arise, which are often related to what constitute legitimate forms of information, knowledge, impacts and levels of compensation (Leifsen, Gustafsson, Guzmán-Gallegos, and Schilling-Vacaflor 2017:1044).

The limitations of the EIA in not including local, non-technical knowledges and values (discussed in Chapter 4) can be extended to the public hearings connected to it. Substantial disagreements are translated into a procedural form (Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. 2017:8;

---

<sup>213</sup> The biggest difference between the EIA and the environmental licence was that the calculation for the extension of the environmental compensation zone was changed (see Chapter 5) which made the required area much larger than that proposed by Emgesa. The Environmental Ministry also explicitly demanded the inclusion of tenants, farm managers, wood extractors, sand extractors, farm-partakers, truck drivers, merchants, contractors, artisanal fisherfolk and fish-farmers in the census (Minambiente 2009:246–47). However, during later adaptations to the licence, many of them lost their right to compensation (see Chapter 9).

Rodríguez Garavito 2011) and to every concern a technical solution is provided (see also Hébert 2016; F. Li 2009).

This technical approach to participation “depoliticizes what should be an explicitly political process” (Hickey and Mohan 2004b:4). What was once intended to be a “political methodology of empowerment” turned into a “technical method of project work” (Hickey and Mohan 2004b:11; see also Carmen 1996; Cleaver 1999; Cooke and Kothari 2001; Ferguson 2003; Rahman 1995). Dagnino sees this trend connecting to the neoliberal agenda of capital accumulation (Dagnino 2008); project officials would appropriate spaces for participation to legitimise their actions that often brought further inequality. Cornwall (2004:80) calls these spaces “pseudo-democratic instruments through which authorities legitimize already-taken policy decisions”. In these cases, participation mechanisms have produced closures, limiting people’s options for contestation (Deetz 1992; Vasstrøm 2016). Also at El Quimbo this was the case – participation turned into a technical procedure that provided the formal conditions for granting the environmental licence of an already approved project.

Even before the environmental licence was granted in May 2009, Emgesa began “exploration works” at El Quimbo (see Chapter 5) and the national government established a new military division, the “Special Battalion for Energy and Roads” (*Batallón Especial Energético y Vial*, #12) close to the village of La Jagua, Altamira. This special division of the army is responsible for protecting the road and energy infrastructure of the nation, in this case Betania and El Quimbo (Quinta División del Ejército Nacional 2011; more in Chapter 9). Furthermore, less than a year later in March 2010, Emgesa and the then president Álvaro Uribe agreed that the compensations demanded by the environmental licence were too high to keep the hydroelectric project financially viable (Salcedo Montero 2010:112; Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015:17; see Chapter 9). Consequently, the national government allowed modifications to the environmental licence after it had already been granted (Decree no. 2820, 5 August 2010).<sup>214</sup> Since then about 15 changes have been made to the licence in response to the company’s wishes, without any further consultation with the receiving municipalities (Dussán Calderón 2017:52). None of this encouraged trust among the rural population in central Huila that they

---

<sup>214</sup> A key point is the fact that Emgesa promised (as formalised in the licence) that every household that loses its home, which is a property below 5ha or consist only of a house, would receive 5ha of land as compensation. That made many poorer households of the valley believe that they would benefit from the dam construction. However, the licence was adapted and many were excluded as “irregular occupants” of land, or they received lands below 5ha and less fertile (Ingetec-S.A. 2008; Salcedo Montero 2010:112).

could rely on politics to improve their position and secure their rights from the company. Many sceptics opted for social mobilisation.

### Activism and science

After the news broke that El Quimbo dam was back on the political agenda in 2008, Miller Dussán, Professor of Education and Communication at the South-Colombian University in Neiva, took up the issue in the civil society organisation “Plataforma Sur”. The umbrella organisation for different environmental and social organisations of the region was still young when they began to look into possible social and environmental impacts of the dam.<sup>215</sup> Plataforma Sur joined meetings of the concerned communities at El Quimbo in July 2008 and held several fora on the dam project, where participants gathered and shared information. As soon as Emgesa handed in the EIA to the Environmental Ministry, it began the dam construction in October 2008. This provoked a new alliance of urban civil society actors and affected populations to mobilise against Emgesa for the first time in November 2008. Different professionals and students from Neiva accompanied the protest in the region, which soon extended to the provincial capital Neiva (see Figure III-1).<sup>216</sup> Moving the protests to the capital signifies an upscaling of the local struggle to receive wider attention and is therefore part of the contentious politics of space (politics of mobility, Leitner and Sheppard 2009).

The social movement was, from its beginning, an alliance between people who considered themselves affected and had chosen to resist the dam project, and urban professionals and activists who had environmental, social and/or ideological concerns with the project. Without creating apparent power imbalances between the actor groups, it horizontally linked two quite different spaces.<sup>217</sup> Mathews (2009:76) describes these collaborations between “urban elites, environmental activists, and rural people who otherwise might have little in common” as being an “unlikely alliance”. In Mexico, he observes indigenous communities who took up widely acknowledged scientific discourses to raise attention to their struggles beyond the local, and

---

<sup>215</sup> Founding members were Fundación El Curíbano, Asociación Cultural y Ambientalista del Sur, Corporación COM, Red de Promotores de Derechos Humanos, Fundación Picachos and Amasijo Yuma.

<sup>216</sup> I use “professionals” to refer to people with a university degree that joined the movement without being affected themselves. Similar to “experts”, they have or are considered to have in-depth knowledge in a certain discipline. With experts, however, I include those connected to the industry, or to economic or political consultancies.

<sup>217</sup> Of course, this is a generalised assessment based on accounts of local (former) Asoquimbo members and professionals in the city. On a personal basis, power imbalances could have been experienced within a space and between the different spaces.

found support among the urban classes, which helped them to question state practices in the periphery (Mathews 2009). However, in Colombia these alliances are not so un-likely.



Figure III-1 Social protest of the affected population and urban-based critics of the dam in Neiva, September 2012 (Retrieved from <http://www.quimbo.com.co/2012/09/el-huila-se-levanta-contrala.html>, 15 June 2020).

Roa García (2017) analyses a variety of contemporary peaceful alliances in the field of environmental conflicts and water justice in Colombia between peasant movements, environmental activists, legal and human right NGOs, and university students (see also McNeish 2017a; Rodríguez Garavito and Arenas 2005). Not only students and NGO members but also many Colombian scholars see themselves as having a moral obligation to serve ambitions for social equity and environmental justice by decreasing the often-asymmetric knowledge distribution between local populations and investors and governments.<sup>218</sup>

These efforts in science often relate to decolonial methods and theories which aim to include different ontologies and epistemologies (see Sousa Santos 2014) and which have evolved in Colombia since the 1950s, particularly in sociology. In the midst of the last century, the spread

---

<sup>218</sup> As expressed by Professor María del Rosario Rojas Robles (National University Colombia) during her talk on “Peace and Environment” at Noragric, 13 Nov. 2018. In Colombia, intellectuals have always played an important role in social contestation of the ruling power. The guerrilla organisations M19 and the still active ELN had their origin in student movements which supported peasant struggles and ideologically opposed social inequality. Public universities (also some private ones) have also contributed to non-violent expressions of state critique and alternative visions. A prominent example is the formulation of the new political Constitution of 1991 (see Chapter 8).

of communist ideas in the country reached academia. Until then, sociology was seen as being infused by class and power interests of the dominant bourgeoisie (Fals Borda 1979). First studies done in Saucio in 1955 and then in Boyaca in 1957 broke the positivistic paradigm. Fals Borda (1979:40) explains:

There was a felt need for sociology to be above all a social science inspired by the interests of the working classes and the exploited; a ‘popular science’ as it was called in the beginning, which would be of greater use in analyzing the class struggle documented in the field, as well as in the political action of the working classes as the ultimate actors in history.

Participatory action research became a popular method among this stream of science (Fals Borda 2006) and was soon developed into a diverse range of collaborative research practices.<sup>219</sup> Fals Borda (1979:39) says further:

Since it did not appear appropriate to work with stable or permanent concepts, which always describe facts as ‘correct, complete and objective’, alternative theoretical solutions had to be sought in order to reach reality with the intention of both knowing and transforming it.

According to Fals Borda (1979:50), the involvement of intellectuals is necessary especially when “revolution” is also directed against intellectuals. They help to provide the “formal weapons and ideological and political knowledge necessary to confront” the enemy (Fals Borda 1979:43).

Also at the El Quimbo dam struggle, professionals from Neiva played a crucial role in spreading alternative information about the project and its possible consequences among the local population, as well as in the media. As shown in Chapter 4, the knowledge produced by the company was highly contested. One of the most important strategies for the movement was to mobilise intellectual resources to challenge these facts by presenting their own studies. As Miller Dussán (2017:174) expresses it:

to face the arguments of the environmental impact study, it is necessary to set up a multidisciplinary team with a capacity equal or similar to that of the team that carried out the impact study that analyses each of the technical, social, economic aspects, among others, in order to demonstrate the insufficiencies and inconveniences of the study in question. So it is clear that the political discourse that questions the project is not enough.

---

<sup>219</sup> For instance, collaborative activist research, co-laboring (*co-razonar*), collective research and action, decolonial pedagogies and decolonial feminisms (presented by Arturo Escobar, 22. June 2017, Seminar on Collaborative Research, Oslo).

Social movements in Colombia and globally have increasingly invested in scientific knowledge production to lend a certain authority to their arguments (see Hébert 2016; F. Li 2013; Machado et al. 2017). In January 2009, Miller Dussán published a report: “The negative impacts of the hydroelectric megaproject El Quimbo and related legal violations”. The report was based on studies undertaken by the environmental agency CAM and NGO Planeta Paz, by the environmental lawyer Guillermo Asprilla and the engineer Marcos Silva in addition to the accounts of the local population (Dussán Calderón 2017:176). The scientists specifically placed their hopes for preventing the dam realisation on the analysis of the local biodiversity, the uniqueness of the tropical dry forest with its rare species and the understudied epiphytes so predominant in the area. Leyla Rincón, a biology professor at the South-Colombian University, pointed out that when they discovered a new (as yet unclassified) epiphyte unique to the valley (*Pitcairnia huilensis*; see Betancur and Jiménez-Escobar 2015), she was sure that the project would no longer be viable, because it would endanger this species. Emgesa, however, financed studies of the plant, branding it as a scientific discovery thanks to the investment project and promised to replant the species in their conservation area.<sup>220</sup> In this way, the company applied an easy technical fix to the situation. Fabiana Li (2009:230) notes a related weakness in the application of science for activism: “The dominance of science as a tool of accountability has helped direct the actions of NGOs and local activists toward scientific counter-arguments in ways that may limit the effectiveness of their efforts”. Certain branches of science have colonised other knowledge systems because they assume universal validity of their own research practice; techno-scientific language, in particular, renders values and norms equivalent and therefore cannot account for situated knowledge, values and cultures (F. Li 2013). To apply techno-scientific principles therefore is for some researchers the voluntary subordination to an oppressive (colonial) knowledge system (F. Li 2009, 2013; Sousa Santos and Rodríguez Garavito 2005).

Even though the discovery of a species unique to the valley falls into the weakness of arguing in techno-scientific language, researchers at El Quimbo have included local knowledge and drawn on capitalist critique and alternative development approaches related to post-development and decolonial thoughts (Dussán Calderón 2017; Naranjo Aristizábal 2014; Salcedo Montero 2014).<sup>221</sup> Individual professors and their students organised field trips into the area, visited the communities to learn from their knowledge of the place and to critically

---

<sup>220</sup> Emgesa’s newsletter “*La Buena Energía de El Quimbo*”, Edition 12 of 2015:6–7.

<sup>221</sup> Interviews 20 and 24

discuss the damage the dam would cause. Most prominently, it was Miller Dussán who initiated the forming of Plataforma Sur, and later Leyla Rincón, who joined Plataforma Sur together with the Organisation for Wetland Protection in Neiva, Curibano. Many of their students chose to get involved in the case and were soon followed by students from other parts of the country. Some dedicated their theses to the dam struggle<sup>222</sup> and published their results.<sup>223</sup>

Miller Dussán is an advocate of decolonial thinking, as presented above. He believes that knowledge is created at the interface of science and (peaceful, non-military) activism, and that it needs to serve the purpose of defending local lifeworlds against the global capitalist system (as promoted by Dussel 1994; Escobar 2010; Fals Borda 2009; Grosfoguel 2006; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2000; Sousa Santos 2014). He (2008) says about the purpose of the South-Colombian University:

A consensus is required in defining the main lines of research so that they respond [...] to solving the problems and satisfying the needs of the South-Colombian communities. [...] These actions must be aimed at consolidating the work within all social organisations and in their permanent mobilisation in the defence of their specific interests, but integrated into the great project of building a region and a country, supported by the real empowerment of local communities.

And he (2017:234) describes social mobilisation as:

the dialectic between thought and action [...] that, from a ‘glocal’ strategy, confronts the transnational corporate capital, the State and its extractive mining, energy and agribusiness projects and contributes to the creation of a new paradigm of civilisation where the relationships between human and non-human nature are harmonised.

Miller Dussán began a blog in 2007 to document “university activism”. Plataforma Sur was his first intent to move towards a stronger collaboration between academia and civil society and Asoquimbo became the main project for such collaboration.

As mentioned at the start, the affected population in disagreement with Emgesa formed in July 2009, together with activists from Neiva (most importantly Miller Dussán) the association of

---

<sup>222</sup> For example, John Jairo Trujillo-Quintero (Universidad Cooperativa de Colombia), Camilo Andrés Salcedo Montero (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), María Camila Macías Amaya (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana), Sandra Paola Naranjo Aristizábal (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), Leonardo Ernesto Pacheco Guerrero (Universidad Militar Nueva Granada), Erika Alexandra Barreiro Álvarez and Claudia Liliana Martínez Quesada (Universidad de Santo Tomás), as well as the author herself for her master’s thesis at Lund University 2013.

<sup>223</sup> For instance on the peasant economy (Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015), on property and economic rights (Díaz Polanco, Trujillo Quintero, and Pérez Bonilla 2015; International Commission of Jurists 2016) and on psychosocial impacts (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014; Pulido 2014; Salazar Bedoya, Barreiro Ibata, Fernandez, and Vargas Andrade 2012). These studies provided alternative/complementary information, which included local perception and experiences, while following the rules of science.

the affected people of El Quimbo dam, Asoquimbo (Dussán Calderón 2009, 2017:150). Elsa Ardila, a social leader of the village Rioloro was elected the first president. At its beginning, Asoquimbo was part of Plataforma Sur; however in 2012, internal conflicts about the funding of Plataforma Sur caused its disintegration.<sup>224</sup> Asoquimbo soon grew in membership, ranging from smallholders, farmworkers and fisherfolk to merchandisers, students and environmental activists.

One of the first outputs of the alliance was the Asoquimbo declaration of December 2009 which contained a proposal for an alternative development strategy for the valley (published at Dussán Calderón 2009). The idea of the *campesinos* and fisherfolk was to create an agro-food peasant reserve (*reserva campesina agroalemantaria*) to advance agricultural production and food security in the region, instead of destroying it. Peasant reserves had been integrated to Colombian law in 1994. It has the objective of strengthening the environmental and social organisation of farmers in developing their agricultural production and to ultimately contribute to rural peace and social justice (FAO 2015). As such, the proposal found much support among the rural population at El Quimbo. It reflected the aspirations of many smallholders, farmers' cooperatives and landless *campesinos* in the area, who saw in the reserve the possibility to keep their life projects and life-territory while increasing their independence and recognition beyond the *veredas*.<sup>225</sup>

The peasant reserve can be seen as a strategy for an “alternative modernity” (Escobar 2008:162). Asoquimbo advocated an alternative pathway for the area, relating it to similar principles promoted by national politicians, such as rural development, economic profitability and biodiversity conservation.<sup>226</sup> It used prominent discourses to reach the ears of the more powerful (as described by e.g. Mathews 2009; McAllister 2015), while “self-directing the form of modernity” based on own visions for the future (Escobar 2008:162). As Franco (1998:278) points out, “the power to interpret, and the active appropriation and invention of language, are crucial tools for emergent movements seeking visibility and recognition for the views and actions that filter out from the dominant discourses”. It further follows the logic of not only critiquing or opposing change but also providing an alternate way forward.

---

<sup>224</sup> The leaders in Neiva did not agree on core strategies or on the use of funding, e.g. for salaries (Interview 24).

<sup>225</sup> Interviews 1 to 3, in 2012

<sup>226</sup> Practices of agroecology would protect the ecosystem while incorporating the agricultural production to the organic food market – a beneficent solution for economy, society and environment.

Escobar (2008) sees the creation of alternate modernities as a practice of counterwork. “Counterwork” expresses a positive notion of resistance as construction, rather than the passive notion of rejection (or even the negative notion of destruction). Escobar (2008) took the concept from Arce and Long (2000:2), who discuss “how different discourses, values and practices associated with notions of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ intersect and are intertwined in the everyday encounters and experiences of people from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds”. Counterwork rejects the idea that resisting groups oppose and neglect state-enforced development per se, but directs attention to the transformation of external knowledge systems within more localised cultures (Escobar 2008). Communities are not mere “receivers” of external institutions, but active modellers at the interface of internal and external institutions. In relation to resistance, counterwork “visualises alternative routes” (Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. 2017:3) and brings forward different perceptions of development (Escobar 2008).

Lawyers affiliated to Asoquimbo contributed the legal conception and requirements necessary to constitute a peasant reserve and for “politicizing territorial rights” at El Quimbo (as termed by Brent 2015:687–89),<sup>227</sup> and Miller Dussán connected the proposal with discourses of food sovereignty, environmental justice and development critique.<sup>228</sup> In this way, I argue, the alliance of urban intellectuals and the local population was able to produce openings, to create an alternative vision for the future apart from the development vision imposed from the central state. Even though scientific studies underlining the disruptive impact of the El Quimbo dam were usually countered by Emgesa’s technical fixes, the alliance still managed to fill many blind spots left in the corporate studies. This was done, for instance, by including local knowledge and non-commercial species and values into the ecosystem analysis (see Chapter 4) and communicating related implications in public fora. The South-Colombian University played an important role in this regard.

---

<sup>227</sup> By 2018, only six peasant reserves had been constituted in Colombia. Their legal establishment makes the respective territories less available for “the extraction of natural resources and large-scale exploitation of the land through agro-industries”, similar to indigenous *resguardos* (Peace Brigades International 2018). It is therefore not surprising that the authorities have shunned away from granting this type of collective land title.

<sup>228</sup> “Another vision defines development as the integral improvement of the quality of life of communities, for which an articulation between social equality and environmental justice must be ensured. [...] it insists on the importance of guaranteeing water and food security and sovereignty, access to common goods such as water and land, the defense of peasant economies and the productive units of medium and small producers, the right to work, to the conservation of the social fabric and to the sense of belonging. [It serves] the preservation of strategic ecosystems and the participation of communities in the elaboration and verification of their individual and collective life projects” (Dussán Calderón 2017:168).

With the start of Asoquimbo, Miller Dussán formed a group of professionals situated at the South-Colombian University in Neiva, who covered applications for funding, communication, legal issues and administration. The facilities offered by the institution were also soon used for public events – academic as well as artistic – to bring attention to the El Quimbo dam struggle. This caused certain tensions within the public university, because Emgesa looked for collaboration from the same institution.<sup>229</sup> Emgesa has funded several research projects especially linked to the natural sciences at the South-Colombian University. For example, project groups study the reproduction of riverine fishes, take samples and artificially fertilise species in tanks to allow a repopulation of the reservoir at a later stage. As a result, one branch of the university depended on Emgesa’s contribution and the dam realisation, while another branch was focused on fighting the dam, being supported financially by civil society (national and international organisations). Such internal disagreements over funding are typical of many research institutions; the actual confrontations in this case however occurred on the lands affected in central Huila.

### Civil disobedience and confrontations

The local population, who had joined Asoquimbo in the first years, followed the collective (overall) goal of preventing the realisation of the hydroelectric project El Quimbo. To reach this goal, many chose to “refuse to play the game” (Simpson 2014), which included not being counted or interviewed by the company. Accordingly, some people apparently stayed deliberately out of the census when Emgesa registered the affected population again in 2009,<sup>230</sup> and smallholders rejected any form of private negotiation with the company.

This kind of refusal or civil disobedience was also implicit in the occupation of already sold lands and the continuation of the agricultural production in the valley. On the one hand, this was a coping strategy for farmworkers and fisherfolk who had lost their income owing to the enclosure; on the other hand, it was a form of resistance to the project. The *campesinos* continued to farm for instance at La Honda and Domingo Arias, while completely guarding the *veredas*, allowing no stranger to enter.<sup>231</sup> At the first sight, by disobeying, the *campesinos* were

---

<sup>229</sup> Public universities (as other educational institutions) in Colombia are notoriously under-funded. (Tensions mentioned in Interview 8, 16.)

<sup>230</sup> Later this strategy proved to be to the disadvantage of many. The fewer people who were registered, the better for the company. Those not registered in the census faced more trouble being considered as affected later on (see Chapter 4 on the census). Many affected farmworkers believed they had been ill-advised (by Asoquimbo). They believe the opposite strategy would have proven to be more successful. Calling for all people from everywhere to register as affected might have overwhelmed the company (Interviews 10, 34).

<sup>231</sup> Interview 3 and field visit September 2012

passively rejecting change, but a closer look reveals that this produced landscapes of resistance, where the company was restrained in its normal procedures and processes were protracted. This “resignifying” of place to express disagreement forms part of contentious politics of space or “politics of place” as called by Leitner and Sheppard (2009:237). Even more so, these landscapes of resistance appeared through social protests.

As mentioned, Plataforma Sur had organised peaceful demonstrations since the start of the dam construction. However, in early 2012 the tensions grew. As a result of the increased limitations on the local population to continue their life project (see Chapter 2), topped with the collapse of the bridge “El Paso de Colegio” in September 2011, the affected people organised by Asoquimbo turned towards more direct action and started to block important roads to the construction site in January 2012. This so-called “Regional Strike for the Defence of Territory” united the western municipalities of Huila affected by the damage of road infrastructure and associations fighting mining in the Paramó de Miraflores (wetland system in the eastern cordilleras),<sup>232</sup> with those opposing the dam construction. Furthermore, the local population (*campesinos* and fisherfolk) was supported by students and activists from Neiva and beyond, by regional organisations (such as the Regional Council of Indigenous people in Huila – CRIHU), and also by truck drivers and local companies which had hoped to be contracted by Emgesa, but now instead faced restrictions in executing their productive activity.<sup>233</sup> Up to 500 people, some with vehicles, blocked the main road for 17 days in total (see Figure III-2). This action delayed the dam constructions accordingly. While many protested directly by blocking the roads and parts of the riverbanks, others contributed indirectly to the strike by supplying the activists with food, water, pots and even tents during these days (see Sánchez Espitia 2012a).<sup>234</sup> The Mobile Anti-Disturbance Squadron (ESMAD, part of national police) moved in

---

<sup>232</sup> Their presence was an expression of sympathy with the struggle at El Quimbo as well as of rejecting extractivist industries in the region generally.

<sup>233</sup> Signees of the common declaration are: Comunidades de Puerto Seco, Asociación de Aserradores, Comunidad de la Jagua, Comunidad de las Cañada, Asociación de Pescadores de El Hobo, Comunidad de la Honda, Comunidad del Majo, Comunidad de Jagualito, Junta de Acción Comunal de Matambo, Municipios del Macizo Colombiano adscritos a ASOMAC, Comunidad de la Plata, Asociación Intersectorial de Gigante, Garzón Paramo de Miraflores, Movimiento Ríos Vivos, Comunidad de Garzón, Comunidad de Consejo Municipal de Cultura de Gigante, Asociación de Pescadores de la Jagua, Asociación de Cafeteros, Asociación de Tabacaleros de Garzón ASOTAGAR, Gremio de transportadores de la Plata Huila, Jornaleros de la Jagua, Comunidad de Zuluaga, ASOQUIMBO, Corporación Com-Unidad, Corporación Casa de la Memoria, Asociación Cultural y Ambientalista del Sur-ACAS, Mesa Amplia Nacional Estudiantil Huila, Consejo Regional Indígena del Huila CRIHU.

<sup>234</sup> Interview 31

several times to take away the food and utilities to force the crowd to give up. Later, violent clashes occurred between them, where ESMAD arrested protestors.<sup>235</sup>



Figure III-2 Roadblock in Gigante, early 2012, “El Quimbo: they neither flood, nor expropriate, nor sell – Peasant reserve, Asoquimbo” (Retrieved from <https://opanoticias.com/politica/no-mas-represas-en-el-huila/4242>, 15 June 2020).

The tense situation was not only widely covered by Huilan newspapers, but also found its way into national media. Miller Dussán used his private blog to disseminate the positions, claims and demands of the resistance and became the resistance’s public spokesperson. The increased attention to the case by mid-January caused the establishment of a dialogue between the resisting organisations, the director of ANLA, the vice-minister of Political Relations, the vice-minister of the national Senate, the Huilan governor Cielo Gonzáles and the director of the CAM, among others. At the meeting, the ministries agreed to form a thematic roundtable<sup>236</sup> to discuss the unresolved situation of the local population between actors groups and to hold another public hearing to follow up on Emgesa’s compliances with the environmental licence of El Quimbo (Minambiente 2012). At the same time, Emgesa committed to guarantee the “vital minimum”<sup>237</sup> for the communities which had already experienced an impact on their

<sup>235</sup> Interviews 30, 31

<sup>236</sup> A thematic roundtable (*mesa temática*) is a space where different actors come together to discuss solutions to an identified problem and to overcome discrepancies between opposing parties. It is usually constituted by several meetings and organised and financed by the public.

<sup>237</sup> The “*minimo vital*” (from German *Existenzminimum*) is a legal concept to express “the right to a minimum of material conditions necessary for subsistence” (Rueda Saiz 2010:35). See also Chapter 10.

livelihoods, to allow for their subsistence until the final conditions for full compensation were established. Consequently, Asoquimbo agreed to withdraw the protesters from the roads and riverbank, allowing for the normal proceeding of construction works.

On 25 January 2012, the thematic roundtable was supposed to start, but ANLA did not appear, claiming the resistance had not stopped the protests. Fisherfolk remained at the riverbank to peacefully demand their inclusion in the census, which restricted the normal proceedings of the construction works (see Figure III-3). The situation was resolved after several negotiations and a final settlement for compensation between the five remaining fishermen and Emgesa.<sup>238</sup> Nevertheless, no vital minimum was guaranteed, nor was a roundtable or public hearing realised. Civil society suspected that ANLA was afraid of a follow-up public hearing, recognising that the concession of the environmental licence had happened irregularly, imposed by the central government and not according to the constitution.<sup>239</sup>

Instead, on 14 February, ESMAD moved into the *vereda* Domingo Arias to evict about 500 *campesinos* and fisherfolk who occupied the lands there. During this process, a young man lost his right eye (apparently caused by a stun grenade), and another suffered superficial facial injury. Subsequently several expropriations and forced evictions (*amparo policitivo*, state-led expropriation) took place around the valley (see Figure III-4). Witnesses recorded the incidents on their mobile phones and uploaded them to social media to document the violence exercised.<sup>240</sup> The videos show how ESMAD dragged the motionless inhabitants, who were expressing peaceful resistance, over the ground away from their homes. Their houses were demolished directly afterwards. Many of the affected had not been able to safeguard their personal belongings beforehand.

---

<sup>238</sup> Interview 51

<sup>239</sup> “*El Ministerio le tiene miedo a la Audiencia Ambiental*” (Valbuena 2012).

<sup>240</sup> The best known of these is “*El video que el gobierno no quiere que veamos*”, made by Colombian movie-maker Bladimir Sánchez Espitia (2012b, see also 2012c).



Figure III-3 Fisherfolk occupying the riverbank in negotiation with the police (Retrieved from <https://evangelizadorasdelosapostoles.wordpress.com/2012/03/02/el-huila-se-moviliza-contra-el-desvio-del-rio-magdalena>, 15 June 2020).



Figure III-4 Forced eviction of people from Domingo Arias (Retrieved from <https://www.lanacion.com.co/otro-desalojo-en-el-quimbo/> and <https://www.redcolombia.org/2012/02/15/el-esmad-desaloja-protesta-contra-el-desvio-del-rio-en-el-quimbo/>, 15 June 2020).

In August 2012, Asoquimbo together with civil society groups in Huila who supported the struggle against El Quimbo dam, held the “Great Minga for the Liberation and Defence of Mother Earth” in El Hobo, downstream from the dam (see Figure III-5).<sup>241</sup> Traditionally, at a

<sup>241</sup> Supporting organisation were the Defence of the Paramo de Miraflores (against mining in mountain wetlands of Huila) and the Regional Council of Indigenous people in Huila (CRIHU), among others. As mentioned before, the El Quimbo dam project has not impacted people who identify with indigenous culture or origin. CRIHU supports local struggles in the defence of territory and against extractivism also outside indigenous reserves.

*minga*, community members come together to collectively work on a project beneficial for the community – a typical practice for Andean indigenous groups. Recently, social movements around Latin America have taken up the concept of *minga* to call for collective action “that is at once local and international, gains force from both its cultural and historical references to a shared experience of subjugation” (Poole 2009).<sup>242</sup> In the case of the *minga* in Huila, it implied the continued presence of the resistance movement in the area and the formulation of collective demands of the government (Dussán Calderón 2012). ESMAD dismantled the gathering and 25 participants were reported injured.



Figure III-5 “Great Minga for the Liberation and Defence of Mother Earth in Huila” (Dussán Calderón 2012).

The *minga* was another form of civil disobedience to deliver the message: “We do not give up on this territory”. But it was also part of another widely used strategy of Asoquimbo, which I refer to, using Svampa’s (2012:5) term as “recreational actions” (*acciones de contenido lúdico*). It is the organisation of public activities like seminars, concerts, plays, movie-screenings, and the use of art to distribute the arguments and discourses of the anti-dam movement across places

<sup>242</sup> Poole (2009) further states, “By calling their movement a *minga*, the indigenous participants call attention to both the work that must go into politics and the idea that that work must be collective. They also, of course, reclaim it from long histories of state-led attempts to organize and control collective politics and community organization”.

and scales. Asoquimbo has regularly organised such events especially at the South-Colombian University, in Neiva, but also within the affected municipalities.

Civil disobedience, in the case of land occupation and the blocking of roads, but also here in the organisation of recreational activities for the wider public, facilitated politics of networking (linking up with and gaining the attention of diverse trans-local spaces and actors groups) and as such represents an alternative act of power; it is action contrary to Emgesa's will. Foucault frames this freedom to think and act otherwise as *counter-conduct* (Cadman 2010:550). It is going beyond the passive notion of "not conducting oneself properly" (Foucault 2007:201) and emphasises the "productivity" (Legg 2018; Rosol 2014:76) involved in "questioning the regime of truth" (Cadman 2010:550) and wanting to be conducted (governed) otherwise. The concept not only targets political impact but also the intention to change beliefs, behaviour and attitudes (Foucault 2007 and Introduction by Davidson, in Foucault 2007:xxix; Rabinow 1997:157). The movement against El Quimbo wanted to push Emgesa to reconsider its social mitigation strategies, the state of engaging with and committing to the concerns of the rural population and the society to change the perspective of the national development paradigm.

The beginning of the year 2012 can be considered the peak of physical tensions between the resistance movement, the company and the state. The protests brought together a wide range of actors in support of the local struggle at El Quimbo. This affirmed and motivated many affected families in continuing their resistance, and in parts, strengthened their negotiation position towards the company (as in the case of the five fishermen at the riverbank). However, the political reaction was mainly armed intervention. In November 2013, the forced displacement of another 200 people took place, people who had occupied and continued to cultivate the lands (among others at La Honda). As a result of the unresolved situation in central Huila, Emgesa as well as Asoquimbo took the conflict to the courts.

### Judicialisation of conflict

During the years of resistance, Asoquimbo made extensive use of the national law and international rights. It involved lawyers and law students in the analysis of political agreements and decisions, examining whether everything complied with the legal framework. In cases in which procedures revealed certain blank spots or loopholes, Asoquimbo would demand more information and explanation from the respective institution (*petición*). In some cases, the resistance called on public control units to check what was happening at El Quimbo throughout the construction phase. Public comptrollers and ombudsmen, individual politicians and lawyers

came to the affected areas to get an impression of the impacts and of the claimed noncompliance of the company. Many raised concerns afterwards, and sometime partial fines and restrictions were enunciated (such as by CAM or even ANLA).

If this did not bring the desired result, a further step was to involve the courts to demand the protection of foundational rights (*acción de tutela*). Lawyers affiliated to Asoquimbo have legally consulted with affected people and facilitated several collective court actions. The most important case went to the Constitutional Court. In the beginning of 2012, Asoquimbo presented 1,297 cases of affected people to the Colombian Human Rights Observatory to demand their inclusion in the census, arguing that El Quimbo put their vital minimum at risk. This was a switch from civil disobedience (the act of rejecting being counted) to what I term a “strategy of numbers”, to overwhelm the company with compensation cases.<sup>243</sup>

During the same year, Asoquimbo compiled a final list of 8,000 people. In the first instance, the Superior Tribunal of the Judicial District of Neiva and in the second instance the Supreme Court of Justice rejected the *tutelas* (legal claims for the protection of rights), because they saw insufficient proof that the people’s subsistence was at risk because of the dam construction. Consequently, the cases were forwarded to the Constitutional Court, who ruled in March 2013 (Sentence T-135/13) in their favour, stating that the census needed to remain open to including all those people who experienced an impact on their subsistence at any point throughout the dam development. Emgesa had to make a new census within the next six months, respecting the rights for participation of those affected (Corte Constitucional 2013; see Chapter 10). Emgesa revised 181 cases in June 2013, however the court reminded the company that this was not enough. At the time of the deadline, Emgesa demanded that the court revise the Sentence T-135, but without success. By then 28,644 people had requested their inclusion in the census.<sup>244</sup> This court case challenged the temporal and spatial scales of census-taking determined by the company and as such forms part of the contentious politics of scale.

Emgesa also took legal action. It accused Asoquimbo leaders Elsa Ardila and Miller Dussán of causing “public disturbances” and the delays in construction (by blocking the road) in 2012. Ardila and Dussán finally won the legal case in February 2017. However, the pressure during

---

<sup>243</sup> For the individuals, it was of course about being compensated. For more information on the power of (large) numbers in politics, see e.g. Desrosières 1998; Porter 1995; Rose 1991.

<sup>244</sup> By 2015, the figure was 30,564 people. Dussán stated that the authorities in charge of enacting the ruling (mainly ANLA and the Superior Tribunal of Neiva) did not sufficiently do so (Dussán Calderón 2017:101).

the years caused Ardila to step down from her responsibilities. Since 2012, Dussán has solely led Asoquimbo.<sup>245</sup>

In total, rules and norms have been taken up by the resistance to defend their rights manifested in the constitution (and/or human right treaties) and to remind the state of its duties (see Chapter 10). As for the resistance, legal contention has been an important tool for many territorial struggles in Colombia (see e.g. Grajales 2015, 2016; Rodríguez Garavito and Arenas 2005). Comaroff and Comaroff (2006) describe devotion to the law as obsession or as legal fetish, implying a false trust in a system that either has no influence on actual political practices, or would only benefit the ruling class, in other words, to “hide power relations between classes with the same final result” (Lemaitre Ripoll 2009:383). Similar to the “rules of (techno-) science”, the law functions for a specific (Western) set of values. Using legal language runs the risk of rendering plural values commensurable, which are otherwise incommensurable (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006; Rodríguez Garavito 2011; Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito 2005). This could weaken the resistance. There are however decolonial efforts also to be found in law (see e.g. Sousa Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito 2005). Indeed, in Colombia, the Constitution of 1991 was the product of an active civil society that had demanded a new juridical system and had participated in shaping it (see Lemaitre Ripoll 2009 and Chapter 8).

In the El Quimbo case, in order to counterwork the legal framework in the interests of the resistance, an “alternative development” was proposed. Escobar (2008:162) defines this strategy as the overall acceptance of the underlying premises of development (in this case the dam development) but with the intent to manoeuvre within the paradigm in the best way possible (making the most out of the compensation schemes). This does not necessarily contradict the main goal of preventing the dam from being completed. The idea was to confront Emgesa on all possible fronts to increase the costs for the company to such an extent that the project becomes economically and politically unviable. Accordingly, the resistance struggled to hold in tension a combination of strategies and alternative projects (Escobar 2008; Martínez Alier 2002:268) to produce enough openings to ultimately *defend life-territory*.

---

<sup>245</sup> In March 2018, he handed over the leadership to his long-term deputy Jennifer Chávarro Quino (former student of the South-Colombian University with family ties to Rioloro).

## Defending life-territory

Among the affected population as well as the local politicians, many argue that the core problem caused by El Quimbo has been the loss of employment in the region. The main source of income in central Huila was the agricultural sector dependent on the fertile lands of the valley. With the enclosure of the lands and waters, people became increasingly aware of the impact the dam would cause. However, what was at stake for the people, having lived and worked in the valley for many years, was not only their employment and other livelihood assets (like house, land, and neighbourhood). Their home, life-territory and life project were at stake. Alejandra from La Escalereta explained, for example, that cacao cultivation was her *proyecto productivo* (productive project), but what she had lost was what she had inherited from her father and had invested in more than 30 years of her life – her life project embodied in the *labranzas* (cacao plantations, see Chapter 4).<sup>246</sup>

As mentioned in Part II, some *labranzas* in the valley were a hundred years old. Agricultural practices had formed the landscape over generations and connected the people with the life-territory. For the *cacaoteros* (cacao cultivators), Don Jaime, Alfredo and Alejandra (introduced in Chapter 4), their profession built on memories, local knowledge, experience and routine (“*ya uno es enseñado vivir por acá*”).<sup>247</sup> It was source of stability and tranquillity as well as aspirations (“*aspiraciones*”, “*para salir adelante*”), hopes and a “vision of the horizon”.<sup>248</sup> Also other *campesinos* and especially the fisherfolk expressed how they missed the freedom and independence they had enjoyed in their former daily labour (see Chapter 5).<sup>249</sup>

The life project refers not only to what they chose to commit their strength and time to on a daily basis, an activity that provides subsistence, food and shelter for the family, but also to an implied connection to the life-territory and the community and feeling proud of one’s own contribution to it.<sup>250</sup> The necessary collaboration between neighbours and communities, for instance for organising and maintaining the irrigation system, contributed to a sense of belonging.<sup>251</sup> Related statements were: “They pulled me out of my territory”,<sup>252</sup> “The river is

---

<sup>246</sup> Interview 56

<sup>247</sup> Interview 2 (and 56)

<sup>248</sup> Interviews 2, 53, 56

<sup>249</sup> Interviews 3, 14, 36

<sup>250</sup> This pride was expressed (non-verbally) during my field visit in 2012, first, when Don Jaime showed me around at the *labranza* and described the treatment of the trees and the fruits (Interview 2), and second, when resisting *campesinos* explained to me the working of the irrigation canals (Interview 3).

<sup>251</sup> Interview 2 and 3

<sup>252</sup> “*me sacaron de mi territorio*”; Intervention by Gerardo Lugo Florez at the public hearing, Nov. 2016.

ours”,<sup>253</sup> and “The river beaches were for fisherfolk and others, but now they are owned by a multinational”.<sup>254</sup>

Professor Leyla Rincón explained that only through her fight against El Quimbo dam could she understand what life-territory really was. As a natural scientist, she had learned about geographical spaces and habitats, but was now seeing the life-territory from the perspective of the fishermen or the rural women, in terms of how they constructed the life-territory by creating bonds.<sup>255</sup> Taking away the foundation of a life project, like the land and the river, affects not only the livelihood, but also pride, community and identity (Helmcke 2013). A resettlement can re-establish livelihood assets and ideally a productive activity. However, one’s life project gets lost – “*se queda en cero*” (you end up at zero).<sup>256</sup>

Accordingly, resisting fishers and farmers at La Honda stated in 2012 that they defend their ways to subsist, the river and water sources, in total, their lives: “*Quitán la vida de nosotros, eso es nuestra lucha*” (They take our lives, that’s our fight).<sup>257</sup> Popular slogans among the affected population were relating the dam to death: “*Rios para la vida no para la muerte*” (Rivers for life, not for death) and “*Rios libres, pueblos vivos*” (Free rivers, people alive).<sup>258</sup> I therefore call their struggle a *defence of life-territory* directed against the expansion of the neoliberal development model into their life-territory (as shown in Chapter 5).

I consider the defence of life-territory resembling “popular environmentalism” or what Martinez Alier (2002) terms “environmentalism of the poor”. People turn into environmentalists because their livelihoods are depending on the environment they seek to protect from harm, in my case the lands and the river (Latorre Tomás 2009; Martinez Alier 2002). An important tactic is to relate the struggle to environmental justice principles. Environmental justice works as a “science with the people” (Martinez Alier 2002:12) to fight unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens among population groups often correlating to specific race, income, social class, or culture and religion (Martinez Alier 2002). As previously indicated, Asoquimbo raised environmental concerns (through alternative

---

<sup>253</sup> “*El río era de nosotros*”, former resident of Veracruz, Interview 45.

<sup>254</sup> Intervention by Gloria Rivera Brand at the public hearing, Nov. 2016.

<sup>255</sup> Interview 24

<sup>256</sup> Interview 1

<sup>257</sup> Interview 3

<sup>258</sup> see also the title picture of this thesis showing the dam as an opened human body with the title “Anatomy of death”.

studies on the impact on the biodiversity) and applied environmental justice arguments to counter the dam development (related to the formulation of an agro-food peasant reserve).

Asoquimbo had as its overall objective to prevent the El Quimbo dam realisation and to leave an impact on environmental politics in the country. The social movement emerged because a common interest and a shared struggle led to contentious collective action, mobilisation and organisation (Tarrow 2011; Tilly 1978). Some authors see a collective identity and unity as characteristic of social movements (e.g. James and Seters 2014; Tilly 1978). The defence of life-territory, however, can be expressed in different forms. For the local population involved, the motivations were diverse. Some became activists to fight the dam realisation as such. For them, no compensation could outweigh the loss they would experience.<sup>259</sup> Others had joined Asoquimbo for the same purpose but soon realised that they cannot stop a project supported by the national government; therefore the key motivation for resisting became being included in the census and to receive the best compensation possible.<sup>260</sup> Again, for others, the purpose was to be acknowledged as affected and receive support in overcoming the inflicted difficulties (like the fisherfolk downstream).<sup>261</sup> All these motives were related to the protection of livelihoods and for all these interests, Asoquimbo offered a space, thanks to its “repertoires of contention”, which were various forms of collective action to make political claims (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2004:5,16).

Most of the affected population joined Asoquimbo at one point: “we all took part in Asoquimbo”.<sup>262</sup> During the first years of the anti-dam struggle, between 2009 and 2012, Asoquimbo’s support base grew substantially across space, scales and social (interest) groups. The contentious politics of knowledge and space (place, networking and mobility) were the strength of the movement. The collaboration with urban professionals allowed the application of a variety of strategies and the dissemination of scientific, legal and ideological counter-discourses beyond the local.

Miller Dussán in particular linked the dam opposition to wider critical theory and ideology. He shaped an anti-dam narrative that strongly relied on environmental and decolonial discourses. For example, he equates “multinationals” with colonisers (which were in this case even Spanish

---

<sup>259</sup> e.g. Interviews 27, 29, 36, 39, 56, and intervention by Orlando Ramirez at public hearing, Nov. 2016.

<sup>260</sup> e.g. Interviews 10, 30, 34, 51.

<sup>261</sup> Interviews 12–15

<sup>262</sup> Stated by *jornalero* and vice-president of the Rioloro community action council in 2017, Interview 26.

– Endesa).<sup>263</sup> They would bring only devastation and “ecocide” to the region, while being supported by the “extractivist peace” agenda of the national government.<sup>264</sup> He calls the affected people “victims of development” but at the same time they would be “descendants of la Gaitana” (see Chapter 1), who continue her fight to “defend the territory”.<sup>265</sup> He promotes water as life and in so doing, not only discursively opposes all mega-dam investment but also all investment in mining. While discourses have the power to “blind their proponents from seeing alternative interpretations and actions”, they can also “facilitate action” (Benjaminsen and Svarstad 2008:51) and produce openings for alternative visions. The anti-dam narrative in this case allowed the local struggle to “jump scales” (Cox 1998:2; Haarstad and Fløysand 2007:290). It created links to other social movements against extractivism within Colombia and internationally.

Since its beginning, Asoquimbo continuously extended its networks and became part of the national movement “Ríos Vivos” and the international network “International Rivers”.<sup>266</sup> Asoquimbo also received support from the national NGOs for social justice “Tierra Digna” and for peace “Planeta Paz”. Asoquimbo further collaborated with indigenous movements in the south of Colombia (as noted before), being inspired by their *cosmovisión* (worldview) for example of *pacha mama* (mother earth) and *buen vivir* (a good life).<sup>267</sup> Miller Dussán went abroad on several occasions, to protest against the Enel Group in Italy, for instance, or to denounce Human Rights violations in the United States. An affected fisherman said: “They [Asoquimbo] opened my eyes. They brought people to us from all parts. Today we have more knowledge”.<sup>268</sup> The contentious politics of space implied so far a mostly horizontal exchange of knowledge and experience. The local population contributed with their local knowledge and

---

<sup>263</sup> Alfredo said: “We turned back to the past, the conquest or colony in a certain form, where the Spanish come and do how they please.” (Interview 53).

<sup>264</sup> “*Paz extractivista*” or “*paz corporativa*” meaning peace for private corporations to invest in Colombia, but not necessarily peace for people and the territories.

<sup>265</sup> Also popular slogans of the resistance relate to the legend: “Like descendants of the Gaitana, we defend our territory till the defeat of the Spanish – No to El Quimbo!” (see <https://www.desdeabajo.info/colombia/item/19314-el-quimbo-el-r%C3%ADo-magdalena-en-desobediencia-natural.html> Retrieved 15 June 2020).

<sup>266</sup> “The Movement for the Defence of Territory and Affected people by Dams – Rivers Alive” (Movimiento Ríos Vivos) links Colombian movements against dams and water privatisation. Asoquimbo was one of the founding organisations in 2011. It forms part of “International Rivers”, an international NGO seeking to protect the world’s rivers.

<sup>267</sup> “The Earth is a superorganism, the ‘Gaia’, a living system of fragile equilibrium, severely affected by all forms of social-anthropocentric production and organization – predators of humans that must be overcome, if we are to aspire the Buen Vivir. We are human, but we are also biological. Consequently and in essence, the relationship that we have to resolve to pave the way towards an eco-society is the relationship of profound inequity and inequality not only among human beings, but among all beings of nature” (Dussán Calderón 2017:19).

<sup>268</sup> Interview 14

experiences of impacts, while the urban-based experts combined these with wider scientific, political and juridical discourses and contributed with knowledge gathered through other experiences of struggles in the country and abroad. The scaling up of objectives allowed to reach the interests of more actors and to make them aware of the issues at stake.

Related to these politics of space is Kirsch's "new politics of time", described as strategies that try to intervene early in the decision-making process of investments in order to prevent projects from happening before the negative effects are felt (Kirsch 2014). During the struggles of El Quimbo in 2012, Emgesa started evaluating another potential dam project at Oporapa, which was mentioned in the report to develop and manage the Magdalena River by Hydrochina (2013:486).<sup>269</sup> This dam would also be located within Huila and therefore caused an outcry from the population in Oporapa, which had taken note of the impacts caused by El Quimbo. The involvement of Asoquimbo and Ríos Vivos in the area, combined with the increasingly negative image of Emgesa in the Huilan public, caused the company to retract the Oporapa dam proposal in September 2017. Additionally, Asoquimbo has supported several calls for prior consultation processes concerning energy and mining projects all over Colombia, for instance in Cabrera. In Cabrera's surrounding municipalities in Cudinamarca (the central province of Colombia), Emgesa planned six micro-hydroelectric installations. The population voted in its absolute majority "No", not only to the project but also to extractivism in general within their territory.<sup>270</sup>

The strategies of counterworking, counter-conducting and using democratic, legal and scientific discourses and mechanisms make the anti-dam movement a form of "rightful resistance" (O'Brien 2007). The concept is inclined towards Gramsci's "war of position" and stands in contrast to the "war of manoeuvre" – a form of military or armed resistance more attributed to guerrilla movements aiming to overthrow the established system by force. *War of position* wants to "create alternative institutions and intellectual resources within existing

---

<sup>269</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 1, the "Master Plan" of the Magdalena River assessed the development potential of the three different regions of the Magdalena River (upstream, midstream and downstream). For the upstream river basin, Hydrochina saw further potential for hydroelectricity. It proposed four more hydropower dams upstream of El Quimbo, and even more downstream (Hydrochina 2013).

<sup>270</sup> In 2008, Emgesa made public that it planned to build 14 small hydropower plants and one reservoir around the Páramo Sumapaz (Andean wetland) in Cudinamarca. Because of strong resistance from the affected municipalities – especially from Cabrera – Emgesa revised its plans. It abandoned the idea of a reservoir and decreased the number of power plants to six. Even though Cabrera was no longer considered affected, the peasant reserve (one of those six common land titles in Colombia), obtained the right to have a popular consultation process. On 26 February 2017, a total of 1,506 habitants were asked if they agree to mining and energy activities, which transform land and water use in their territory. More than 97%, 1,465 people, voted "No!"

societies” (Cox 2005:38). Rightful resistance is at the interface of popular resistance and institutionalised participation. It is “more consequential than most ‘everyday resistance’ but still less risky than uninstitutionalized defiance” (O’Brien 2007:55). O’Brien (2007:33) explains further:

Rightful resistance is a form of popular contention that (1) operates near the boundary of an authorized channel, (2) employs the rhetoric and commitments of the powerful to curb political or economic power, and (3) hinges on locating and exploiting divisions among the powerful. In particular, rightful resistance entails the innovative use of laws, policies, and other officially promoted values to defy ‘disloyal’ political and economic elites; it is a kind of partially sanctioned resistance that uses influential advocates and recognized principles to apply pressure on those in power who have failed to live up to some professed ideal or who have not implemented some beneficial measure.

The resistance is “noisy, public and open” and seeks the attention of the elite referring to “equality, rights and rules of law” (O’Brien 2007:34). Part of this form of resistance is nonviolent, discursive (e.g. using science to delegitimise decisions) and uses formal, legal strategies (e.g. activating laws; Cavanagh and Benjaminsen 2015). Together, all the strategies form a critique within the system (O’Brien 2007:35), whose aim is not “to eliminate power [...] but to mobilize it” (Purcell 2009:160). They want to create openings that allow alternative, more just and equal pathways. Asoquimbo, I argue, worked along this line, and turned into an influential political actor within Huila.

An indicator of the political influence Asoquimbo had achieved can be seen in the governor elections in January 2013. Because of corruption allegations, the governor of Huila at that time, Cielo Gonzáles, stepped down. For the following election, only one legible candidate ran. Because this restricted democratic principles, Asoquimbo promoted the blank vote to delegitimise the election. Indeed, the blank vote ended up being very high: over 30 per cent of the Huilan population and about 50 per cent of the six affected municipalities voted blank. Normally the percentage of blank votes is below 1 per cent.

Another indicator was that soon afterwards, regional institutions of the state also expressed increasing scepticism concerning Emgesa’s action in central Huila. The CAM had articulated its environmental concerns with the project early in the making of the EIA (see Chapter 4). It furthermore fined Emgesa several times for irregular extraction of sediments and woods. Because Emgesa ignored many commitments and regulations, the Huilan Administrational Tribunal (regional court) finally became involved to enforce these regulations. In February

2015, it ruled that Emgesa was not allowed to start operating the dam before obligations, such as a minimum water run-off rate, were fulfilled (*La Nación* 2015a).

Accordingly, an alliance between the rural population in opposition to Emgesa and a group of university and civil society activists based in Neiva grew into a trans-local movement against extractivism in the defence of life-territory. I continue to see this movement as place-based, because it was in the interests of and widely supported by the local (affected) population. Furthermore, the crucial confrontations happened locally, in conflict with the corporate actions and the politics allowing those actions. With the advances of the dam project and related socio-spatial reconfigurations (Part II), however, the local base of Asoquimbo increasingly eroded and the association soon centred around the intellectual and student activists situated in Neiva.

The following chapter begins with Emgesa ignoring the aforementioned court ruling by closing the dam gates, which initiated the filling of the reservoir. I explain the consequences this had and analyse how it caused a new momentum in the resistance and a change in alliances. I argue that the quite material objectives attributed to the *defence of life-territory* – preventing the dam realisation and protecting the life projects at El Quimbo – turned into rather abstracted political objectives aligned to the *defence of region-territory* – establishing regional autonomy from the central state.

## 7. The Defence of Region-Territory

*The only good thing that Emgesa has achieved  
is to unite the Huilan people  
to defend their territory.*

José Armando Acuña Molina, Huilan Departmental Assembly<sup>271</sup>

### The filling of the reservoir

It was the early morning of 30 June 2015, at the end of the week of San Pedro (the traditional festival of Huila), when Emgesa closed the dam gates. People had been dancing all night and were sleeping off their hangovers. At six o'clock, Huila's governor at that time, Carlos Mauricio Iriarte, received a text message from the president of Emgesa, Luis Rubio. It stated the following: "*Gober* [short for governor] I inform you that, from 5.30 am today, they gave the hydrological conditions and closed the dam gates. The operation of closing was successful.

---

<sup>271</sup> Intervention at public hearing 11. Nov. 2016

Greetings” (see Figure III-6). The national news channel UNO covered the story within the rubric of *¡Qué tal esto!* (How about this!) a few hours later and featured the governor’s surprise at the disrespect expressed in this short message. Emgesa had not bothered to consult or even notify the regional authorities in advance. Neither the mayors nor the CAM were informed.

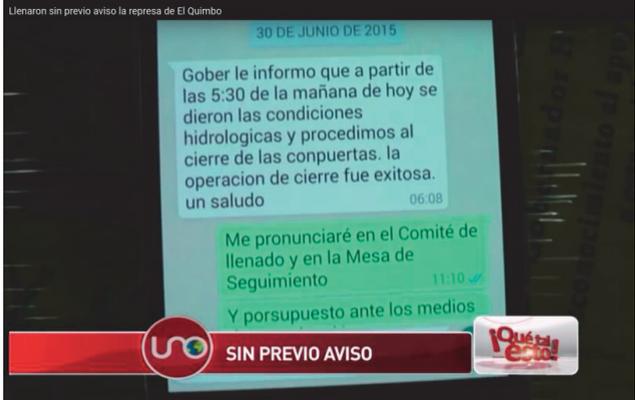


Figure III-6 Filling of El Quimbo dam reservoir without prior notification (*Noticias Uno Colombia* 2015; min. 0:26).

This “disrespectful” behaviour was covered widely in the media. The commentator from *El Diario del Huila* called El Quimbo a “sort of stab to the region”.<sup>272</sup> The Huilan public was outraged. Apart from the behaviour itself, many commitments stated in the environmental licence had not been fulfilled. Emgesa had ignored the demands of the CAM and the ruling of the Huilan Administrational Tribunal in February of the same year. Most controversial was that Emgesa could not guarantee the minimum water run-off, nor had it removed an important amount of biomass from the “area of direct influence”. The ANLA had made last minute modifications (17 in total) to the environmental licence, in order to allow Emgesa to initiate the filling regardless (No. 759, 26 June 2015).

Additionally, the original chapel of San José de Belén – Huilan heritage – was destroyed and slowly disappeared under the rising water level (see Figure II-8 in Chapter 5). The Huilan moviemaker and former student of the South-Colombian University, Francisco Olaya filmed the flooding with his drone (Atarraya Films 2015).<sup>273</sup> The picture of the ruin in the water

<sup>272</sup> “*Contra viento y marea se levantó El Quimbo, una especie de puñalada a la región*” (Artunduaga 2017).  
<sup>273</sup> *Atarraya films* also produced two documentaries about the community San José de Belén in advance of the resettlement. One of these received a prize for best regional journalism in Colombia in November 2016: “*Erase una vez una vereda llamada San José de Belén*”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AczcZxPPVrQ>. The other

symbolised the disrespect of Emgesa, but also of the ANLA towards the region, its institutions, culture and values.

The company's position was that "what is done is done" and repeated that the process was now irreversible. It apparently expected the public uproar to calm down soon. But it did not. The Huilan Administrational Tribunal reissued its decision earlier that year prohibiting Emgesa from starting the energy generation before complying with all commitments to the region. In August, the national Mining Ministry tried to convince the tribunal to lift its decision – without success (Castillo 2015). Nevertheless, Emgesa started operation in November, following a decree by the national government allowing it to do so (6 October, Decree 1979 of 2015; following the State of Emergency caused by a border conflict with Venezuela, 7 September, Decree 1770 of 2015). This provoked the Constitutional Court to be involved and to decide that the decree is not legitimate (Sentence C-753 of 2015; *El Espectador* 2015; see Part IV).

After several months of standstill, in January 2016, Emgesa was finally allowed to produce energy as the lasting drought caused by El Niño had necessitated run-off for the flowing of the river downstream. In April 2016, the ANLA fines Emgesa COP 2,600 million (approximately USD 3 million) for the mismanagement of the biomass removal, even though the company repeatedly assured that it removed even more of the biomass than required by the environmental licence (see Chapter 5). The circumstances of the filing, in combination with the inconsistency between court rulings and governmental decisions, caused national public attention.

The regional media of Huila, mainly *La Nación* and *el Diario del Huila*, covered the "polémica" of El Quimbo on nearly a daily basis with quotes from the local politicians and Asoquimbo leaders.<sup>274</sup> The national newspaper focused more on the position of the national government, and the negative impacts the struggle would have on national energy security, the navigability of the river downstream and future foreign investment (e.g. *El Espectador* 2016a; *Semana* 2016; *El Tiempo* 2015a). Nevertheless, the case of El Quimbo, with its social and environmental problems, had become part of the national public debate and Miller Dussán, who was regarded as main expert and spokesperson of the movement by the local media, was increasingly quoted in national media (e.g. Calle 2015; Rivera Rueda 2015; *El Tiempo* 2015b).

---

is called "*Capilla de San José de Belén (Agrado - Huila)*": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XqHIU5TnNo> (all retrieved 20 Feb 2020).

<sup>274</sup> Asoquimbo, as association for all the affected groups, was mainly represented by the president Miller Dussán, the vice-president, a juridical coordinator and a communication coordinator, as well as by social leaders of the affected communities.

Emgesa's attitude over the years, topped by the circumstances of the filling in June 2015, became the core issue of the election campaign of Huila the same year. Carlos Julio Gonzáles, psychologist and brother of former Huilan governor, Cielo Gonzáles, announced in May 2015 his intention to run for governor in Huila as candidate of a fairly conservative party "Cambio Radical". The focus of his campaign was meant to be education. While education in Colombia needs to improve in all areas, it is not an issue of great public concern, and with the filling of the dam, the topic only became more alienated from general attention. If Gonzáles seriously wanted to advance his prospects for the elections only four months later, he needed to change his agenda. He decided to ride the wave of discontent towards Emgesa by providing the solution: no more dams in Huila during his legislation!<sup>275</sup>

This suddenly opened a new door for Asoquimbo. Until that moment, no leading politicians had pronounced or positioned themselves explicitly against the large-scale investment. Soon other mayoral candidates for the municipalities of Huila, also looking towards election, followed his example. Miller Dussán organised a meeting with Gonzáles. If he would take seriously what he promised and committed to the "defence of territory", Dussán would support him during the election campaign.<sup>276</sup> Thereafter, Gonzáles appeared in public wearing T-shirts with slogans of the anti-dam movement (e.g. "Also, I am affected by El Quimbo"; see Figure III-7) and made use of its narrative. In October 2015, he was elected governor of Huila. The new mayors of the 37 municipalities of Huila had followed the same criticism towards the dam project.<sup>277</sup>

The main strategy of Asoquimbo was now *incidencia política* (political effect, advocacy). Miller Dussán formulated it this way: "I have known Carlos Julio Gonzáles for 25 years through his academic work. Now we have an investigative alliance [*alianza investigativa*]"<sup>278</sup> Both became the most prominent figures for the struggle against Emgesa. But also other regional public institutions and the church became outspoken critics. The CAM officials felt reassured in their prior criticism. The municipal councils of Gigante, El Agrado and Altamira rejected requirements to make necessary adjustments to the land use plans for formalising and transferring the resettlement areas, arguing that Emgesa had not yet complied with the agreed commitments. Also the Diocese of Garzón refused to receive the new chapels built in La Galda

---

<sup>275</sup> Interview 20

<sup>276</sup> Interview 20

<sup>277</sup> Interview 20

<sup>278</sup> Interview 20

(San José de Belén), Nueva Veracruz and Llano de la Virgen, arguing in a similar manner. As a result, some inhabitants of the resettlements began to take care of the new chapels themselves, but by mid-2017, the chapels had not been used for service.<sup>279</sup>



Figure III-7 Press conference of governor Carlos Julio Gonzáles (middle) with Asoquimbo (to the left stands Miller Dussán and further left the social leader of the fisherfolk in El Hobo; towards the right stands a person of the governor’s team and further right Jenniffer Chavarro – at that time vice-president of Asoquimbo; *RCN La Radio Colombia* 2015).

Instead, the diocese of Garzón applied for funding from the Spanish Caritas (Catholic charity) to initiate pastoral social work (*Pastoral Social*). In 2015, the diocese formed the “Mission of San José” and employed Patricia Zuluaga Ospina, a lawyer, to look into the matters of El Quimbo, the environmental licence and what the church should demand from Emgesa.<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, the priest Hector Gabriel Trujillo Luna was transferred to the church of Rioloro. As general vicar of the bishop of Garzón, he was the highest ranked priest Rioloro has ever had. For the *Rioloroños* (citizens of Rioloro) this came as a surprise, but they took it as a sign that the Catholic church stands by them in their struggle and that they are not forgotten.<sup>281</sup>

The vicar as well as other priests of the diocese combined anti-dam discourses with religious language. They preach environmental consciousness referring to it as a responsibility which

<sup>279</sup> Emgesa stated in its newsletter “*La Buena Energía de El Quimbo*” (Edition 12 and 13 of 2015) that it had handed the chapel over to the community of San José de Belén, but Fernanda from the community clarified that only three families had received it (Interview 40).

<sup>280</sup> The diocese initiated several legal cases against Emgesa, Interview 43.

<sup>281</sup> Interviews 28, 29, 45

god has given to the human race to take care of the *casa común* (common home). They announce that “development that goes against humanity is no development”. The mission commits to strengthen local communities and to “defend the *casa común*” (Diocese of Garzón 2017). The mission’s representatives not only see Emgesa as a threat, but also the national development agenda. They relate in their argumentation to the political Constitution, human rights, environmental justice and the bible. This turn towards a political positioning was new to the diocese.<sup>282</sup> During the first years of El Quimbo dam construction, the Catholic church had largely stayed silent. Emgesa itself considers this “awakening” inspired by pure greed for money in the form of compensation from the company.<sup>283</sup> Other see it as reaction to the raising number of evangelist churches in Colombia, including in Huila.<sup>284</sup> The church itself defends it as reaction to the injustice brought to the communities by Emgesa.<sup>285</sup>

In summary, the closing of the dam gates meant the loss of water sources and the lands of the valley; however, it also meant new opposition. As the epigraph at the start of this chapter indicates, the Huilan public seemed to be united in their criticism of Emgesa. This resulted in a new collaboration between Asoquimbo, the local governments, the CAM and the church with the immediate objective of pressuring the ANLA to withdraw the environmental licence and to stop the dam from operating until Emgesa had fully complied with all compensation demands.<sup>286</sup> To reach this goal, all actors joined forces for the realisation of a public hearing to follow up on the environmental licence granted.

Accordingly, one of the first steps González took as new governor was to formalise, together with Asoquimbo, the creation of a thematic roundtable for environment, water and territory (Decree 489 de 2016, Gobernación del Huila). For regional development planning, administrations are able to institutionalise thematic or technical roundtables (*mesas temáticas/técnicas*) to consult with regional or local actors for better-informed decision-making. It is constituted by invited actors, mostly experts and representatives of key actor groups, who discuss a certain topic that can vary between meetings. At the same time, the

---

<sup>282</sup> But a trend similar to what has been called “liberation theology” and “eco-theology”: the Christian church’s attention towards social inequality and ecological concerns, in Latin America usually related to dependency theory and decolonial thinking (Martinez Alier 2002:206; McDonagh 2019; Vuola 2019). Also interesting in this context the “Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home” (Rome 2015) and Sachs’ reflections about it (2017).

<sup>283</sup> As expressed by Emgesa social worker, among others, Interview 37

<sup>284</sup> Accounted by some Rioloñeños, e.g. Interview 44

<sup>285</sup> A new bishop came to the Diocese in 2013 who got increasingly aware of the situation at El Quimbo (Interview 43 with church lawyer).

<sup>286</sup> The long-term aim was to impede all further dam developments in Huila and to strengthen regional decision-making capacities within the state system.

roundtable is mostly open to everyone to listen and to raise concerns or ask questions. It is a participation mechanism, that, if the instalment is accepted by the national authorities, is funded by the public (see Chapter 10).

Civil society members, affected populations, representatives of local political institutions and experts met in March 2016 for the first time. The first item on the agenda was to strategise the demand for the public hearing. Asoquimbo had demanded such a hearing, which is required by law (Decree 330 of 2007), without success since the protests in January 2012. However, the new political support gave new reasons for hope. The governor used his connection to the national government to pressure the ANLA and the Ministry of the Environment to successfully realise the public hearing. At the same time, the roundtable prepared for the public hearing in several open meetings. Gonzáles gathered a variety of experts in his team and mobilised them to investigate the diverse impacts of the dam, former administrative failures and possible demands. They reviewed studies, numbers, and laws, which Asoquimbo often happily provided. As Miller Dussán notes:

The public hearing, as the follow-up of the project, is the first one within the energy sector in all of Colombia. Asoquimbo demanded a hearing since 2012, but only now with the governor, supported by the thematic roundtable for environment, water and territory, it was successful. The organisation and the preparation was in the responsibility of the Huilan government, but the public servants had no idea about how things work. That is why the *juridical and environmental consultants of Asoquimbo* worked side by side with the public servants.<sup>287</sup>

In November 2016, the first public hearing to follow up on the environmental licence of an energy project in Colombia was held in Garzón.

### “The day of Huilan dignity”

The Ministry of the Environment delayed the public hearing several times. There were rumours that Emgesa pressured the ANLA not to realise the hearing. But the ANLA understood that it was unwise to push the public and political annoyance in Huila even further, especially considering the fact that the case enjoyed national public attention. As stated, the Huilan government and Asoquimbo prepared well for *el día de la dignidad huilense* (the day of Huilan dignity), as termed by the governor, Gonzáles. About 970 individuals had previously signed up

---

<sup>287</sup> “La Audiencia Pública, como seguimiento de un proyecto, es la primera en el sector energético en toda Colombia. Asoquimbo ha exigido una audiencia desde 2012, pero solo ahora a través del gobernador con el respaldo de la mesa ambiental, agua y territorio se lo logró. La organización y preparación fue responsabilidad de la gobernación, pero los funcionarios no tenían ni idea cómo funcionan las cosas. Entonces los asesores jurídicos y ambientales de Asoquimbo trabajaron al lado de los funcionarios.” (Interview 7).

to speak at the hearing and to hand in a written complaint. In the end, some 3,000 people attended the event and more than 150 people expressed their concerns and demands verbally. The contributions covered two full days: 11 to 12 November 2016.

The Director of the ANLA as well the Minister of the Environment attended to facilitate the event and to listen.<sup>288</sup> The operating company Emgesa was represented by its Garzón director (Jhon Jairo Huertas), who had 40 minutes at the outset to present the advances of the company in complying with the environmental licence. Otherwise, Emgesa had no additional platform to react to the testimonials.

After Emgesa's presentation, the governor Carlos Julio Gonzáles took the podium (see Figure III-8) and started by paraphrasing the first two verses of the Hymn of Garzón, which was played at the beginning.<sup>289</sup> With this, he expressed the local pride for the region, the beauty and importance of the rivers and highlighted that it used to be an oasis of peace and love. During the following 40 minutes, he elaborated in detail on the financial losses Huila had to endure (because of the impact on the agricultural production) and on the political and juridical contradictions which had led to the realisation of El Quimbo. He questioned whether the authorities had checked if their modifications to the environmental licence did not reflect "violations of the human rights", and that "the State" was made to be responsible. The people sitting in the hearing applauded him and cheered.

The mayors of the six affected municipalities followed his example. Each of them exceeded their assigned five-minute time slot, denouncing the multiple impacts their communities and administration had faced, because of the dam. The mayor of Altamira said that El Quimbo did not bring "development" to the region but instead brought "sadness" (*tristeza*). The mayors of Gigante and Garzón demanded a new census of the affected population and the compensation of the agriculture sector and economy. The mayor of Paicol called Emgesa a "thief" and spoke of the "destruction of the social fabric" (*tejido social*) of the municipality. The mayor of Tesalia demanded that Emgesa change the dam to multi-purpose use to re-establish economic activity. The strongest discourse came from the mayor of El Agrado, Waldina Losada Vega. She reminded the state of its responsibility to "defend its people" (*defender el pueblo*) and called upon it to "dignify its political constitution". She claimed that Emgesa came to "divide and to

---

<sup>288</sup> The Minister left earlier the first day and did not attend the second day. Event 2.

<sup>289</sup> See epigraph at the beginning of Chapter 1.

reign the people” and said: “It is a sadness that a multinational deprived us [...]; they blackmailed us, they destroyed our history and our cultural patrimony”.<sup>290</sup>

Following these interventions, the environmental authority of the upper Magdalena River, CAM, gave an environmental account of the situation. The CAM director explained that they tried to do their work, but their studies and demands were not considered. During his speech, the director presented the damaging effects on the forest, the poor water quality and the problems caused by displaced animals. He also expressed discontent with the way in which the decision-making process and the distribution of responsibilities had taken place:

[Emgesa] has not complied in its totality; it has not evaluated the epiphytes, there is no risk assessment [...] It is illegal, a process against the authorities [...] Emgesa has operated the Project with a *Machiavellian* attitude.<sup>291</sup>

Also the bishop of the Diocese of Garzón spoke up:

A Project of national pride has devastated the environment, *la casa común*, the biodiversity, the ecosystems [...] They are insulting the human rights [...] The state is not taking into account the community [...] Everything indicates that it is better to pay fines than to comply with the law [...] The conception of progress is not integral to the region - The Huilian population has no access to its own resources!<sup>292</sup>

Professor Miller Dussán followed the bishop (see Figure III-9). He was accompanied by shouts from the audience, of “Water for life, not for death!” and “Asoquimbo!” The standard time slot for official representatives was five minutes, but the ANLA was forced to allow him 40 minutes in order to prevent an uproar in the audience. He used his speech to directly attack the state and the multinational. He called the affected population “victims of the state” (*victimias del estado*), and continued:

The state is internationally responsible for not complying with its obligations and for the human rights violations [...] Politicians are business shareholders (*accionistas empresarias*) [...] Deliver the promised lands to reactivate production! [...] Emgesa turned the river into a *cloaca*! It’s miserable (*una miserableza*) [...] *Fuera la Multinacional!*<sup>293</sup>

---

<sup>290</sup> “Es una tristeza, que una multinacional nos despojó, [...] chantajearon, destruyeron nuestra historia, el patrimonio cultural” (El Agrado mayor, the public hearing, Nov. 2016).

<sup>291</sup> “[Emgesa] no ha cumplido en su totalidad, no ha evaluado los epifitas, no hay gestión del riesgo [...] es ilegal, un proceso en contra de las autoridades [...] Emgesa ha operado el proyecto con una civiltud maquiavélica [sic].” (CAM director, public hearing, Nov. 2016).

<sup>292</sup> “Un proyecto de ‘orgullo nacional’ ha devastado el medio ambiente, la casa común, la biodiversidad, los ecosistemas [...] Están atropellando los derechos humanos [...] El estado no tiene en cuenta la comunidad [...] Todo indica que es mejor pagar multas que cumplir la ley [...] La concepción de progreso no es integral a la región - ¡los huilenses no tienen acceso a sus propios recursos!” (Bishop of Garzón, public hearing, Nov. 2016).

<sup>293</sup> “El estado está internacionalmente responsable de no cumplir con los deberes y de la violación de derechos humanos [...] Políticos son accionistas empresarias [...] ¡Que se entreguen las tierras prometidas para

He even compared the congressional representatives with guerrillas and demanded those who had supported the hydroelectric project to apologise publicly to the Huilan population: “Like the guerrilla, all the congressmen and women who supported the project have to publicly ask forgiveness from the Huilian community”.<sup>294</sup>



Figure III-8 The public hearing in Garzón: Carlos Julio Gonzáles giving his speech on 11 Nov 2016 (retrieved from <https://www.lanacion.com.co/los-desplantes-al-huila-quimbo/>, 20 Aug 2020).



Figure III-9 The public hearing in Garzón: Miller Dussán shows the violence exercised by the state (ESMAD) against the resisting farmers and fishers at Domingo Arias 2012 (taken by the author, 11 Nov 2016).

---

*reactivar la actividad productiva! [...] Emgesa volvió el río en una cloaca! Es una miseria! [...] ;Fuera la Multinacional!*” (Miller Dussán, public hearing, Nov. 2016).

<sup>294</sup> “*Como la guerrilla, todos los congresistas que apoyaron el proyecto deben pedir disculpa públicamente a la comunidad huilense.*” (Miller Dussán, public hearing, Nov. 2016).

After Miller Dussán, 132 people each spoke on the podium for three minutes. Of 132 interventions, 50 were statements of personal damage caused by the dam and individual demands for compensation. The other 83 speakers positioned themselves clearly against the project. Of these, 32 were representatives of certain communities who spoke either in the name of a *vereda* like Veracruz, or in the name of an association, such as that of fisherfolk, farmworkers or truck drivers. Another three contributions came from the dioceses in Garzón; another 11 from public institutions: the Huilan government (7), the CAM (1), the mayor of Pital (1),<sup>295</sup> the national congress (1) and the national office of public prosecutors (1). A total of 15 interventions came from NGOs and four from individual experts. The NGOs were all Colombian, but many with international networks, such as Tierra Digna, Ríos Vivos and Planeta Paz. Some 17 speakers did not state any affiliation but still criticised the project apart from personal demands.

Of the 132 speakers, approximately 80 used technical evaluation or scientific language to highlight flaws of the project, and to show how Emgesa did not comply with the environmental licence. Another 63 people drew from the Colombian law, human rights or other legal or political documents, which were disregarded by Emgesa and/or the national government. Another 75 people talked about economic losses and damage to assets, while approximately 36 people brought up the issue of social impact, often relating to the destroyed social fabric of the communities and the disintegration of families. Damages to the culture were mentioned 37 times. This was usually expressed through the loss of the chapels, other archaeological artefacts and the history of the region, but also through the account of former existing tranquillity and peacefulness in the area. Ecological concerns, expressed through biodiversity loss or the loss of the river, were raised 17 times.

Even though no intervention was in favour of Emgesa (or the ANLA), not all clearly positioned themselves against hydroelectricity per se. Nevertheless, many took up the language related to the anti-dam narrative as used by Asoquimbo over the years, with terms such as “the multinational”, “social fabric” and “ecocide”. Other important indicators of the influence of Asoquimbo can be observed. The dominating presence of techno-scientific, legal and political language, even among community representatives, is at least a partial result of the capacitation of the affected communities over eight years of resistance and Asoquimbo’s political advocacy

---

<sup>295</sup> Municipality in Huila, which is indirectly affected.

during the recent months. A significant number of the 132 speakers were (or had been) related to Asoquimbo – especially the NGOs, but also the community leaders.

Among the 970 people who had registered for an intervention, many decided not to talk as time moved on, and others had to leave before they were called to the microphone. One may assume that many of those who remained until the end were doing so because they had a certain responsibility to speak as group representatives. This would explain the high number of affiliated critics of Emgesa. If anyone had intended to speak positively about Emgesa or El Quimbo, they probably did not dare to do so. In any case, the hearing was not the space to defend a project which was already generating energy. It was rather a *claimed space* for those who wanted to change the attitude of the company and of the national government towards the region. The space was dominated by the discourse of the opposition, and the general order of speakers and their argumentations followed the strategy and preparation of the roundtable.<sup>296</sup> This was contrary to the first public hearings held in 2007–08, where Emgesa had a wider platform to present the project and in which counter-arguments were more dispersed and unstructured.<sup>297</sup>

As noted in the beginning of Chapter 6, participation often turns out to be merely symbolic (Perreault 2015; Rodríguez Garavito 2011), and attendance a sign of accepting the project at stake (Leifsen 2017; F. Li 2009). Accordingly, for some marginalised groups, to “participate” means to disable or enfeeble resistance. Fabiana Li (2009) shows how resisting groups therefore may choose to stay away from public hearings and instead organise protests. Also, Masaki (2010) cites a case in Nepal where participation turned into an obligation rather than a right for the underprivileged. However, the case of the anti-dam struggle in Huila shows that there is room for agency and change within participatory spaces.

---

<sup>296</sup> As the governor was involved in the planning with the Ministry of the Environment.

<sup>297</sup> The public hearing of the mining project Angostura by Greystar (now Eco Oro) in Santander 2011 provides another contrasting example, which represents the reality of many public hearings in Colombia. The Canadian company dominated the space, its design, organisation and discourse. Pamphlets and flyers promoting the project covered the walls and the entrance to the hall. Company representatives and engineers took up most of the speeches (some in English or rudimentary Spanish) and the only way for the attending people to disagree was to turn their backs to the podium. The event took place in the provincial capital Bucaramanga, which receives its drinking water from the mountain wetland affected by the proposed mining, Páramo de Santurbán. The company had provided bus transport for communities in the area of direct influence, which supported the mine in hope of better infrastructure and employment, while communities in opposition to the project were unable to attend (no transportation). This created a tense atmosphere as local communities in favour opposed primarily urban (Bucaramangan) students, professionals and civil society organisations that had environmental concerns with the project. After few hours, the power imbalances developed into open conflict between the different actor groups and the hearing was cancelled, having left no space for critiques (based on my own participation as civil society intern at the event).

Claimed or created spaces are those spaces realised as a result of public demand or the collective action of less-powerful actors (Gaventa 2004:35). “The issue in this respect is not that people are included in spaces of so-called democratic participation, but that they include themselves in order to explore a potential for change” (Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. 2017:12). This reappropriation of participation mechanisms and the reshaping of their organisation can change power relations in those settings and accordingly create openings for empowerment (Vasstrøm 2016). Counterwork here is to engage in politics, to challenge dominant discourses and to change public perception in order to trigger desired political responses. Participation is therefore an important strategy of rightful resistance (Cornwall 2004:81; Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. 2017; Mohan and Hickey 2004:70; O’Brien 2007).

The Huilan government, the Huilan press, and Asoquimbo leaders celebrated the public hearing as a success and the affected population had high hopes for its outcome. Some expected the ANLA to withdraw the licence (as targeted by the resistance) and maybe even to dismantle the dam (a demand proclaimed in parts by Miller Dussán and Carlos Julio Gonzáles).<sup>298</sup> However, official representatives and experts had never really believed in this possibility.<sup>299</sup> One commentator of *El Diario del Huila* (Artunduaga 2017), referring to voices within the Huilan assembly, states that the demand for dismantling the dam is the utopia of some *loquitos* (crazy people) who treat El Quimbo as *caballito de batalla* (a showpiece). “One thing would be to ask for the respect of commitments, another to turn back time”.

Miller Dussán expressed it in this way:

Of course, the ANLA will not suspend the environmental licence, but we hope that it has an impact on the sector. Especially in the south of the country, the resistance against the energy sector is very concentrated. The roundtable is the product of eight years of fight. It is not a product of bureaucracy; it is representative and participative with many actors of the civil society and the local politicians. The 37 municipalities of Huila are against the mining-energy politics (*locomotora minero-energético*). Nobody is talking positively of El Quimbo. That is why they stopped the other hydroelectric projects in the South for now. [...] For us, the most important is what we do now, changing the governmental attitude. We demanded the public hearing via the constitutional court. Because of the ANLA – the ANLA is the only problem.<sup>300</sup>

---

<sup>298</sup> Some local people had actually expressed hope for that outcome (e.g. a fisherman in Rioloro, Interview 30).

<sup>299</sup> E.g. the Head of Infrastructure Development in the Huilan government, Interview 23.

<sup>300</sup> “*Por supuesto la ANLA no va a suspender la licencia, pero esperamos que tiene impacto al sector. Sobre todo en el Sur del país, la resistencia contra el sector energético es muy concentrada. La mesa es producto de ocho años de lucha. No es un producto burocrático, pero representativa y participativa con muchos actores de la sociedad civil y los políticos locales. Los 37 municipios están en contra de la locomotora minero-energético. Nadie está hablando positivo sobre el Quimbo. Por eso se parraron los otros proyectos hidroeléctricos en el Sur*”

In the end, it took the ANLA half a year to respond to the public hearing, and it did not suspend the environmental licence. The issues were “resolved” by voluntary commitments Emgesa agreed to.<sup>301</sup> The governor of Huila expressed his dissatisfaction with the outcome, demanding an appropriate response of the ANLA via the Tribunal of Cudinamarca. In April 2018, the tribunal decided that the responses provided by the ANLA so far and the fines already paid by Emgesa were sufficient according to the law (*Diario del Huila* 2018b).

Another important thematic roundtable took place in April 2017.<sup>302</sup> The research organisation Terrae presented its studies of the seismic activities in the proximities of El Quimbo dam and the fractures underneath the reservoir. The experts’ conclusion was that the EIA did not take the risk appropriately into account and Emgesa neither applied precautionary principles nor provided a contingency plan. Asoquimbo leaders and the governor took the studies as proof of the extreme threat the dam poses, even for the city of Neiva (as located downstream), and again demanded the dismantling of the dam. The regional media covered the issue accordingly (*Diario del Huila* 2017; *N-24.col* 2017; *La Nación* 2017b).

The commentator from *El Diario del Huila* (Artunduaga 2017) was subsequently provoked to criticise the governor for “his ally” Miller Dussán, who “organised Asoquimbo – a sort of powerful syndicate, planting terror and panic”.<sup>303</sup> Asoquimbo had indeed become quite powerful. After years of alternative knowledge production, disobedience, protests and legal contention, it turned to political advocacy and consultancy, being in close relationship with the regional government. This changed motives and interests connected to the resistance.

## Defending region-territory

As described in the previous Chapter 6, the reasons for the local population to join the resistance varied, but most were motivated by a wish to defend life-territory as they knew it. With the filling of the dam, this life-territory was lost. However, with new political support, another aspect of the resistance came to the forefront: the defence of the region-territory.

Affected people as well as Miller Dussán have called the resistance a *defensa del territorio* (defence of territory) early on, and many social movements around Latin America proclaim the

---

*por ahora. [...] Por nosotros lo importante es, lo que hacemos ahora, cambiar la actitud del gobierno. Pedimos audiencia con corte constitucional. Por la ANLA. La ANLA es el único problema.*” (Interview 7).

<sup>301</sup> Apparently, the ANLA forwarded the individual complains of the public hearing to Emgesa for them to negotiate with the persons (Interview 25). The ANLA responded to the complainants that it has not the authority to handle matters of compensation (Interview 56).

<sup>302</sup> Event 8

<sup>303</sup> “*Su aliado [del gobernador] Miller Dussán, organizó Asoquimbo, una especie de poderoso sindicato, sembrando terror y pánico.*”

same (see e.g. Salazar 2011; Sañudo et al. 2016). Indigenous movements in Latin America have shaped the perception of *territorio* (see Chapter 2) and its defence. For them, it is primarily the fight for self-determination on *territorios originarios* (the ancestral lands; Svampa 2012) and a contestation of state sovereignty (Sieder 2011). This implies controlling use of those lands' resources and envisions "development" in own terms (Escobar 2010:10). Salinas (2017:210) highlights a further dimension of these struggles, namely an interaction between human and non-human beings and the related *cosmovisión*. Escobar (2016:13) makes "the proposition that many contemporary struggles for the defense of territories and difference are best understood as *ontological struggles* and as struggles over a world where many words [sic: read worlds] fit" (emphasis added).<sup>304</sup>

The defence of *territorio* can be seen as protecting the livelihoods and local knowledges embedded in the *territorio*, as well as the spiritual relationship to the *territorio* against state-led development by maintaining independence. However, it also involves being recognised, culturally and politically, in a state system. The fight of Afro-Colombian communities at the Colombian Pacific coast is characterised by similar dimensions. Their defence of *territorio* is about reaffirming their identity on their lands and receiving political autonomy with aspirations for social and economic autonomy (Escobar and Paulson 2005:265–66).

Several authors have described the appearance of social–environmental movements in Latin America that include a demand for local autonomy and self-determination. Alonso-Fradejas (2015:500), for instance, looks at local reactions in Guatemala and emphasises that the "defense of territory entails defensive and oppositional practices as well as propositional ones, regarding strengthening 'peoples' sovereignty' over their life territories". Svampa (2012:7) identifies an "ecoterritorial turn" in Latin America: the emergence of a common language that brings together indigenous, communitarian, defence of territory and environmental discourses about, for instance, common goods, food sovereignty, environmental justice and *Buen Vivir* (Svampa 2013:41). Combining the logic of political lobbying with the logic of social movements would unite people of different classes (*carácter policlasista*). Intellectuals and experts would not only accompany the defence of territory but form part of it. Therefore these actors should not be considered "external allies" but actors with their own weight within this new organisational framework (Svampa 2012:5), which is similar to my argument for the defence of life-territory at El Quimbo (Chapter 6).

---

<sup>304</sup> Taken from the Zapatistas in Mexico: "Un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos."

Among these approaches to the defence of *territorio*, I identify two unifying characteristic dimensions. First, there is the dimension of protecting the life projects of peoples in their *territorio* (in my case life-territory). Second, there is the demand for autonomy and self-determination over *territorio* (in my case region-territory), which is recognised within the state system. For many movements in the defence of *territorio* both aspects are strongly interlinked. For the defence of life and territory at El Quimbo, I argue, the first dimension played a stronger role before the reservoir filling; the second became forefront after the filling.

As life-territory is foundational to the life project, it was also a source of independence, pride and identity (see Chapter 2 and 6). The alternative development strategy of a peasant reserve, for instance, found much support among fisherfolk and *campesinos*, because the life-territory would have been saved, and many could build on their former life projects. Another crucial aspect of this strategy was that the peasant reserve would have increased local independence and autonomy. This strategy already implied a critique of the central state, which the affected people increasingly made responsible for having failed to protect their rights.

Alfredo, resettled to Montea (Nueva Veracruz) said, “Emgesa wins or it wins [...] All of this under the responsibility of the same state”. He further argued:

it has come to the point, where a foreign multinational comes to command the state – supposedly, in quotation marks the ‘constitutional state’ [*estado de derecho*] [...] we turned backwards – back to the conquest, the colony in some form. [...] And simply because of the repression of the same state, we had to accede that our best lands, were delivered to the company, because the state said, you have no right ... we as Colombians ... imagine.<sup>305</sup>

Alfredo highlights the elite interests: “Here in Colombia, the toughest cancer is our political leaders. [...] Everything is given for the benefit of foreign patrimony; Colombia is a state of foreigners, not of Colombians. [...] Justice does not exist in this country for people, who do not have the economic conditions”.<sup>306</sup>

Pablo, former *mayordomo* and landowner at Veracruz said, “Our state is worse than the guerrilla FARC; [...] the public force was created to defend the peasantry but when it comes to mega projects it is against the *campesinos*”.<sup>307</sup> Fernando from Veracruz asked at the public hearing: “Is it possible for the government to allow a multinational to displace the *campesinos*,

---

<sup>305</sup> Interview 53

<sup>306</sup> Interview 53

<sup>307</sup> Interview 34

leave them on the streets?”<sup>308</sup> On another occasion, he declared: “The same government stabbed us ... It is against us”.<sup>309</sup>

Former fisherman Orlando also raised his voice against the national politics: “The government, at all moments, was in favour of the company, not of us”. He added, “In Colombia there are laws, there is a constitution! The company arrived in Huila, ignoring all rights and their authorities – impunity!”<sup>310</sup> Others agreed: “The government is permissive; the only thing it has done is sacrifice the communities”;<sup>311</sup> “The elite has invested in El Quimbo and so the government is with them”;<sup>312</sup> “The project comes because it comes, it was a demand from the Huilan leaders, a national necessity”;<sup>313</sup> “Many officials were in the hand of Emgesa”,<sup>314</sup> and “the multinationals arrive with the same state already backing them [...] for a development that fills their pockets”.<sup>315</sup>

The “political leaders”, the “government” and the “state” seem to be referred to synonymously and are in the discourse of the affected population as the ones to blame for the impacts experienced. Local autonomy over land and water use is considered the solution to resource struggles. Miller Dussán has contributed to framing this solution.<sup>316</sup> He argues that on the one hand, resistance is a collective identity in radical opposition to “exploitation, exclusion, discrimination, dispossession and displacement” intrinsic to the extractivist development agenda. On the other hand, it is the construction of “territorial power” (power emerging from the people living in their territory) and “self-government” (Dussán Calderón 2017:146; see also his footnote 375, page 145). Accordingly, Miller Dussán, as well as Ríos Vivos, perceive the movement as necessary for peace advances. The authors demand the inclusion of the categories “victims of development”, “victims of mega-projects”, nature as victim of the armed conflict, and multinationals as actors of the armed conflict to the national post-conflict agenda (Dussán Calderón 2017:209; Ríos Vivos 2016, 2018). The connection is also reflected in some local

---

<sup>308</sup> His intervention at the public hearing, Nov. 2016

<sup>309</sup> Interview 36

<sup>310</sup> Intervention by Orlando Ramirez at the public hearing, Nov. 2016

<sup>311</sup> Resident of Rioloro, Interview 28

<sup>312</sup> President of the Rioloro community action council, Interview 25

<sup>313</sup> Former inhabitant of La Escalereta, Interview 56

<sup>314</sup> Former inhabitant of San José de Belén, Interview 39

<sup>315</sup> Former fisherman in Rioloro, Interview 51

<sup>316</sup> Miller Dussán has called himself an “ecosocialist” and created his own political party called the same. Before the national elections of 2018, it was changed to “Defenders of Territory” and candidates were listed under “Union Patriótica” (party of former FARC members). The party’s mission: “We defend the construction of a new autonomous and sovereign territorial power for the defence of Water and Life”. There is furthermore a university group of the South-Colombian University called the Defence of Territory, which is an “initiative for the social projection of the university for the support of communities affected by the mining-energy politics”.

accounts. Alfredo declared, “If the state is not starting to think seriously about the agricultural sector, it is not the countryside that will flourish, but the war”.<sup>317</sup>

Asoquimbo and Ríos Vivos (also OXFAM and Planeta Paz 2017) argue that the peace advances of the national government only follow one objective, the investor’s confidence. The peace agreement is peace for the private corporations to invest without risk. It is *paz corporativa* (corporate peace) instead of *paz territorial* (peace for the territories). The conflict would now be between actors of the resistance and of the “corporate state” (Dussán Calderón 2017:16, 209).

With the filling of the dam, local political institutions put themselves on the side of the resistance, taking up this criticism towards the central state institutions (as seen with some discourses at the public hearing). This positioning intensified the view that the local authorities were also victims of the central state. The *jornalero* Javier from Rioloro said, “Always, the highest politics [*política más alta*; on national level] are against one”. It would pressure the politics below (*por debajo*; on local/regional level).<sup>318</sup> This is in line with the perspective expressed by the expert for forestry of the CAM: “It is the regional against the national. The CAM pronounced its concerns from the beginning, but it was a national decision and they did not listen to us. Now they are asking, why we have not done our work”.<sup>319</sup>

The senator Ernesto Macías Tovar<sup>320</sup> generalised this impression at the public hearing, commenting that “the national government has never respected the regional authorities”. The statements demonstrate the central motive for many regional public institutions in criticising the dam project. They felt disregarded and ignored in their decision-making capacity by Emgesa and the state which they were part of. The circumstances of the reservoir filling and the start of the dam operations made this even more obvious. The El Quimbo dam project turned thereafter from being a case of environmental and socio-economic devastation into a case of central state despotism. The fight to protect the lives at El Quimbo became a fight for constituting territorial autonomy and to protect dignity and pride. Because the life-territory was flooded, the defence of life-territory at El Quimbo moved towards the second dimension of defending territory to what I call the *defence of region-territory*, relying on the difference of

---

<sup>317</sup> Interview 53

<sup>318</sup> Interview 32

<sup>319</sup> Interview 9

<sup>320</sup> Born in Garzón, part of conservative centre party “Centro Democrático”, El Quimbo critic.

the terms drawn in Chapter 2. It was about strengthening the power of territorial administrations against central state despotism and autonomy over own lands and resources.

The defence of region-territory in Huila resembles, I argue, ideas of resource sovereignty and of environmental democracy. Studying mining conflicts in Tolima, McNeish (2017a) develops the concept “resource sovereignty” to emphasise “the role of natural resources in the formation of political platforms” and in the production of (alternative) development frameworks. Struggles for resource sovereignty would be “claims for territory and economic development with cultural and epistemological expressions of identity and relationships to landscape and resources” (McNeish 2017a:8). These expressions often include a critique of the centrally enforced extractivist model, but do not necessarily do so. Regional claims for autonomy over lands and resources do not contest the sovereignty of the state in the international community (Sieder 2011). Instead, sovereignty here “refers to the ability of people in a given community to control their own fate whether through localized resources or the capacity to access state resources that buffer persons from risk” (Wolford, Borras, Hall, Scoones, and White 2013:201). It “implies a struggle to secure greater autonomy from the state at the same time as seeking greater recognition by the state” (Sieder 2011:168).<sup>321</sup> Related efforts for autonomy seek to construct “democracy from the roots” (Esteva 2019:100) and to re-articulate “stateness” (McNeish 2017a:8–9; see also McNeish and Logan 2012). In other words, what is at stake for these movements is not their mere inclusion into the system (expansion of the state) but “the right to participate in the very definition of the political system, the right to define that in which they wish to be included” (Alvarez et al. 1998:21).

Roa García (2017) describes the increasing appearance of struggles for environmental democratisation in the context of Colombian water conflicts. She (2017:59) writes:

Since the first decade of this century, an alliance of peasant movements, environmental activists, legal and human right NGOs, and university students have activated the mechanisms not only to demand environmental/water justice through redistribution, but also to question the extractive model and demand decision-making power regarding the kind of development territories should pursue.

These alliances claim participatory spaces as reaction to investment projects that would generate immediate social and environmental impacts on the region. This local call for more decision-making capacity over land and resource use is in line with environmental democracy

---

<sup>321</sup> Efforts of *autonomy* from the state seek certain *sovereignty* over their lands and lives. The concepts are not interchangeable but are strongly linked within the defence of region-territory.

(Rodríguez Garavito 2013; see Chapter 10) and is increasingly taken up by regional administrative authorities (*municipios and departamentos*) to strengthen their own position within the state apparatus.

The alliance against dams in Huila joined these efforts around the country to contribute to national advances in redefining the responsibilities of territorial state divisions and supporting prior consultation processes. As part of this effort, governor Gonzáles was elected president of the National Federation of the *Departamentos* in January 2018, representing, not only Huila, but also 32 other governors around the country (*El Tiempo* 2018a). He advocated for more decentralised structures in the state apparatus. For example, at the forum of the Office of the Comptroller General (*Contraloría General de la República*), Carlos Julio Gonzáles expressed his goal to integrally reform the system of *regalias* (bonuses – the amount paid by industries to the regions in which they operate; normally this amounts to 1% of the profit) to strengthen territorial autonomy (*Diario del Huila* 2018a; see Chapter 10).

Asoquimbo and the Huilan political leaders consider it an indication of their success that no other dam proposal in Huila has gone through since El Quimbo, despite Huila's strategy paper emphasising the hydroelectric potential (see Chapter 9) and Hydrochina's suggestion for five more dams in the upper stream of the Magdalena River (2013).

However, the people affected by El Quimbo did not experience any significant change to their situation. After the ANLA had responded to the public hearing, Emgesa re-evaluated all cases of the people who had demanded compensation at the hearing. For example, the fisherfolk of El Hobo were individually invited to interviews, which were again experienced more as interrogations than interviews.<sup>322</sup> Some received letters thereafter, in which Emgesa stated that a study had shown that the fishery in the area had increased by about 43 per cent since 2012 and that fisherfolk are therefore beneficiaries of El Quimbo.<sup>323</sup> Up to May 2017, only one fisherman downstream of El Quimbo had received compensation.

The administrations of the municipalities also continued to impede changes in the land use plans necessary to legalise the resettlement areas (and to hand over the titles to the families). Therefore, the resettled families have not been able to sell their properties in order to find other opportunities somewhere else or to take up credits.<sup>324</sup> By 2018 Emgesa appeared to move

---

<sup>322</sup> Interview 12

<sup>323</sup> Interview 12; picture of letter 05 March 2017

<sup>324</sup> Alfredo from Nueva Veracruz, Interview 53

towards possibilities for multi-usage of the dam reservoir, wanting to build ports for ferries at its banks and work with the population of Rioloro for the establishment of fish cultivation projects.<sup>325</sup> In December 2018, the company furthermore consulted about secondary road construction, which is meant to connect El Agrado and Paicol along the west side of the reservoir and which was part of the agreement with regional officials in March 2009 (Medina Torres 2018; Salcedo Montero 2010:82–85). It should be noted, however, that by beginning of 2020, not much of the above had materialised. Also the promised irrigated lands for the reactivation of agricultural production in the municipalities were still not found (Areiza 2020).

Consequently, after nearly ten years in limbo, many affected people do not view the resistance as having been successful. In their perspective, the public hearing was just another occasion where they repeated the same arguments.<sup>326</sup> Early in 2017, when Cerbatana (a young organisation of artists and students from Bogotá but with links to Rioloro and La Jagua), organised the art festival “La Alegría Resiste” (“happiness resists”) in Rioloro, the response of the locals was mixed. During one dance performance at the village pavilion, Tea from Rioloro said, “Not many have come to the event, because they know that it is against hydroelectricity and for the community, and they do not see any sense in it any longer”.<sup>327</sup> Some of the people who had stayed in the valley of the dam and had fought against the flooding even felt betrayed by Asoquimbo. One former member of the association described the slow decrease in local support of the resistance: “Don Edgar resisted his eviction from La Honda until the end. Asoquimbo sent him a lawyer but at the end, he felt left alone. That is how Asoquimbo lost its last associate from La Honda”.<sup>328</sup> A member of Rioloro’s community action council affirmed: “Before, we all took part in Asoquimbo, but not anymore. Everybody started to fight for his own benefit”.<sup>329</sup>

The fisherfolk at El Hobo are still part of Asoquimbo, using its juridical and organisational guidance. However, some of them started to doubt Asoquimbo’s motives: “We are like shields for Asoquimbo. Miller Dussán promised land for 130 fishermen and fisherwomen. But we see other things. Asoquimbo does not have this objective anymore”.<sup>330</sup> The image of the affected population as shields (*escudos*) requires special consideration. Especially since the filling of

---

<sup>325</sup> According to a later communication (Nov. 2018) with Rioloro inhabitant Diego (see Interview 44).

<sup>326</sup> Interviews 30, 32, 34, 53

<sup>327</sup> Event 3

<sup>328</sup> Interview 5

<sup>329</sup> Interview 26

<sup>330</sup> Interview 12

the dam, Asoquimbo's nucleus had become the circle of professionals at the South-Colombian University in Neiva, instead of the affected population. Alfredo of Nueva Veracruz expressed the situation as follows:

Asoquimbo initially had a leading role, impressive also, but as in all types of organisations there are good and bad leaders. Some of the good ones allowed themselves to be infected and lost their focus on things and that gave them a loss of credibility. [...] The fact is that they had no significant achievements that could really motivate the community.<sup>331</sup>

A former legal assistant of Asoquimbo also disclosed that the association had now (as of 2017) more ambitions to change politics on the national scale, while the local people still would not have anything to eat.<sup>332</sup>

The fact that the demand to dismantle the dam was only made to achieve the actual goal of "having an impact on the sector", together with the strategy of the local political and civil society institutions to present a devastating picture of the dam's impact, suggests that the objective behind these tactics had a political agenda. The people suffering from the dam construction became numbers and cases which serve as arguments (or shields) for the dam opposition to reach more regional authority over the resource use.<sup>333</sup> After all, Carlos Julio González' choice to support the anti-dam movement during his election campaign was opportunistic. And, as was made clear in a Madagascan case of local resistance against a big land acquisition, opposing a land deal is "a means to regain authority by those who have felt unduly side-lined during the negotiation process" (Gingembre 2015:578). At the same time, this competition over authority among state institutions can lead to "divisions and opportunistic realignments" (Gingembre 2015:564) which become openings for the resistance to reach its own goals.

Asoquimbo and Curíbano<sup>334</sup> leaders established ties to the Huilan government. Leyla Rincón herself went into politics (as elected council member of Neiva) to change the system from within.<sup>335</sup> Miller Dussán used his collegial relationship to the governor to indirectly influence politics but chose to run for Huilan governor himself during the election in 2019.<sup>336</sup> The

---

<sup>331</sup> Interview 53

<sup>332</sup> Interview 16

<sup>333</sup> Armando Saavedra said: "The autonomy of the territories needs to be respected [...] like this it is no development." (Interview 23).

<sup>334</sup> Environmental organisation for wetland protection in Neiva

<sup>335</sup> Interview 24

<sup>336</sup> He depended on the votes from other alternative parties to be placed as their candidate, which he did not receive in the end.

Catholic church, specifically the Pastoral Social of the Diocese of Garzón, joined this political alliance to criticise the company Emgesa, but also the national government. As a result, the collaboration among political and civil society actors in Neiva became much stronger.

At first glance, the further scaling up of the dam opposition through the alliance between Asoquimbo and regional authorities appears to be a true “win–win” scenario. However, their links to and among the local communities eroded. Fights for compensation became individual projects. The resettled population searched for the best solutions to their specific problems. People in surrounding villages tried to establish new livelihood strategies in other sectors and some families continued private negotiations for compensation. Asoquimbo’s connection to the affected area was now increasingly fragmented, mainly through the mayors of the municipalities and the local associations which still sought recognition as affected.

On the one hand, professionals of Asoquimbo still drove to the affected areas to participate in meetings between Emgesa or officials and the communities (though more irregularly from mid-2017). They would for instance drive to El Hobo occasionally to respond to questions of the fisher associations there.<sup>337</sup> The fisherfolk downstream still relied on Asoquimbo to understand the legal issues they were struggling with. However, the one lawyer partly employed by Asoquimbo in 2017 scarcely had the capacity to respond to and assist in all private legal matters (Asoquimbo was considering getting more assistance in April 2017). On the other hand, Asoquimbo still relied on its links to the affected population, as it officially represents them. Accordingly, a few of the social leaders would always accompany the Asoquimbo professionals to official meetings with politicians.<sup>338</sup> For instance, two fishermen joined a meeting with the National Land Agency in Bogotá in May 2017, attended by Miller Dussán, Jenniffer Chavarro, Asoquimbo’s lawyer, and one representative each from International Rivers and Planeta Paz.<sup>339</sup> I attended as a silent observer, while everyone else had a time slot to raise their points with the Director for the Access to Land and his assistants. However, it was Miller Dussán who did most of the talking. Already during the prior preparation meeting, he had often interrupted other interlocutors, especially the fishermen. This suggests a rather vertical (asymmetric) relationship and gives an impression of what was meant by the expression: “We are like shields for Asoquimbo”.

---

<sup>337</sup> See Event 5

<sup>338</sup> The case of the Mission San José de Belén is similar. Sofía, resettled from San José de Belén, said that the mission would take her and other affected people sometimes to other communities threatened by extractivism to share their experiences. Interview 39.

<sup>339</sup> Event 13

This reconfiguration of the resistance leads to the question of whether the mobilisation can be still considered place-based. As argued in Chapter 6, in the case of the anti-dam struggle in Huila, urban professionals have been intrinsic to the resistance and its achievements. But after the filling of the dam, the alliance *rescaled*. Its extension into regional politics implied an abstraction of direct, immediate goals to more political long-term objectives. In this way, the local basis of the affected population slowly eroded, and their struggle was appropriated for political purposes. Because it was now mainly concerning the regional authority over resources and directed critique towards the Colombian state, I consider the struggle a *defence of region-territory*. It began as a trans-local defence of life-territory but distanced itself from its local particularity. While multiscalar strategies are essential for resistance movements, many authors of environmental struggles have argued that this risks losing sight of the strength of the localised alternative visions and strategies (Cresswell 2002; Escobar 2001; Harvey 2000:51; Leitner and Sheppard 2009:233).

## Epilogue: Turning against the state

*Resistance to large dams  
is often resistance against the state.  
Martinez Alier 2002:126*

At the concert “Canto al Agua” in Neiva, March 2017 which celebrated the international day of water and against dams, the governor Gonzáles took Miller Dussán aside for a short private chat.<sup>340</sup> Dussán disclosed later that Gonzáles shared with him that the central government had called him. The message apparently was that if Gonzáles continued to oppose the central state – the state which he himself should represent, not oppose – then Huila would be denied significant funds from the peace process.<sup>341</sup> Since then, the roundtables continued but were more often dedicated to other topics of concern within the theme “environment, water and territory” in Huila. Asoquimbo and the Mission of San José remained involved with these other topics and advocated against the “state-enforced neoliberal extractivist model” (especially in the mining energy sector), often taking the El Quimbo case as a daunting and deterring example.

With responding to sub-question (c), I have shown the changes that the resistance underwent over time. While the juridical prosecution of Emgesa as well as demonstrations and cultural

---

<sup>340</sup> Event 6

<sup>341</sup> Asoquimbo meeting in April 2017, Event 7

events against dams were still part of Asoquimbo's strategies to improve the situation of the affected population, they became a tool for something more. They enhanced political influence, challenged the development discourse by presenting the miserable situation "development" had caused, and used this to argue for more autonomy of the regions in the state system.

In this, the resistance was quite successful. The El Quimbo dam conflict has further sparked a nationwide critical debate about mega-dams and regional autonomy. Dams had caused local conflicts before, but they had not reached nation-wide critical attention. Only shortly after the polemic around El Quimbo had calmed down, Hidroituango – the largest dam project of the country – turned out to be a technical disaster. In 2018, the dam was still far from being finalised while the environmental impacts together with cases of violence against social leaders and technical failures had accelerated (see Chapter 1). By then, investments in hydroelectricity had become distinctly unpopular. As mentioned earlier, Emgesa retracted its proposal to realise the Oporapa dam in 2017; the ANLA had been "considering" the environmental licence for the project since August 2012. No other company had expressed interest in any of the 15 other dam projects, proposed in the report of Hydrochina (2013) for the upstream valley of the Magdalena River by 2019. Even mainstream media and national officials discuss environmental concerns around large dams (see e.g. *El Espectador* 2016b; Pardo Ibarra 2018; Vásquez Marazzani 2018). Moreover, the government seems to have moved away from defending hydroelectricity for its future importance. The energy is still considered renewable and clean, but because of the El Niño droughts hitting Colombia regularly, it is not considered a stable source (see e.g. Álvarez 2018; Amat 2018; Monterrosa 2018).

More and more local populations, municipalities, provinces, regional state institutions and even the constitutional court joined the voices in Huila to advocate more regional autonomy against the interests of the central state. As a result, Miller Dussán claimed in 2017: "We have succeeded in dividing the State".<sup>342</sup>

The state was the main enemy of the resistance. As the epigraph of Martínez Alier at the beginning of this section illustrates, resistance against dams is often also against the state. A large-scale investment in the energy infrastructure of the country is essential for nation-building (see Chapter 9) and often becomes a project for the central state to extend its reach. In the case of mega-dams, this is rarely in line with local aspirations. While being opposed to the state, Asoquimbo made use of essential mechanisms provided by the same state to oppose it.

---

<sup>342</sup> Interview 20

Asoquimbo relied from the start on the facilities of the public university and on legal as well as democratic support. It even found valuable allies in regional state institutions and courts.

The defence of life-territory created openings for alternative action and visions for the future by producing alternative knowledge on the impacts and by spreading alternative discourses on development. It reached public attention by combining collective actions in the area with events and networking in the city of Neiva. Linking up discourses in line with national and international movements further allowed Asoquimbo to “jump scales” and to receive wider support, which made it attractive for regional political interests. The new alliance for the defence of region-territory was even more able to use participatory and legal tools of accountability provided by the state to activate its own control mechanisms. Consequently, the state cannot be simply regarded as the enemy. It was at once enemy and ally. This sheds light on the disaggregated character of the state (see Part IV).

Accordingly, to demand participation and to participate in decision-making was in this case not opposed to, but in fact an integral part of the resistance. For some, resistance is opposing power and in this sense, any action or behaviour that complies with the power structures needs to be avoided and opposed. This kind of civil disobedience or refusal (Simpson 2014) was visible in the early phases of the anti-dam mobilisation, when affected people refused to talk with Emgesa’s people and continued to work the lands. Refusal can also be expressed by staying away from participatory spaces and instead protesting against laws, knowledges and spaces created to support the already powerful, as in the case described by Fabiana Li (2009), Cajamarca Peru. In the case of El Quimbo however, the participatory space, the second public hearing, was not willingly provided, but needed to be fought for. A second public hearing to follow up on the environmental licence is a control mechanism granted by the law but rarely applied in practice. It became a claimed space (Gaventa 2004) that the movement appropriated and re-politicised. The same was done with other tools of democracy and law.

In this way, I continue to see the movement against dams as representing rightful resistance (O’Brien 2007) and a war of position (Gramsci 2018). It has a counter-hegemonic ambition, which wants to make the political system more democratic (Dagnino 1998:40). Coutinho (1980:31; cited in Dagnino 1998:40) points out, in the context of social movements in Latin America, that if “hegemony” (here the political system) is not democratic then the people have to find one which is. The aim is to change the state from within (Dagnino 1998).

Accordingly, the defence of region-territory does not want to get rid of any power relation but aims to increase territorial autonomy and to decentralise and *rescale* the Colombian state system. The resistance strategies – contentious politics of scale, alternative scientific studies, protests, disobedience, and legal actions – therefore counterworked and counter-conducted corporate actions and politics. The resistance acted against the central government’s “conduct of conduct” by reformulating the relation between central government and the regions, and by changing the perception of development of the Colombian public. This can be considered a “fine-tuning of power” (Legg 2018:28).

Foucault sees resistance as something that is always accompanying power, but which is normalised and internalised by the powerful at the same time.<sup>343</sup> This does not disqualify resistance from being politically transformative (Legg 2018:29). In *Security, Territory and Population*, Foucault (2007) argues that conduct and counter-conduct constitute each other. He sees early revolts against the pastoral conduct incorporated into the later manifestation of Christian pastoralism. In the same way, O’Brien (2007) sees counter-conduct as essential in the production of the modern nation state, a view which is shared by many Colombian activists. As the social leader whose statement appears at the beginning of Part III says: “*Resistir no es aguantar, es construir*” (to resist is not to withstand but to construct). It is to actively take part in the Colombian state formation process.

In sum, El Quimbo dam was finalised but Emgesa and hydroelectricity have drastically forfeited popularity. Returning to the sub-question (d) of what has the resistance achieved, it is clear by now that the answer is multifaceted. There were many objectives within the same movement. For those who wanted to stop the dam from being realised or dismantle it, the resistance has failed to produce anything.<sup>344</sup> For those who fought for individual compensation, the resistance might have achieved being included in the census and being compensated. And for those who wanted to impede similar projects in future, to change the public perception of the national development model and to establish territorial autonomy, the movement was an important step in that direction.

The case shows that the resistance’s ability to “construct” cannot only be measured according to whether demands “are processed within the politics of (institutional) representation”, but must also include “how the discourses and practices of social movements might destabilize and

---

<sup>343</sup> “Power never completely determines a subject’s possibilities to act, resistance is necessarily present in such relations [...]. Resistance is thus not external to power” (Rosol 2014:75).

<sup>344</sup> For example, for the fishermen at El Quimbo, Interview 30

thereby – at least partially – transform the dominant discourses and exclusionary practices” of existing democracy (Alvarez et al. 1998:11). While Emgesa depoliticised the issues at stake (closures), the movement repoliticised them (openings), combining direct actions (protests and recreational spaces) with institutional actions (juridical contention, public hearings and thematic roundtables; Svampa 2012:5). However, the broadening of objectives also led to the reconfiguration and rescaling of the movement. While Asoquimbo leaders together with new political allies increasingly committed to the fight against the “state-enforced neoliberal extractivist model” by increasing regional authority over resources (defence of region-territory), it detached itself from the more immediate concerns and the unresolved situation of the affected population in central Huila.

In this Part III of the thesis, I bring into the picture the political reactions against the El Quimbo dam project. I describe how trans-local resistance grew rapidly over the first years and slowly but continuously extended, upscaled and abstracted its interest with the final tipping point being the closing of the dam gates. While the defence of territory is commonly described in literature as local political reaction and in the interest of the communities targeted by national development schemes, I illustrate that these struggles run the risk of being appropriated by political agendas. This has its own strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, to bring about political change beyond the individual case of land expropriation requires an upscaling of the local issues into a wider political critique. This allows space for other interests and to join forces on multiple levels. On the other hand, the more abstracted political strategies might have fewer direct material impacts for the local population, which consequently feels less represented by the movement.

Part III has not only raised questions concerning the power and scale of the resistance. The movement’s strategy to make use of state mechanisms and to find support in state institutions to oppose state led undertakings leads unavoidably to query the “national scale”. In the following, Part IV, I go deeper into the analysis of the Colombian State, of the role it has played in the El Quimbo dam struggle. At the same time, I situate the struggle in the wider political economy of the country.



## IV. The State and the Territory

*We have succeeded in dividing the State!*

Miller Armin Dussán Calderon,  
professor and resistance leader

## Prologue: Dividing the state

On being asked to describe Asoquimbo's work as a social movement, Miller Dussán answered:

[It has been] the only organisation that in absolute solitude defended the territory and life, and with that, faced all the monsters of power [judiciary, legislative, executive, all the political parties, the press and the church]. But it seems to us that this attitude in these circumstances, including the latest difficulties, was the most appropriate and thanks to that attitude we have great results today.<sup>345</sup>

Miller Dussán specifies that one of these “great results” has been the successful division of the state: “The resistance has advanced so much that it has generated deep contradictions within the state, within the parties, within the power structure”. Part III outlined these advances and brought to the surface connected weaknesses. At the end, Emgesa succeeded in damming the river and it became apparent that “the state” played an important role in allowing the corporate actions. But by activating a diverse range of political and legal control mechanisms, Asoquimbo pressured certain state organs to position themselves regionally and nationally in such a way that it produced inconsistencies and tensions with those state entities that facilitated corporate control.<sup>346</sup> This leads me to query a third dimension of my overall research question – *how did Emgesa successfully dam the river in spite of the original negative evaluation and constant resistance*, namely the state.

While the conflict around the El Quimbo dam project certainly brought an internal ambivalence of the Colombian state to the surface and intensified tensions, I argue that this is the result of the disaggregated character of the Colombian state. When surveying published studies of the Colombian state and its historic formation in the territory (Chapter 8),<sup>347</sup> this image of disaggregation comes to the fore: The Colombian state is often described as having a strong and stable democratic system, but at the same time too weak to control its peripheries (Call 2008:1496; Lorente 2010; Oxford Business Group 2017); and while social movements around the country put their trust in the law and think the strengthening of regional state divisions to be an answer to the resource conflicts in the country (as has been highlighted in relation to the

---

<sup>345</sup> “Asoquimbo en este campo quedo como la única organización en la soledad absoluta defendiendo el territorio y la vida, y enfrentado a todos los monstruos del poder. Pero nos parece que esa actitud en una circunstancia además de ultima dificultades, era la más acertada y gracias a esa actitud hoy tenemos grandes resultados.” (Interview 20).

<sup>346</sup> Interview 20

<sup>347</sup> I choose the English term “territory” for this Part to express a combination of meanings: the state’s formation in the national territory, in specific its (rural) regions, but also its relation to social processes in the defence of territory, like the El Quimbo dam struggle.

El Quimbo dam case), many Colombian scholars see in the constitution and connected processes of decentralisation the cause of regional authoritarianism and violence (Ávila Martínez 2012; Ramírez 2015).

As well as analysing the specificities of the El Quimbo struggle, it is therefore necessary to outline the placement of the struggle in the wider context of Colombia's political economy. As a contextual framework to this Part IV, Chapter 8 provides a more detailed discussion of the disaggregated state. I argue that this disaggregated character appeared for the people involved in the resistance against the dam as a division during the El Quimbo struggle – a division between a state as enemy that facilitates capital accumulation (capitalist state) and a state as ally that respects the constitution and the rights of its people (constitutional state).<sup>348</sup>

In the next two chapters (9 and 10), I explore in depth these two different conceptualisations of the state. I analyse how each has made itself visible (materialised) in Huila, and how this is related to wider political processes in the country and globally. I present empirical evidence which relates to existing theory on the capitalist and constitutional state. With this, I target the sub-questions: (e) *what role did the Colombian state play in the El Quimbo dam struggle* and (f) *how does the case fit into the wider political economy of the country?* While Part II of my thesis analysed the corporate actions that targeted the affected municipalities (engineering of reality), in Part IV, I analyse the different actions of state institutions towards the multinational company and towards the resistance. Throughout this process, I examine the openings and closures produced through the enactment of democratic control mechanisms and of discourses. I begin by providing the context of Colombia's state formation and its disaggregated character.

## 8. The disaggregated state

The global research and advisory company in economic intelligence, the Oxford Business Group (2017), writes:

The *paradox* of Colombian politics is that despite 52 years of civil conflict [1964–2016] and the authorities' inability to extend the rule of law across the totality of the territory, the country has a history of strong democratic institutions and constitutional stability, with the military playing a relatively peripheral role in civic life (emphasis added).

---

<sup>348</sup> Díaz Londoño (2009) makes a similar observation describing a tension between the *estado social y democrático de derecho* (social and democratic rule of law) and neoliberalism within the Colombian State.

The quotation above can be contested on multiple fronts; however, it accurately reflects an often repeated narrative on the Colombian state, namely that Colombia would have a strong and stable democratic system but “with limited areas out of control” (Call 2008:1496).<sup>349</sup> Especially official institutions representing Colombia like to present their country as the “most stable and long-lasting democracy in Latin America”.<sup>350</sup>

This picture of a stable democracy is largely dependent on the fact that Colombia has formal democratic institutions in place (see Box 4 and Appendix 3) and regular elections since the era of “*La Violencia*” (“The Violence”: referring to civil war and the military coup that ended in 1957). Additionally, Colombia started a process of economic liberalisation in the late 1980s that was launched in positive response to the Washington Consensus in the 1990s (Rueda Saiz 2010:42).<sup>351</sup> Colombia experienced steady growth of its GDP throughout the 1970s and 1980s and increased its growth rates even further in the 1990s. This was “exceptional for Latin-American standards” (Rueda Saiz 2010:42).<sup>352</sup> The reaction to the financial crisis in 1998 was further liberalisation (Rueda Saiz 2010) and the protection of international investments.

At the same time, Colombia suffers from an ongoing internal armed conflict between rival forces. These include the state military, illegal armed groups of the far political left (communist guerrilla groups such as FARC, ELP) and the far political right (paramilitary organisations such as *Aguilas Negras*). The internal conflict is kept alive by drug trafficking and illicit mining.<sup>353</sup>

---

<sup>349</sup> This narrative is often seen in international economic or foreign policy journals and newspapers. An IR analysis of Colombian democracy (Lorente 2010), for instance, states that “despite the internal conflict and unlike most of the countries in Latin America, Colombia has a strong democratic tradition. Since it won independence from Spain in 1819, it has only experienced two military interventions interrupting long periods of stable democracy”.

<sup>350</sup> For example, the Colombian Embassy in Washington D.C. states on their homepage: “Colombia is Latin America’s oldest and most stable democracy. For more than a century, the country has experienced peaceful changes of government every four years as citizens have elected government representatives in free and fair elections in a political environment that proudly supports full freedom of the press” (<https://www.colombiaemb.org/overview> Retrieved 12 Sep 2019).

<sup>351</sup> The Washington Consensus is a set of economic principles and policies to promote a free market, formulated by several financial institutions in 1989 (among them the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund).

<sup>352</sup> It should be pointed out that, from the 1970s onwards, the cocaine production and trafficking to the United States led to a high influx of illicit dollars into the country which caused a boom in e.g. the construction industry. It is estimated that by the 1990s, “revenues from the trade made up an estimated 4 to 7 percent of Colombia’s GDP” (Insight Crime 2016:11). This was partly destructive for Colombia’s more traditional industries and contributed to the financial crisis in 1998 (Insight Crime 2016:15).

<sup>353</sup> Since the peace agreement in November 2016, the FARC officially demobilised and many see in this the end of the conflict. However, the current government is rejecting the agreement and has turned again towards the use of military force against insurgency. New power vacuums resulted from the withdrawal of FARC members, which were filled by other guerrilla or paramilitary groups. The number of social leaders being threatened and killed has accelerated since the agreement in Colombia. This indicates that the internal armed conflict is ongoing. Furthermore the term “civil war” which is often used to describe the armed confrontation within the country over the last decades is highly inaccurate. As many actors in Colombia’s civil society argue, the armed

Corruption, clientelism, *politiquería*<sup>354</sup> and impunity from past and present human rights violations persists, as does major inequality, threats and actual murder of social leaders and journalists around the country (Global Witness 2019; Insight Crime 2016).<sup>355</sup>

#### **Box 4. Colombian State**

Formally, the Colombian state is constructed on the model of the modern (Western) nation state (Rechtsstaat, rule of law). The political constitution forms the framework of the state apparatus (visualised in Appendix 3), with three branches of power (executive, legislative and judiciary), the electoral and control entities (e.g. offices of comptroller general and of the ombudsman) and the autonomous entities (e.g. the Bank of the Republic, universities and environmental agencies such as CAM). In addition to such a state apparatus, Jessop defines the state as having a delimited territory and a population over which it exercises power (Jessop 2016). This assumes exclusive political authority, specifically sovereignty of the state (Krehoff 2008). The borders would be internationally accepted, and the local population would acknowledge the state's rule and order (Krehoff 2008:288). Sieder (2011:162) explains:

Anthropological conceptualizations understand sovereignty as the monopoly to decide not only who is included and excluded from the political community, but also what order, security and normal life consists of, and what measures should be taken to restore them when these principles are threatened including, in the last resort, the power to decide matters of life or death.

If the population not only accepts this rule but see it in their own best interest, the state has hegemony. Hegemony, according to Gramsci's understanding, is "the consolidation of class domination" (Hansen and Stepputat 2001:3). The ruling class would have achieved legitimisation. Many states with colonial history face the challenges of navigating between traditional forms of rule, colonial systems of rule and those related to alternative ideologies and therefore lack sovereignty and hegemony (Hansen and Stepputat 2001:12, 27–28). Also, in Colombia, former armed and contemporary social mobilisations, as in the case of the El Quimbo dam struggle, question the existence of such hegemony.

The question arises how these two images of reality, a seemingly "stable democratic system" and extensive violence, are able to exist together. A common explanation is that the Colombian state has a strong democratic system at its centre (represented through national state institutions

---

conflict is between the state army and illegal organised armed forces. The civilians are the ones that suffer the most, being caught between the fronts.

<sup>354</sup> Common term in Colombia to describe the politics of the country. It refers to politicians who use their function not to serve the public good but to abuse it to maintain their privileges or the privileges of those groups to which they belong (clans, elites). See [https://dle.rae.es/politiquear?m=30\\_2](https://dle.rae.es/politiquear?m=30_2) Retrieved 10. Aug 2020.

<sup>355</sup> Colombia has one of the highest (forced) internal displacement rates worldwide. It had a Gini-index of 49.7 in 2017 (100 = total inequality; World Bank 2017), which made it, after Brazil, the most unequal country in South America. The Gini coefficient for land distribution in Colombia was 0.88 in 2016 (1 = total inequality; Venezuela had the same value, only Paraguay and Chile had a higher coefficient within Latin America; Guereña 2016). The landowning elite continues to be in close relationship with drug traffickers and "criminal gangs", as well as with state military and bureaucrats (McNeish, Rojas Andrade, et al. 2015:14). As a result, it is still able to prevent successful land restitution programmes and other legal processes for reconciliation (Baquero Melo 2015; McNeish, Rojas Andrade, et al. 2015:2; Peña-Huertas et al. 2017; Velásquez Ospina 2017).

based in Bogotá) but the system is too weak or absent in its periphery (e.g. Lorente 2010; Oxford Business Group 2017). The response is consequently to bring the state to the territories (*traer el estado*) in order to close the apparent gap between the rural and the urban (see Jaramillo 2014). The peace agreement with the FARC in 2016, for instance, suggests that the countryside need to be “properly filled by the state’s institutions”, while the urban spaces are considered as fully institutionalised (Cairo et al. 2018:6–7). Sergio Jaramillo (2014:6), High Commissioner for Peace, said in a lecture on territorial peace: “We have to fill the space, the territory must be institutionalised” (see also Box 8 on territorial peace in Chapter 10).

The weak state discourse is also visible in academic literature. Garay Salamanca and Salcedo Albarán (2012) describe different forms of state capture or the so-called “co-opted reconfiguration of states”. In analysing the case of Colombia, they show that weak state institutions enable clientelism, corruption and bribery to exist alongside more direct involvement of private actors (legal and illegal) in legislative and public processes (Garay Salamanca and Salcedo Albarán 2012). Illmer (2018:773) points out that “individuals and groups use an array of lawful and unlawful mechanisms to modify political regimes as well as influence key decision and law-making procedures”. Similarly, Vargas and Uribe (2017:756) highlight that “the state must compete or negotiate with other actors and organizations for the establishment and regulation of rules” and that “economic elites and non-state armed actors play an important role” in this.

One argument has been that specifically the political Constitution of 1991 opened the way for such state capture (Ávila Martínez 2012). One intention with the new Colombian constitution was to redefine the power balance inside the state to open space for political participation beyond the established biparty system (Ávila Martínez 2012:15).<sup>356</sup> A key point was that the regions received more power in distributing state funds into education, health, sanitation and other basic services for poverty elimination (Maldonado Copello 2011:2). Another point was the privatisation of state businesses (including those of health provision). According to Ávila Martínez (2012:4, 11, 15) this cleared the path not for the political participation of the broader society, but the further manifestation of *regional authoritarianism*:

the decentralization model [...] allowed the entry of a huge amount of economic resources into municipalities and provinces – resources that quickly caught the attention of local and

---

<sup>356</sup> Following the military coup and the civil war in the 1950s, the elite of the country (large landowners and commercial class) agreed on a power sharing agreement that made it hard for any other party to establish itself in national politics. The new constitution of 1991 was the result of a civil mobilisation against the violence around the country and connected to the hope for a better peaceful Colombia (see Lemaitre Ripoll 2009).

regional elites and, above all, of illegal armed groups. Currently, all the academic trends in the country accept a close relationship between decentralization and the armed conflict (Ávila Martínez 2012:4–5).

Indeed, local administrations were soon occupied by the regional elite and the state funds were used to maintain the political and economic power (Ávila Martínez 2012:11, 15).<sup>357</sup>

The above forms part of an argument that the Colombian state is unable to minimise the influence of external actors and their individual interest in the political system and is therefore fragile or weak. In the terminology of international relations, a state is branded “failed” or “fragile” if it is unable to respond to the needs of its population. For example, the “Fragile States Index” (formerly “Failed States Index”) produced by the American-based think-tank “The Fund for Peace” classifies states according to their “sustainability” using a set of indicators, ranging from internal security threats and elite control to the adequate provision of public services, law and equal development for the whole society. Colombia has improved its ratings since this index began in the early 2000s. In 2019, however, it was still classified as a state of “elevated warning”.

Call (2008) argues that most states which are classified as such, are not failed (completely collapsed), nor actually fragile. Western governments in particular would classify certain post-colonial countries as failed or fragile in order to justify interventions to bring more “stability and order” (Call 2008; Lund 2016). This was also the case with the United States-led “war on drugs” in Colombia.<sup>358</sup> However, most often these countries face context-specific issues which require context-specific solutions. Call (2008) therefore introduces other more discriminatory categories, among them the “weak state”. States in this category have “weak formal institutional capacity”; their formal institutions partly fail to deliver all services and resources equally to its population. Consequently, informal institutions might fill these gaps, taking over

---

<sup>357</sup> Maldonado Copello (2011) analyses the provincial use of the budget for basic services and notices a significant variety in spending. This supports the argument that the funds did not always reach their dedicated purpose.

<sup>358</sup> In the 1990s, the US started to invest in the Colombian military to successfully combat drug cartels and guerrilla on own grounds. This cooperation was formalised with *Plan Colombia* in 1999 and led to a strengthening of state military as well as paramilitary. President Álvaro Uribe (2002-2010) intensified the war on drugs supported by George W. Bush (2001-2009). As Colombia remains to be a major cocaine producer worldwide, the Plan has proven to be first and foremost a war against the guerrilla and the peasants of the country. The aerial eradication (fumigation) of illicit crops has also destroyed food crops and left many farmers without anything. Furthermore, the military received incentives to kill guerrilla. In order to keep up numbers, soldiers would kidnap young men from marginalised areas, dress them in guerrilla uniform and massacre them – a phenomenon which came to be known as “false positives” (see for detailed account McNeish, Rojas Andrade, et al. 2015).

state responsibilities and authority. Related issues are often observed in post-colonial countries (Hansen and Stepputat 2001:11), and also seem to represent the case of Colombia.

I see two problems related to framing the Colombian state either as fragile or as weak. First, defining the Colombian state as weak, runs the risk of falling back to the view of a stronger central state that diminishes the influence of external and non-state actors in the peripheries. However, the debate around *parapolíticas* that came to describe the political system in Colombia early this century indicates that private interests of the elite and the paramilitaries infiltrated the state to its very core (Ávila Martínez 2012).<sup>359</sup> The separation between state actors, state-like actors and non-state actors remains blurred on all levels, as does the division between state and non-state practices. As Sieder emphasises, “there is little that is really ‘outside’” the state (Sieder 2011:170). Also, Ávila Martínez (2012:10) argues that illegal actors and practices are not external but internal to the Colombian state. Therefore, “an emphasis on the absence or weakness of the state [...] glosses over the complex ways in which the state and its legal structures operate” (F. Li 2009:219).

Second, instead of helping to understand the complex issues that are fundamental to the Colombian state formation process, the weak state discourse functions as a *myth* used to distract from or even legitimise, for instance, hard development interventions in the regions (Hansen and Stepputat 2001:12) that have “clear political motivations”: to “empower capital at the expense of civil society” (McNeish 2017b:501).

I therefore argue that Colombian state institutions have not been too weak to confront “autonomous” systems of rule but instead evolved with these. The nation’s elite, who were united in their quest for capital accumulation and their fight against communist ideals since the power sharing agreement in 1957 (to maintain the power structures), have traditionally formed and still coordinate the state (Guzman Campos et al. 1962:339, 417). As Escobar (2015:22) explains, “Colombia (along with Mexico) has the dubious privilege of having maintained one of the most enduring and callous forms of elite control in Latin America, unabashed pro-US policies, and ruthless capitalistic development”.

---

<sup>359</sup> While the elite supported the paramilitary forces for their private protection and to maintain their power, the security groups organised under the umbrella “United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia” (AUC) in 1997 and soon evolved into a political actor that claimed power in its own right (Ávila Martínez 2012:10). Especially under the Uribe presidency, AUC gained extensive political power not only by manipulating election behaviour but also directly by taking up key functions of government (see Ávila Martínez 2012).

To provide a concrete example, in the case of the “Las Pavas” community, a combination of unlawful and lawful mechanisms was used to include its territory into the agro-industrial export economy. The *campesino*-families living in the northern Magdalena Medio region (about 700 kilometres downstream of El Quimbo dam, towards the north) have faced paramilitary violence since the 1990s and have been forced to leave their lands several times. In the early 2000s, land registries were modified, and the lands of Las Pavas were “legally” sold to a palm oil production company, which immediately cleared the forests and planted palm trees (see also Peña-Huertas, Ruiz, Parada, Zuleta, and Álvarez 2017). Since then, the *campesino*-families have claimed the rightful ownership over the lands in courts. Even though their right to the land has been legally recognised, there has been no political will to settle the tensions between claims of the *campesinos* and the company. Instead, the national police have been watching every move of the locals, who decided to “squat” in the midst of the palms for the lack of alternatives.<sup>360</sup> The case makes obvious the intimate relations between formal and informal actors and processes at play within the state apparatus.

The Las Pavas case is only one prominent example among hundreds of other cases around the country (see Maher 2015; Meger and Sachseder 2020; Sachseder 2020). State institutions have been known to support land accumulation by using various mechanisms. They use coercive (e.g. armed actors that forcefully remove the population from their lands), political (e.g. legally by declaring lands of public utility and of strategic interest; illegally by changing land registries) and market mechanisms (e.g. influencing prices, taxes; Vargas and Uribe 2017). It is not the result of individual corrupt bureaucrats, but of a system reproduced by the elites of the country (see also Gutiérrez-Sanín and Vargas 2017).

Nevertheless, as indicated in the case described above, and in the analysis in Part III of this thesis, there is another process ongoing within the Colombian state – a judicialising of conflict and an increased form of legal activism in Colombian judiciary. Jacobo Grajales (2015, 2016) examines land-grabbing in Colombia and observes an apparent paradox “where widespread lawlessness and violence either inflicted or condoned by the state and corporations exists alongside legal institutions that, while constrained by this wider political economy, offer some opportunities for legal remedy” (cited in Hall et al. 2015). In other words, Colombians who have experienced widespread violence connected to the state, begin to expect the state to protect their rights (in line with its political constitution), which is sometimes successful. Camargo and

---

<sup>360</sup> Own field visit in May 2011 as peace observer.

Ojeda (2017) see this as an ambivalent reaction to an ambivalent system and refer to it as “ambivalent desires for the state”.

Accordingly, I consider the state not as a monolithic structure but as ambivalent or disaggregated. Abrams (1988:79) observes:

The state is the unified symbol of an actual disunity. This is not just a disunity between the political and the economic but equally a profound disunity within the political. Political institutions [...] conspicuously fail to display a unity of practice –just as they constantly discover their inability to function as a more general factor of cohesion. Manifestly they are divided against one another, volatile and confused.

Also Gupta emphasises that “the state is characterized by various levels that pull in different directions” (Gupta 2012:42; quoted in Camargo and Ojeda 2017:58–59). Hall et al. (2015: 475) note: “States are not coherent, unified entities that consistently act with premeditation, competence or consensus. They contain multiple actors, factions and interests, many of which are in direct competition for political influence”. Accordingly, Krupa and Nugent (2015:4) are “concerned with materially grounded political imaginaries”. In their edited volume on the Andean states, they study what kinds of political subjects are generated by different, often competing, projects of rule (Krupa and Nugent 2015:5).

Similarly, Hansen and Stepputat (2001:14) treat the state as “a dispersed ensemble of institutional practices and techniques of government” to comprehend its particular appearance. In line with their approach, I intend “to disaggregate the state into the multitude of discrete operations, procedures, and representations in which it appears in the everyday life of ordinary people” (Hansen and Stepputat 2001:14), in this case during the El Quimbo dam struggle. Recognising the ambivalent, disaggregated character of the state, whose image is produced locally – specifically through power contestation – I argue that the Colombian state appeared in two different forms to the people in Huila: the capitalist state that restricted and the constitutional state that empowered territorial and local ambitions for more autonomy over resources.<sup>361</sup> Both forms do not supersede but instead permeate each other. Nevertheless, their coexistence is conflictive in the question of the purpose and priority of the state, which will become more apparent throughout this analysis.

---

<sup>361</sup> I decided on this binary, because it reflects the ideas and images of the state conveyed by the people at El Quimbo. This is of course a simplification. There are multiple facets to the state and some overlap with the two forms analysed here (see also discussion in the Epilogue to this Part).

To analyse the two forms of state as they emerged during the El Quimbo dam conflict, I look at three main indicators. First, I reflect on the actors involved during the dam conflict and their visible relation to the state apparatus; second, I bring to the forefront the political and juridical decisions which were taken during the dam conflict and how they were legitimised. Third, I focus on the material outcomes that affected the local population.<sup>362</sup> In Chapter 5 of this thesis, I have already indicated that infrastructure plays an essential role in engaging places and populations into the state system. In general, infrastructure is considered the core edifice that organises a nation (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012; Scott 1998). It structures not only the economy but also the society (Meehan 2014:215). It links regions to state practices (social and territorial inclusion), to the global economy and processes of development (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012:402), but it can also do the opposite and detach places from these processes. Because the provision of public and critical infrastructure is the responsibility of the state, infrastructural outcomes contribute significantly to the state's image.

Accordingly, for each of the two forms of the state, I analyse the relevant actors, practices and outcomes and embed the resulting image into the relevant theory and the wider context of Colombia's political economy. I start with the politics that allowed the El Quimbo dam to be built and which I see as characteristic of the theory of the capitalist state.

## 9. The capitalist state

### El Quimbo dam in the national interest

The first political step towards the realisation of the El Quimbo dam was the national government declaring the lands of El Quimbo valley of "national interest" (Ministerio de Minas y Energia 2008). In so doing, it abused a mechanism established by the 1991 Constitution that allowed the state to legally expropriate property if its use does not correspond to "public utility and social interest" (e.g. with no productive activity; Bonilla 2011).<sup>363</sup> While the old

---

<sup>362</sup> Similar to Hansen and Stepputat's (2001:8) "symbolic languages of authority: (1) the institutionalization of law and legal discourse as the authoritative language of the state and the medium through which the state acquires discursive presence and authority to authorize; (2) the materialization of the state in series of permanent signs and rituals: buildings, monuments, letterheads, uniforms, road signs, fences; and (3) the nationalization of the territory and the institutions of the state through inscription of a history and a shared community on landscapes and cultural practices."

<sup>363</sup> The idea for civil society was that unused lands owned by large landlords would be redistributed to landless peasants who as small holders would make better use of it. The agrarian reform in the 1970s was the result of a first intent towards this principle in response to the rising land conflicts throughout the country (see farmers' cooperatives, Chapter 4).

Constitution of 1886 emphasised the role of the state in protecting private property as an individual right (Bonilla 2011), the new Constitution of 1991 recognises that property has an additional social function and is therefore connected with certain responsibilities. In complete contrast to its envisaged legal intentions, the government under Álvaro Uribe used this mechanism to effectively centralise land and capital into the hands of a multinational company.

The El Quimbo dam did not come from nowhere; a variety of political processes led up to the above decision. As indicated in Chapter 1 (and in the Prologue of Part III), the dam was already proposed in 1997 by Betania-S.A. but refused by the then Environmental Ministry. The operation of the Betania dam in Huila had been privatised in 1996 and became part of Endesa Chile. This capitalisation was also the result of the new constitution. In response to global processes for economic liberalisation, the constitution specified that the central bank should have autonomy, education and health services can be privatised, and the state should liquidate rather unprofitable state businesses (Álvarez 2016). Article 336 of the Constitution of 1991 states: “The Government will sell or liquidate a monopolistic company of the State and grant to third parties the development of its activity, if it does not meet the efficiency requirements, under the terms determined by the law” (Consejo Superior de la Judicatura 2016).<sup>364</sup>

Shortly after Betania-S.A, the public energy company “Empresas Energía de Bogotá” (today “Grupo Energía Bogotá”) was also partially capitalised. Since its financial viability was at stake, it became a mixed-economy entity majority owned by Endesa Spain and Endesa Chile (La Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras and La Firma Comisionista de Bolsa 2011:9). As a result, two national subsidiaries were formed: Codensa (responsible for energy distribution) and Emgesa (responsible for energy generation). Betania-S.A. became part of the latter in 2007 (Enel Group 2016:F-83).

By 2007, economic priorities had changed. With the election of Uribe as president in 2002, the government embraced a political platform of neoliberalism and securitisation (see Echavarría Álvarez 2010; Ojeda 2013).<sup>365</sup> The “war on drugs” supported by the United States gained a new momentum. The government had not only the objective to stop the production and trafficking of drugs, but also to debilitate guerrilla groups and to take control of their territories

---

<sup>364</sup> Some critical voices in Colombia see the biggest success of neoliberalism manifested in the Constitution of 1991 (Álvarez 2016). Others again argue that the constitution is neutral towards any economic model (see e.g. Arango 2011; Díaz Londoño 2009).

<sup>365</sup> “Securitisation” in international relations means to make an issue (such as social protests against an investment project) into a matter of national security, which then generally justifies the use of force to tackle this issue (forceful dismantling of the protest).

(and access the natural resources). As part of the securitisation strategy, Uribe rejected the existence of an internal armed conflict and framed the guerrillas as terrorist organisations that occupied limited areas of Colombia's periphery (McNeish, Rojas Andrade, and Vallejo 2015; Restrepo Echeverri and Franco Restrepo 2011).

To further distract from this internal warfare at the international level the government focused on securing investors' confidence (*la confianza inversionista*) and creating a friendly environment for transnational corporations.<sup>366</sup> Uribe himself said:

We believe in private investment, because we know that in the villages where it has been limited, laziness has been established, business creativity has ended, and essential freedoms have been affected. Finally, private initiatives are a source of prosperity that allows the collective enjoyment of freedoms and rights; it is a source of autonomy that prevents abuses of the poor.

Without a path to prosperity, it is impossible to speak of freedoms, and the only path of prosperity known so far in the history of humankind is that of respect for private initiative.

Investors' confidence requires physical and legal security, political determination to stimulate it, good management of the economy and the ability to introduce adjustments at all times within the path that leads to clearly defined objectives (Uribe Vélez 2013a).

Uribe oriented governance along these lines during his presidency by liberalising the markets for foreign direct investments and by accommodating foreign capital. *The Internal Agenda for Productivity and Competitiveness* (National Council of Economic and Social Policy of Colombia [Conpes] 2004) and *The Visión Colombia II Centenario 2019* (National Planning Office [DNP] 2005) were important strategy papers in which Uribe's government formulated the guidelines for future economic development. The vision statement puts the focus on expanding the export industry, and taking advantage of Colombia's natural wealth (DNP 2005). Complementing this, the internal agenda states that every region has to identify its economic potential and strengthen its competitiveness. In both reports, a key factor was to expand the physical infrastructure including the energy grid. Colombia now aimed to increase its energy production with the support of the private sector, and to become more embedded in

---

<sup>366</sup> Uribe based his politics on three principles: democratic security (in effect securitisation), investors' confidence and social cohesion. The last, however, was considered to be achieved automatically through the successful implementation of the first two principles (Uribe Vélez 2013b).

regional economic agreements (such as the Initiative for the Integration of the Regional Infrastructure of South America, called IIRSA, of 2000).<sup>367</sup>

In response to the position of the national government, the Huila government officially formulated its own internal agenda in 2007. The agenda emphasised the potential of the Magdalena River basin for energy generation. Huila would have high competitiveness (specifically with El Quimbo, later also with the dams Pericongo and Guarapas) and could become a strategic area linking the Andean region economically with Central America. It is pointed out in the agenda that “in this sense, it is necessary to ‘dust off’ pre-feasibility studies for projects, such as El Quimbo, that offer a prospect of high competitiveness” (Departamento del Huila 2007:264). This statement already indicated that existent policies and laws should be adopted in such a manner that they support potential investments in the sector.

The national government put several pieces of legislation in place that cleared the way for investors in hydroelectricity to encounter fewer obstacles and to secure profitability. An important mechanism was introduced in 2006: *el Cargo de Confiabilidad* (La Comisión de Regulación de Energía y Gas 2006). The “Reliability Charge” gives certain guarantees to selected energy projects. In effect, the state is committing to pay the operating company a fixed price per kilowatt-hour installed, on a monthly basis during an agreed period, regardless of their daily participation in the wholesale market. In the case of El Quimbo dam, the state guaranteed payment for the first 20 years of the project’s operation (Dussán Calderón 2017:50). “In exchange, the generator commits to comply with the Firm Energy Obligations (OEF): the company must guarantee the supply of energy to the national grid, even in critical conditions of scarcity [e.g. during periods of droughts like El Niño]” (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:38).

In August 2008, the national government introduced Conpes 3527: The Development Plan 2006–2010 titled “The politics of competitiveness and productivity”, which makes guarantees to foreign investments, highlighting Uribe’s famous call for “investors’ confidence” (Conpes 2008). It further emphasised the importance of hydroelectric projects for the development of the country. A few months earlier, the Ministry of the Environment had already pronounced its support for the El Quimbo dam realisation and assigned Emgesa to the project. In the month following the introduction of Conpes 3527, the lands of El Quimbo valley were declared to be

---

<sup>367</sup> “The IIRSA would be responsible for promoting basic infrastructure, and transportation, communications, and energy, providing the underlying foundation for greater commercial and social integration in the South-American subcontinent” (Couto 2005:2).

of “public utility and social interest” (Ministerio de Minas y Energia 2008). Shortly thereafter, Emgesa started construction.

I argue that the above-mentioned policies which led to El Quimbo being approved, reflect the idea of the capitalist state. Harvey (2014:28) explains: “The capitalist state must use its acquired monopoly over the means of violence to protect and preserve the individualised private property rights regime as articulated through freely functioning markets”. To have power over territory is to privatise it and to integrate it into the market. “The ultimate ‘landlord’ is the state; it controls non-human nature’s use values, and delivers these rents to capital” (Parenti 2014:837; see also Purcell and Martinez 2018). Polanyi (2001:187) had already pointed this out in the 1940s, stating that

to separate land from man and to organize society in such a way as to satisfy the requirements of a real-estate market was a vital part of the utopian concept of a market economy. Again, it is in the field of modern colonization that the true significance of such a venture becomes manifest. Whether the colonist needs land as a site for the sake of the wealth buried in it, or whether he merely wishes to constrain the native to produce a surplus of food and raw materials, is often irrelevant.

Polanyi’s analysis of the colonial project to enclose land to force people into the labour market by threat of starvation (Polanyi 2001:171–73), is applicable to Colombia’s history of land conflicts and continues to be relevant today. Even though Uribe’s government did not protect individual private property when it declared the lands of El Quimbo valley of public utility, it resulted in a new enclosure (centralised ownership for the sole function of profit-making). This is paramount for expanding the capitalist frontier (Moore 2000; Peluso and Lund 2011). The possibilities for subsistence agriculture were diminished and people became more dependent on the market; the energy generation produced bonuses, where capital was already accumulating. “By supporting (through midwifery), promoting (through husbandry) and protecting (through its custodian role), the state creates the foundations for extractivism, legitimises the presence of corporations and protects their interests now and in the future” (Ehrnström-Fuentes and Kröger 2018:34–35).

President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018) followed the direction of his predecessor and focused further on the return of the primary commodities export sector (re-primarisation). A new national development plan, “El Plan Nacional de Desarrollo” of 2010–2014, put forward the direction of the newly elected government. It established the five core areas of investment: innovation, agriculture, housing, mining and energy, and transport infrastructure. These so-called “locomotives for the national economy” gave further juridical security to investors (DNP

2010), and led to the creation of “PINES”, which is the Spanish acronym for “Projects of National and Strategic Interest”. In 2013, the National Council of Economic and Social Policy of Colombia (Conpes) identified the El Quimbo hydroelectric project and another 52 investments in infrastructure, hydrocarbons, mining and energy as PINES. The objective of the policy “Conpes 3762” is to facilitate the development of projects that generate a high socio-economic impact on the country, and which have faced difficulties in their realisation (see Box 5 for the criteria):

The main difficulties that affect the agility and viability of these projects [...] are the acquisition of land, prior consultation with communities, permits and environmental procedures, relations with communities in different regions, and the internal difficulties of public entities in solving legal problems (Conpes 2013).

Of the 53 projects identified in 2013 by Conpes, 80% faced problems (delays) because of environmental issues, 27% because of the development of community consultations and 23% because of issues surrounding property acquisition. Conpes maintained that all issues were linked to insufficient clarity regarding internal procedures by the authorities, a duplication of efforts by state entities, weak and reactive mechanisms, and dispersed and outdated information. By using the weak state discourse, Conpes established a way to guarantee PINES “greater efficiency, clarity of roles, responsibilities, objectives and greater impact” (Conpes 2013). It was short-tracking the process of decision-making to allow more flexible movement of capital.

**Box 5. Criteria for a project being classified as PINES**

A project is identified as PINES if it meets at least one of the following criteria:

- It significantly increases the productivity and competitiveness of the national or regional economy.
- It generates a significant impact on the creation of employment, directly or through capital investment.
- It generates a positive return on the investment and is operationally sustainable.
- It increases the export capacity of the national economy.
- It generates significant income to the nation and regions.
- The scope of the project contributes to the fulfilment of the goals detailed in the National Development Plan (2010–2014).

Until 2018, a project seems to be nominated as PINES based on its size. The more money that is invested, the better. Emgesa contributes to the national export capacity by selling electricity to Ecuador. According to the definition of CONPES 3762, El Quimbo is of national interest. It is also a strategic project, as it expands energy infrastructure in the south of the country.

(First published at: <https://corneliahelmcke.wordpress.com/2017/02/28/of-national-interest/>).

Considering the above, the national state institutions had taken up a neoliberal role by guaranteeing “legal security” for capital and high corporate profitability (Svampa 2013:36). Furthermore, the partially public company Grupo Energía Bogotá has 51.51% financial responsibility for Emgesa, but its “right to vote” is only 43.57% (Enel Group 2019). This limits the decision-making capacity of the public sector, while it still covers much of the costs. This discrepancy, together with the new enclosure and the language of “dusting-off” feasibility studies for high competitiveness, suggest that the state directs its function towards the accommodation of private capital.

In the following section, I investigate this in more detail. I analyse four ways in which the capitalist state materialised in central Huila during the El Quimbo dam struggle, namely through the development discourse, the permissiveness of state actors, infrastructure security, and centralisation.

### *The discourse of development*

The company Emgesa and the national government both promoted (and further constructed) a narrative about the El Quimbo dam connected to discourses of progress, development, energy security, clean and renewable energy, and environmental management. Emgesa itself has distributed this narrative in its public communications. For instance, it claimed that El Quimbo would generate, together with Betania, eight per cent of the national energy demand and create 3,000 jobs. Despite producing clean energy, Emgesa would socially invest and reforest habitats in the region that it otherwise presented as economically inefficient and ecologically degraded (see Chapter 4).

Former president Juan Manuel Santos (2010–2018) laid the first stone of El Quimbo in 2011. In his opening-day speech, he said, “It is a great day for Huila and Colombia. This dream has lasted fifty years. With this dam, the Magdalena River will be controlled so that in winter the coast and the rest of the country will not flood” (quoted in Argüello 2011). He continued by noting the importance of the day “for us, for the confidence of the world in Colombia, for the confidence of the investors in Colombia, for what this means for our economy, for what this means for the well-being of Huila, for the welfare of the country” (quoted in Dinero 2011). He concluded his speech by explaining that the objective of “these great works” was “to find a balance, a balance between the financial economic and the preservation of the environment, the social responsibility” (quoted in Dinero 2011).

In response to the increasing tensions in central Huila in 2012, Santos clarified: “It is certain that the government will exercise the principle of authority, where it must be exercised. We are not going to allow a few to prevent the general interest from prevailing”. He further stated:

I see that there is a documentary circulating about a case in Huila, where after many negotiations and much conversation, there was a group of people who manipulated, who wanted to prevent such an important work as that of El Quimbo, which will generate clean energy, necessary energy [...] They wanted to prevent that from happening. [...] There was an incident; a person actually suffered a mishap in one eye, but in general terms that eviction developed in a normal way, [not only] using the strictest protocols in the defence of human rights and the rights of citizens, but fulfilling a constitutional duty (quoted in *El Espectador* 2012b).

Ex-president Uribe also expressed his opinion on the matter on Twitter: “It is of grave importance [*es grave*] that the communities of Huila do not understand that the Magdalena River is a usable source of energy. The hydroelectric plants will bring development to the country” (Tweet by AlvaroUribeVel, 19 March 2013). The above statements stigmatise the local opposition presenting its members as being only a few (*unos pocos*), who do not grasp the wider importance of the project for the nation. They would be “enemies of development” (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:115).

The investors in El Quimbo and the political leaders used the large hydroelectric project to create a “dazzling picture” of progress and national modernization (Bridge, Özkaynak, and Turhan 2018:5; Dye 2016; Harvey and Knox 2012; Larkin 2013). The discourse of development, invented by the Western world, is a powerful tool to not only promise well-being with technological advancement, but also to devalue and subjugate existing localised socio-economic structures as “under-developed” or “backward” (see Escobar 1984). Using the idea of evolution (modernisation), it justifies the sacrifice of these life forms (similar to the discourse of race; see Foucault 2003:256). It is further strongly tied to the idea of the capitalist state. the Colombian scholar Víctor Manuel Moncayo C. (2012:39) argues that neoliberalism, as the latest stage of the capitalist project, is most able to hide the structural violence executed behind discourses of development. So-called “developing” states still use power to control and suppress (sovereign power by Foucault 2003; despotic power by Mann 1987:341), for example, through forced land dispossession. Alternatively, capitalism offers important governmental

tools (biopower by Foucault 2003) to “developed” states, to mask unequal capital accumulation as being in the common interest, for instance through the notion of a free market exchange.<sup>368</sup>

The ostensible “common interest” has historically been grounded in the economic project of the state. Following Marx’s thinking on “who controls the labour process, controls men and nature”, any political system is necessarily linked to a specific economic order. Marxists (similarly to Gramsci) see the state as an apparatus of the leading class to disguise their oppression of lower classes (Althusser 1971). Following Engels, Abrams (1988:76) says, “the state is brought into being as an idea in order to present the outcome of the class struggle as the independent outcome of a classless legitimate will”. It is the “coercive subjection of rural populations to noble domination through the invention of new apparatuses of administration and law” (Abrams 1988:80). The state would be an abstract idea to distract from class domination by creating the illusion of a neutral state apparatus that follows the sole function to act in the general interest (Abrams 1988:64; Marx and Engels 1968 [1932]).<sup>369</sup>

During the inauguration of the viaduct el Balseadero, Santos again emphasised the importance of the investment: “This infrastructure results in [*tiene como efecto*] prosperity and well-being”. But he added: “There is not a longer viaduct than the one we have just inaugurated. The reason behind it is to bring development and prosperity to this whole region of Colombia, *which has been abandoned for decades*” (quoted in *Canal RCN* 2015; emphasis added). This resonates with the weak state discourse. An abandonment of economic investment seems to mean an abandonment by the state, and now the state complies by bringing development to the region.

Even though these selected quotations from former presidents cannot stand for the state as a whole, they do create a particular image, with the expectations and disappointments connected to it. As declared by one of the affected people: “The company created false illusions”.<sup>370</sup> Creating expectations potentially contributes to a favourable atmosphere for businesses and legitimises their actions. Arce and Long (2000:37) point out that

---

<sup>368</sup> Political systems have used capitalism as infrastructural power (power to penetrate and transform society by equating values and exchange; Mann 1987:341) to secure and stabilise their hegemony.

<sup>369</sup> A similar observation is made by Foucault (1980:106): “Once it became necessary for disciplinary constraints to be exercised through mechanisms of domination and yet at the same time for their effective exercise of power to be disguised, a theory of sovereignty was required to make an appearance at the level of the legal apparatus, and to re-emerge in its codes”. He (1980:105) also contends that “the theory of sovereignty, and the organisation of a legal code centred upon it, have allowed a system of right to be superimposed upon the mechanisms of discipline in such a way as to conceal its actual procedures, the element of domination inherent in its techniques, and to guarantee to everyone, by virtue of the sovereignty of the State.”

<sup>370</sup> “*La empresa nos puso pajaritos de oro*” (Vereda Veracruz, focus group discussion, 23/06/2013, quoted by (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:130); Fernando of Veracruz said also: “*nos pintaban pájaros de oro*” (Interview 36).

development practice is not just a parenthesis of normative linguistic constructions—the language of development cannot stop or control actors’ actions—but it does provide selected, and not necessarily correct, information, data, images, representations, idioms and interpretation of the development issues. It permits and legitimises the activity of international policy makers to misrepresent local ‘realities’, the agency of people and their effect on the production of identities and subjectivities in processes of development.

The picture of the reality drawn by the EIA (as shown in Chapter 4) together with the weak state discourse suggest that external investment and development is in the common interest. In line with the functions of the capitalist state, the national government used these discourses as a technology to defend and legitimise their controversial actions at El Quimbo.

Next, I will discuss the actions or rather inactions of state institutions, which affected directly the situation at El Quimbo and contributed to the image of the state.

#### *Permissiveness*

When the Uribe government declared the fertile valley of the El Quimbo to be a public utility, it made the lands available for corporate land acquisition, leaving the negotiation to the company. This established a “new form of authority” (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:117). The local population was restricted in accessing land and water and in developing their properties and production (see Chapter 5). When the company started construction in 2008, before the environmental licence was granted, it was the adjacent communities who denounced it. However, as the company claimed to merely be carrying out exploration and survey, the state authorities did not interfere (as described in Chapter 5).

Regional officials signed agreements with Emgesa, and the environmental authority (Ministry of Environment at that time) granted the environmental licence soon after. This occurred despite the multiple criticisms and concerns raised at the public hearings and consultation tables (see Chapter 6). The environmental licence is a legally binding document that establishes requirements, terms, conditions and obligations in relation to prevention, mitigation, correction, compensation and management of impacts for the company to comply to while developing the project (ANLA n.d.). In the example of the El Quimbo dam project, with reference to socio-economic compensation, it states:

For all cases of involuntary displacement (settlements and productive activities), total or partial, the company will advance and implement the activities that guarantee the restoration of the socio-economic conditions of the affected families [...]. Among others, the following population groups will be taken into account as beneficiaries: Tenants, farm

managers, wood extractors, sand extractors, farm-partakers, truck drivers, merchants, contractors, artisanal fisherfolk and fish farmers (Minambiente 2009:246–47).

To include everyone affected, also those claiming to have been ignored in the first public hearings of January to February 2009, the licence required Emgesa to renew the census. However, as mentioned in Chapter 4 of this thesis, the following census updates remained incomplete and the compensation schemes – negotiations, interviews and valuation – were left to the company.

Experts from the Environmental Ministry and from the later established “National Agency for Environmental Licences” (ANLA) were formally required to follow up on environmental licences granted (Minambiente 2002). In practice, however, they do not have the capacity to do so. The ANLA lacks staff, experts, time and money to follow up on all aspects of environmental licences (Guevara Ulloa 2016; Rodríguez 2011). The director of the agency frankly stated in an interview early in 2019, that “with regard to the big megaprojects, there is no one to carry out the control” (quoted in Correa 2019). The ANLA needs to rely on the expertise and statements of the company because they cannot enter the restricted areas on their own and do not have the capacity to execute studies themselves. In the case of El Quimbo, the employees of the ANLA (or the Environmental Ministry) would only appear in the region accompanied by Emgesa. Sofia, resettled from San José de Belén, said, “The ANLA has partnered [*ha alcahueteado*] with Emgesa. It [ANLA] has been very permissive with it [Emgesa]. If they [ANLA staff] come to make a visit for verification, they always come with Emgesa. There you see that there is no support for us”.<sup>371</sup>

Instead of controlling Emgesa’s actions, the ANLA raised fines against the company after the damage had been done and only in response to legal complaints, for example when the regional environmental authority, CAM, proved that the water contamination was the result of Emgesa’s extraction works. Even though the fines came together with a temporary construction stop, Emgesa continued the extraction of materials, without consequences (see Chapter 5).

Another sign of the government being permissive with Emgesa was the issuing of Decree 2820 in August 2010, just before the end of Uribe’s term. Prior to this decree, changes to environmental licences needed to pass “a series of judicial institutions and consultation processes” (Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015:17). But the decree enabled environmental authorities to more easily modify environmental licences after they had been granted. Soon, the

---

<sup>371</sup> Interview 39

ANLA began to modify the environmental licence for the El Quimbo dam project, watering down requirements in response to Emgesa's demands. It was rumoured that Emgesa had threatened the national government that if the conditions in the licence were to remain unchanged, the project would be economically unfeasible (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:124). Uribe himself stated:

I met with the director of Emgesa [Lucio Rubio] and he was worried about the cost overruns. And I told him: what needs to be done is a dialogue that rationalises everything. There can be no abuse here. [...]. If we demand what cannot be given, we are left without the project. That is why there needs to be a lot of balance (Neiva, 8 March, 2010; quoted in Salcedo Montero and Cely Forero 2015:17).

One critical point was the inclusion of land “occupants” in the resettlement scheme and economic compensation for wood and sand extractors, truck drivers, merchants and contractors. The ANLA modified the licence accordingly, in total, 15 times (last time 2018). Many families who had been originally promised five hectares of land, lost their entitlement to that land.

According to Article 3 of Decree 330, changes made to a project and to its environmental licence required another public hearing for the local population (Minambiente 2007). However, the ANLA seemed to be able to prevent this from happening. It had not responded to the claims of Asoquimbo since 2012 and remained hesitant after the new Huilan governor was elected in 2015 who supported that claim. It also gave the green light for Emgesa to close the dam gates in June 2015, ignoring the prior decision of the Huilan Administration Tribunal (see Chapter 7). In general, the national government gave room to Emgesa to operate above the jurisdiction of regional authorities, being a project of national interest (see below point on Centralisation).

Naranjo Aristizábal, who studied the politics concerning the El Quimbo dam until 2014, perceives this permissiveness of state institutions regarding mega-projects as a process of “de-territorialisation” or “de-nationalisation”. Private corporations would increasingly take over territorial management and state responsibilities (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014). Moncayo C. (2012) discusses such weakening of the state attributed to neoliberalism. He points out that the “Hobbesian leviathan” is no longer the state but the global imperium; the state is subordinated to global impositions, and the result is a mutation. Studies in this line of thought create the image of a capitalist state as self-dismantling: a state which hands over its authority to the market (e.g. Ehrnström-Fuentes and Kröger 2018; Gudynas 2005; Santos 2017; Sassen 2006; Silveira 2008). The structural adjustment programmes promoted by international financial

institutions (World Bank and IMF) and forced upon Latin American countries in the 1980s, certainly suggested the decrease of state power.

However, as Moncayo C. (2012) also points out, the state still intervenes in market mechanisms, just increasingly in favour of “globality”. López Llanos (2014), reflecting on Moncayo’s work, suggests that the state is not disappearing but has transformed into a new intermediary of globalisation. Neoliberalism, as Sawyer (2004:14) writes, requires government to provide the necessary structures to function and therefore “aims to convert the state into an administrative and calculating organ”. Accordingly, Jessop (2016) considers neoliberalism less a threat to the state than a threat to democracy. In the following passage, he (2016:83–84) describes the change in the function of the state:

[A]s the rhythms of the economy at different scales accelerate relative to those of states at different scales, state apparatuses have less time to determine and co-ordinate political responses to economic events, shocks, and crises [...]. One response has been *withdrawal* from areas where states are actually or allegedly too slow to make a difference or would become overloaded if they tried to keep pace. This *laissez-faire* response frees up the movement of superfast and/or hypermobile capital – increasing the chances of crises generated by relatively unregulated activities with potentially global contagion effects. A second option is to compress decision-making cycles through the shortening of policy development cycles, *fast-tracking decision-making*, and engaging in rapid policy implementation to enable more timely and appropriate interventions. But this means that decisions could be made on the basis of unreliable information, insufficient consultation, lack of participation, etc., even as state managers continue to believe that policy is taking too long to negotiate, formulate, enact, adjudicate, determine, and implement (emphasis added).

Colombian governance has moved along the trends of withdrawal and fast-tracking during the last decades. It privatised many public enterprises (withdrawal), as with the case of Betania-S.A., and fast-tracked decision-making, as with PINES. The state weakened its own control mechanisms. However, as Foucault (2008:132) asserts, “Neoliberalism should not therefore be identified with *laissez-faire*, but rather with permanent vigilance, activity and intervention”. And Colombian scholar Rueda Saiz (2010:42) argues,

this process of economic liberalization did not entail the reduction of the size of the state apparatus. On the contrary, liberalization paralleled the establishment of a new constitution that created a series of major political and institutional reforms that significantly increased state expenditures.

Among these increased state interventions has been the strengthening of state institutions for protecting economic investments.

### *Infrastructure security*

In May 2009, even before El Quimbo's environmental licence had been officially granted, the national government provided armed security for the project's realisation by establishing a special energy battalion "Batallón Especial Energético y Vial" (#12) close to the village La Jagua, Altamira. This special division of the army is responsible for protecting the road and energy infrastructure of the nation. Its website states that the 1,200 soldiers of #12 have "a firm commitment to monitor the department's infrastructure [...] and energy potentials such as the Betania Reservoir and the El Quimbo hydroelectric project" (Quinta División del Ejército Nacional 2011).<sup>372</sup> For the dam opponents, this placement of a military base, coming together with the granting of the environmental licence, delivered a clear message: the state is defending the energy project, not the people.<sup>373</sup> At the time, a newspaper (*El Confidencial Digital* 2009) quoted officials explaining the purpose of the division. A military official stated:

The creation of the battalion has been planned for two years [...]. The start of El Quimbo has accelerated its implementation, since it is concerned with avoiding possible delays, even stoppages in the construction of the plant, due to the strong opposition that the project has encountered from various groups of ecologists and indigenists.

And a member of the regional government emphasised that, "In particular, it [the battalion] seeks to guarantee the safety of the project and so we avoid having to suffer a paralysis because of the presence of irregular groups".

In general, the military divisions responsible for the protection of energy and road infrastructure are part of Colombia's infrastructure security politics that should shield critical infrastructure against attacks from insurgency groups. During the more recent years of armed conflict, the FARC became known for attacks on oil pipelines and other private and public infrastructures. However, to place such a military division just south of El Quimbo dam, in an otherwise peaceful area, can be seen as primarily a source of intimidation for social movements opposing the dam project. In this way, it can be viewed as a technique of counter-insurgency connected to extractivist projects (see e.g. Dunlap 2020). However, the placement of the division became more symbolic over the years as military action around El Quimbo was limited. Another security force was more involved in direct confrontation with the local population.

---

<sup>372</sup> "Soldados que tienen el firme compromiso de vigilar la infraestructura del departamento [...] y los potenciales energéticos como el Embalse de Betania y el proyecto hidroeléctrico El Quimbo."

<sup>373</sup> "The Army created an energy battalion in Huila to take care of the controversial project El Quimbo" (Quintero 2009); "Endesa will have its own military base in Colombia" (*Radio Mundo Real* 2009).

The ESMAD (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios, mobile anti-disturbance squadron) is the Colombian national police riot control. It is nationally known for its aggressive and abusive use of force. Also, at El Quimbo, it was involved in demobilising protests, street blocks and peaceful reunions, and in evicting the resisting population from the valley, as described in Chapter 6. The process of state-led evictions is legally referred to as *amparo policivo de perturbación a la posesión o a la tenencia* (police protection from disruption of possessions or tenure), a law that protects private property and lands of public and social interest (Alcaldía Bogotá n.d.). Mayors and governors can ask for this form of police protection. In the case of the forced evictions at Domingo Arias on 14 February 2012, it was the mayor of Paicol who responded to the request of Emgesa.<sup>374</sup>

For the rural population, after years of fear of being displaced by paramilitaries or guerrillas (up to the 1990s), it is the state who finally succeeded (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:121–22). It seems ironic that the state is ambitious (officially) to protect a multinational investment against FARC activities, while failing to defend much of its civil population against direct violence executed by informal armed actors (Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:126). The caricature of Figure IV-1 illustrates the polemic behind the involvement of the public forces: “Here, recuperating the investors’ confidence maestro!”. The phrase is a modified version of the historic statement, given by a military official during the Palace of Justice siege in November 1985: “Here, defending the democracy maestro!”.<sup>375</sup>

In addition to securing the investment with arms, the government and Emgesa used discourses of security to legitimise it. As mentioned in the above section on the discourse of development, former president Santos defended the ESMAD operations as a “constitutional duty”. When the judiciary prohibited Emgesa from putting the dam into operation, Santos used the state of emergency (in terms of border conflict with Venezuela at the end of 2015) to turn the decision around, calling the dam’s operation a necessity for national security:

We need water; we need more run-off in the Magdalena River. They tell me that Ecopetrol [national oil company] is already suffering huge losses that affect all Colombians. [...]

---

<sup>374</sup> “On January 13, 2012 the company EMGESA S.A. E.S.P. requested before the municipal mayor of Paicol, based on Decree 1575 of 2011, the police *amparo* for the protection of the rights of ownership, possession and tenure of the property La Despenza and La Esperanza; the Mayor assumed the knowledge and notified to the company” (see Corte Constitucional 2014).

<sup>375</sup> The guerrilla group M19 entered the Palace of Justice in the centre of Bogotá and took members of the supreme court and other employees hostage. The military, instead of facilitating negotiations, entered the building by force (destroying it) and killed all M19 members (many not over 20 years old) and most of the hostages. Many bodies were never found. An army officer asked by the radio at that time about what they were doing, said: “¡Aquí, defendiendo la democracia maestro!” (Lemaitre Ripoll 2009:76).

There is a situation that prevents energy from being produced ... Someone compared it to a situation of famine in which the state is throwing away food! (quoted in *El País* 2015).<sup>376</sup>

Hydroelectricity is often represented as a “vital national project on which the ‘fate of the nation’ depends” (Bridge et al. 2018:2). There are also multiple examples in history of how “‘grand narratives’ that imply some form of universal benefit and/or urgent necessity” (Bridge et al. 2018:2) have supported states’ investments in big hydroelectric projects. Santos said further, “It cannot be that because of the decision of one or some judges, millions of Colombians end up suffering dramatic consequences” (*El País* 2015; see also *El Espectador* 2016a). He delegitimises the judiciary and presents the continued closure of the dam gates as a disaster for the Colombian people.



Figure IV-1 Caricature by “Leo”: “Eviction at El Quimbo” (Retrieved from <http://polinizaciones.blogspot.com/2012/02/>, 20 Feb 2020).

Additionally, the company sought to criminalise the resistance against the dam (see Chapter 6). It led to a court case against resistance leaders Miller Dussán and Elsa Ardila for public disturbance, and treated many of the affected people who sought compensation as if they were thieves, or stigmatised them as “free riders” or opportunists (Chapter 5). All of this parallels the defamations that brand environmentalists, indigenists and other social activists not just as “enemies of development” but even as terrorists, putting them into the same category as the

---

<sup>376</sup> Because of the closed border, less petroleum was imported. To make up for the shortage, the president argued that more petroleum needed to be transported from the south, along the Magdalena River. The El Quimbo dam not operating would however restrict the navigability of the river downstream (*El Presidente de la República* 2015).

guerrilla (see Tamayo G. 2003). This stigmatisation justifies violent interventions<sup>377</sup> and is part of the larger securitisation strategy that Colombian politics have followed since Uribe's presidency to strengthen the investors' confidence. Another important aspect of recent politics has been the centralisation of state control.

### *Centralisation*

Major investment projects of national interest, such as large dams and mining operations, have traditionally been managed by the national government.<sup>378</sup> Regional governments have to deal with the results. The electricity generated (or the minerals extracted) reaches the national wholesale market and is distributed there. This was also the case with the El Quimbo dam project, where the local energy infrastructure reaching individual households did not improve, nor did the local energy prices decrease.

In general, the importance of El Quimbo dam did not lie with its potential supply to meet energy demands. Colombia was already a net exporter of energy before El Quimbo was built. But, once Endesa merged Betania-S.A. with Emgesa in 2007 (as described at the beginning of this chapter), it probably expected to build more dams along the upper stream of the Magdalena River in the future. It was known that because of high sedimentation, Betania dam had lost its profitability a long time ago and El Quimbo was rumoured to come to its rescue. To encourage investor confidence, the project had to be realised. An ANLA official admitted that El Quimbo dam was not an economic or a technical decision, but a political one (cited by Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:127). This is also reflected in Uribe's statement, "El Quimbo comes because it comes" ("*El Quimbo iba porque iba*"; cited by Naranjo Aristizábal 2014:127). However, I argue that the reason behind building El Quimbo was not only about pleasing the investor.

Building a large power plant generally makes the receiving region more accessible for other major industries such as mineral exploitation. Mining concessions are given in all parts of the Andean cordilleras. For instance, Emerald, part of the Chinese Sinochem corporation, has extracted oil and continuously expanded its activity in the Páramo de Miraflores (protected mountain wetland within jurisdiction of Gigante and Garzón), east of the El Quimbo valley since 2011. For this investment, the ANLA has also "fast-tracked" approvals (Wu 2019:137).

---

<sup>377</sup> This is similar to the way in which racism is used within modern states to justify violence against certain population groups, according to Foucault (2003:255).

<sup>378</sup> The 1991 Constitution leaves the distribution of responsibilities somewhat open to interpretation. In Chapter 10, I explore this in detail.

Additionally, El Quimbo dam was politically endorsed with two other mega-dams in 2008, one of them the greatest dam project of the nation: Hidroituango. Its high initial cost which increased exponentially (because of several technical disasters during construction together with its controversial location in a very conflictive zone) begs the question why the government pushed through such large constructions. To answer this, I emphasise the role of hydropower plants as a “technology of the modern state”.<sup>379</sup>

Infrastructure itself is key to state power. Anand (2018:158) argues that infrastructure makes citizens subject to the “singular authority of the modern state” which strengthens its sovereignty. Larkin (2013:327) emphasises that infrastructural objects never stand alone, but are in relationship to each other: “They are objects that create the grounds on which other objects operate, and when they do so they operate as systems”. The more centralised the coordination of such systems, the more centralised is the power of the state (Bridge et al. 2018:2). The more decentralised it is, the more independent are the regions. For instance, Murton et al. (2016:425) demonstrate that China “deploys infrastructure to consolidate state space into territory for resource exploitation”, not only within its own state borders. The assembling of infrastructure in place is therefore highly political and can contribute significantly to the image of the state.

Although critical research on infrastructure and on extractivism has accelerated in recent years, few studies have connected both streams of literature. Energy infrastructure offers particular potential to overcome this gap and to reflect back on the power of the state. Energy infrastructure is the “central nervous system” of an economy (European Commission 2011:7). It is of vital importance to extractivist projects and to state-building. McNeish, Borchgrevink and Logan (2015) explore the links between different energy technologies and exploitive practices, as well as energy and (state) power. They point out that “a national electricity grid is a powerful symbol of the internal socio-political coherency of the modern nation-state. [...] Efforts to expand the grid are at the same time attempts at integrating the nation and extending the state’s reach” (McNeish and Borchgrevink 2015:14–15).

Simultaneously, “energy extraction” fuels social–environmental injustice and conflicts (McNeish 2015). Boyer (2014:309) uses “energopower” as an analytical lens to investigate how “human use of energy is increasingly linked to the disruption and destruction of conditions

---

<sup>379</sup> Similar to Penny Harvey (2012:523), who considers infrastructures as technologies of emancipatory modernity.

of life (human and otherwise), [and how] the tensions between dominant energopolitical systems (like carbon fuel) and biopolitical projects (like sustainability) are increasingly evident”. A mega-dam is one such energopolitical system. It is a symbol of power over nature and modernisation. It supports the political centralisation of a nation. Rusca, dos Santos, Menga, Mirumachi, Schwartz, and Hordijk (2018:871) note that “large water infrastructures, like dams, are observable representations of the modern state imaginary and a powerful means of production and reification of state-space”. Analysing the hydroelectric development in Mozambique, they conclude: “This system contributed to reinforce existing hierarchies and facilitated the concentration of power in the hands of a small number of development experts and the political elite” (Rusca et al. 2018:883).

Indeed, El Quimbo dam reflects the centralisation of decision-making within the state apparatus. It also demonstrates the concentration of capital in the hands of a few, in combination with an increased dependency of the local people on the market and institutions and infrastructure of the towns Gigante and Garzón (see Chapter 5). I argue therefore that the strengthening of a centralised capitalist state was one of the goals of constructing the dam.

### The corporate state as enemy

In the eyes of the capitalist state the large hydroelectric dam is a symbol for modernisation (see Figure IV-2). But for the local population at El Quimbo, the visible result of the dam construction was a large water body that they were not allowed to use and could not benefit from in any other way (see Figure IV-3). The deterioration of local road infrastructure connected to the dam construction and the disappearance of social infrastructure owing to decreased population size left the locals with a sense of having been ignored by the state: “There you see that there is no support for us”.<sup>380</sup>

Furthermore, national authorities (mainly the ANLA) attempted to ignore regional authorities and were seen only in company with Emgesa. A speaker (Henry de Jesús Montoya) at the public hearing in November 2016 called the relationship between Emgesa and state agencies a “matrimony”:

The largest offender [Emgesa] has moved within our government; it was a matrimony. I have been denied the right for compensation ... the public hearing is the last resort [*el ultimo*] – the national government is mocking us, no more circus with the communities!

---

<sup>380</sup> Interview 39



Figure IV-2 The El Quimbo dam from the capitalist state perspective: technological innovation and control of nature (retrieved from [Proyectoelquimboemgesa.com.co](http://Proyectoelquimboemgesa.com.co), 05 May 2016).



Figure IV-3 The dam from the local population perspective: environmental and economic deprivation (taken by the author, May 2017)

As demonstrated in Chapter 7, the critique of Emgesa implied a critique of the Colombian state. The El Agrado mayor, Waldina Losada Vega, claimed that the company Emgesa has its “tentacles” everywhere<sup>381</sup> and that the state had failed to defend its people.<sup>382</sup> Bishop Fabio Duque Jaramillo said “The state does not have the communities in mind [...] who is fighting

---

<sup>381</sup> Interview 6

<sup>382</sup> Public hearing, Nov. 2016

against the people, is fighting against god”. Asoquimbo leader, Miller Dussán, referred to the affected people as “victims” of development and of the state (see Chapter 7). Javiar Roa Salazar, lawyer and consultant of the governor of Huila, argued that the ANLA did not act within the legal framework and that Emgesa itself had acted as the judge. Carlos Alberto Cuellar Medina from the CAM (the environmental agency for the upper-Magdalena basin) said that the granting of the licence was illegal and went against the authorities.<sup>383</sup>

Emgesa had undermined Colombian law and democracy, with the support of the national government. The inaction and permissiveness of public authorities throughout the dam realisation produced closures for the people and reinforced an image of a corporate state – a state which is dominated by a political elite that seeks only profit for itself, giving away own resources and responsibilities to multinational corporations. “The state [...] assumes its real function as the corporate state, which legislates for accumulation by dispossession” (Dussán Calderón 2017:17). Miller Dussán (2017:231) defines the corporate state as relying on corporative power rooted in extractivism and neo-colonialism, which turns people and other nature into objects of the market to control the territories. Accordingly, capitalism is not only the prime political project, but multinational companies also have high influence on national politics. They would be “corporate conquistadors” (Boissière, Cabello, McDonagh, Orellana López, Shultz, Sabido, and Tansey 2014; Dussán Calderón 2017:231).

Using official armed actors to enforce political–corporate interests (against social, environmental or technical criteria), the state presented itself as the prime enemy, instead of the energy company Emgesa. The affected people perceived the responsibility in the state institutions to control the actions of the company. Naranjo Aristizábal (2014:144) comments that “the scenarios of confrontation have become a challenge framed in a power dispute in which the [social] leaders feel like facing an enemy for the defence of their territory; that enemy is the State”.

While the national government used the development and the weak state discourse to legitimise hard local interventions and the watering down of licensing processes, the affected population saw the problem as a lack of political will to enforce their rights and consequentially, a too strongly centralised state infiltrated by elite interests. As I argued in Chapter 5, the local population has not seen any of the promises realised for them; development and prosperity have remained abstract concepts. Even when local public institutions pronounced themselves critical

---

<sup>383</sup> Public hearing, Nov. 2016

(like the CAM and later the Huilan Administrative Tribunal), they were ignored. However, another form of the state became visible during the conflict. Especially after the dam filling, the struggle for more local autonomy became pivotal and the election of new regional administrations in 2015 provided new hope for environmental democratisation and the manifestation of a constitutional state.

## 10. The constitutional state

### Environmentally democratising El Quimbo dam

During the El Quimbo dam struggle, the civil society called upon the *estado social de derecho* (constitutional state, rule of law).<sup>384</sup> Article 1 of the 1991 Constitution of the Colombian Republic establishes such a state that would protect civil society's rights. Theoretically, the constitutional state follows three key principles. The first of these is legal equality: every human has rights; the state does not grant these rights but guarantees them; all persons are equal before the law. The second is legal security: constitution and law stand above governments; the rule is separated from the rulers; every state action is bound by the law. The third principle is legal protection: the constitutional court is introduced as an organ of control. Together with other neutral courts, it protect the citizens against the arbitrariness and despotism of governments (Pöttsch 2009). From a social perspective, the main function of the constitutional state is to guarantee and increase the well-being of all its citizens in equality (Barber 2010; see also Díaz Londoño 2009).

The 1991 Constitution of Colombia laid the groundwork not only for the above principles but also for environmental democratisation. The Constitutional Court has increasingly ruled in this direction, without referring to the approach *per se* (Roa García 2016, 2017). Environmental democracy is a relatively new concept that “in its various forms is the product of a mix of environmental struggles and environmental political theorizing” (Fischer 2018:259). Its key principle is that the population facing environmental risk is equally involved in the decision-making concerning that risk. Accordingly, the approach responds to certain claims made by movements for environmental justice, resource sovereignty and

---

<sup>384</sup> Directly translated, this means “social state of rights”. It has its origin in the German concepts *Sozialstaat* and *Rechtsstaat*.

deliberation (Fischer 2018). Roa-Garcia (2017:60) describes environmental democratisation as

a process through which decisions about the transformation of nature-society relations are progressively taken by a broader range of society and at the same time increasingly authentic (made by well-informed and competent decision makers) and substantive (consequential).

The World Resource Institute (2015b) developed an “Environmental Democracy Index” after the concept increasingly received attention in global governance especially in relation to debates on climate change and sustainability. Three indicators are considered in determining the index of a country: access to information and transparency, meaningful participation and legal accountability and compensation. The evaluation report on Colombia’s environmental democracy index states: “The Colombian constitution grants the public a broad right to access environmental information” and, “Colombia’s laws suggest a national commitment to environmental democracy”. However, it adds: “The public is rarely provided the right to participate in the preparation of plans that may impact the environment” (World Resource Institute 2015a).

#### **Box 6. Environmental democracy as discourse in recent politics**

In 2018, the Colombian government implemented two mechanisms in line with environmental democracy: first, a new legislative project was initiated for the creation of a national roundtable on the environment (El Congreso de Colombia 2018) and second, the Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development created the “Intersectoral Roundtable for Environmental Democracy” to promote the ratification and implementation of a South American treaty, referred to as Escazú Agreement (Minambiente 2018b).

This “Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean”, was negotiated by 24 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, in March 2018 in Escazú, Costa Rica. In Article 1, it states that the purpose is to “ensure the full and effective implementation of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making processes and access to justice in environmental matters, as well as the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of each person, of present and future generations, to live in a healthy environment and sustainable development”.

Additionally, the Colombian government started to hold sub-regional roundtables to implement the strategy of the environmental dimension of the “Development Plans with Territorial Approach” as committed to by the government in the rural agenda of the peace agreement with the FARC (see also Box 8). Deputy Minister of Policy and Environmental Standardisation, Willer Guevara Hurtado, said: “To achieve a rural transformation in Colombia, first a reconciliation with the environment must be made; we must advance in the resolution of social and ecological conflicts to minimize the environmental impact caused by them” (quoted by Minambiente 2018a).

Indeed, even though the Colombian government has recently integrated environmental democratisation into their terminology (in response to transnational agreements; see Box 6), so far, the application of the concept seems restricted to institutionalising roundtables on environmental issues related to development planning. As the case of El Quimbo exemplifies, it has been civil society rather than the government, which has demanded that the law is recognised, activating different principles of environmental democracy. In this section of the chapter, I analyse the different political processes around El Quimbo that suggest the existence of a constitutional form of the state. These are legal activism, contesting sovereignty, citizen participation and decentralising infrastructure.

### *New constitution and activism*

With the new Constitution in 1991, the constitutional court was established as equivalent in position to the already existent supreme court. Since then it has increasingly tried to guarantee the well-being of the population according to the principle of an *estado social de derecho*. The constitution itself did not establish social rights as fundamental. However, the legislature was expected to put this into place once the economic conditions were guaranteed to finance welfare mechanisms. Despite constant economic growth (see Chapter 8) this did not happen. As a result, the constitutional court introduced the right of *minimo vital* (subsistence minimum or vital minimum). While it first used this right to protect individual lives (through guaranteeing a pension for the sick and elderly, for example), it soon turned towards making more abstract and general rulings that would protect whole population groups (e.g. classes) and gave direct guidance to the government to apply the rulings into policy (Rueda Saiz 2010).<sup>385</sup> This was possible thanks to an active civil society that engaged in developing the concept of vital minimum in its own terms. “[It] generated an emerging theory of social rights in contemporary Colombia that took on a discursive life of its own, far beyond the institutional remit of the Court” (Huneus, Couso, and Sieder 2010:14; see also Rueda Saiz 2010).

Also, the resistance against El Quimbo took up the concept of *minimo vital* to claim the renewal of the socio-economic census (described in Chapter 4). As already mentioned in Chapter 6, Asoquimbo argued in 2012 that the productive activity of the local population was affected to such an extent that their minimum subsistence was no longer guaranteed. While local courts did not see proof of this impact, the constitutional court ruled in the claimants’ favour. With

---

<sup>385</sup> It took up a normative and policy-guiding role also in other areas.

Sentence T-135/13, it reopened the census of the affected in March 2013 to include everyone whose *minimo vital* was at risk. The Constitutional Court (2013:58–59) specifies:

[...] this Chamber determines, as a measure of protection for other *paleros* [extractors of sand], fisherfolk, truck drivers and builders, among others, who are in a similar situations as the actors [who made the demand], that EMGESA, within a term of fifteen (15) days from notification of the present judgment, start the elaboration of a new census applying the postulates of this Sentence and respecting, in particular, the right to the effective participation of the inhabitants of the area. To complete the census ordered here, [Emgesa] will have six (6) months, counted from the expiration of the first fifteen (15) days. In relation to this point, it also orders the National Environmental Agency -ANLA- to make the participation processes effective on a continuous basis, in the terms transcribed and expressed in Resolution No. 899 of 2009 [the environmental licence].

The ruling not only put demands on Emgesa, but also reminded the ANLA of the environmental licence and of its responsibility to follow up on its stated commitment to participation (see section on participation below). This ruling marked a milestone in the El Quimbo dam struggle. Since then, people have demanded their rights for compensation and have insisted that the company complies with the environmental licence, referring to T-135/13. Many affected people received recognition of damages by the dam in the second, third or later rounds of compensation allocations (sarcastically referred to as “drawings”)<sup>386</sup> specifically because of the court ruling. But the ruling was also ground-breaking in another way. In this same ruling (T-135/13), the court highlights that there are distinct ideas of “development” and that the “general interest” cannot prevail over the rights of the individuals:

In a social and democratic State under the rule of law, as it is enshrined in Article 1 of our Constitution, a general and abstract priority cannot be given to the general interest and to the predominant vision of ‘development’ or ‘progress’ brought by infrastructure works, when these affect the fundamental rights of people (Corte Constitucional 2013:28).

The court based its decision on prior experiences of the impacts of dams. The reports consulted include the Final Report of the World Commission on Dams (2000), the Declaration of Temaca (International Meeting of those affected by Dams in 2010, International Rivers), American Convention on Human Rights, as well as prior court rulings, for example related to the Urrá I dam project along the Sinú River (northern Colombia), which had already identified faulty procedures involving the affected communities in light of the multiple impacts (T-194 de 1999; see e.g. Orduz Salinas and Rodríguez Garavito 2012; and Chapter 1).

---

<sup>386</sup> Interview 31

The court carried out fundamental research on the issues at stake and made parallels to assist its decision regarding the struggles at El Quimbo. The language used by the court targets and directly counters the language of development used by the capitalist state as described in Chapter 9. It therefore not only opened the door for many of the affected people to be acknowledged and compensated as affected, but also reaffirmed and strengthened the resistance movement in its visions and hopes. Civil society took the ruling as a message to the planners of energy politics to look for alternative sources for energy generation in the future (Soler Villamizar et al. 2014b).<sup>387</sup>

Furthermore, the constitutional court supported the Huilan Administrative Tribunal in its decision to prohibit Emgesa from operating the dam before having complied with its commitments (Sentence C-753 of 2015). As such, it ruled against the efforts of the national government to use the state of emergency, caused by a border conflict with Venezuela at that time, to sidestep the Tribunal's decision (Decree 1979 of 2015). One court member explained:

After examining the content of the grounds invoked by the Government and the emergency measures adopted to confront and address the crisis generated by the unilateral closure of the border with Venezuela, the Court concluded that there is no external connection between the reasons presented for issuing Decree 1770 of 2015 [state of emergency] and the aforementioned measures [allowing El Quimbo to operate] (quoted by Gúesguán Serpa 2015b).

For the affected population, the constitutional court was as an essential public body that put the national government in its place, reminding it to respect the law itself. As already argued in Part III, the El Quimbo dam case, as with other resource struggles, contributed to the judicialisation of conflict and ultimately of politics in Colombia. Many actors in and outside the state (and legal system) have taken up legal language to support their claims and demands. This is a trend which has been observed and documented in many countries of Latin America in recent years. Huneus et al. (2010:3) point out:

In the past, courts were not expected to defend – let alone expand – citizen rights, but to quietly preserve the status quo through formalist interpretation. [...] But in recent years several high courts have begun to cast themselves as defenders of rights and to intervene in significant political controversies. And, correspondingly, political claims more often take legal forms. Activists throughout the region increasingly use courts as a stage for their struggles and as a portal through which to import favourable international norms.

---

<sup>387</sup> Interview 20

Huneus et al. (2010:9) identify the following three developments as being critically important for judicialisation in Latin America:

1) expansion of the domain of social and political life that is articulated in legal language and through legal institutions; 2) the expansion of the number and kinds of legal instruments that have become available for use in political struggles; and 3) ever more frequent recourse to legal language and legal instruments as a strategy within types of political struggles that have traditionally turned to law and courts.

The discussion on the judicialisation of conflict at El Quimbo in Part III illustrates these three developments in the Colombian context. In general, as stated in Chapter 8, it was civil mobilisation that led to the formulation of a new Constitution and despite the fact that many hopes connected to it were soon disappointed,<sup>388</sup> the social movements in Colombia had chosen a peaceful route and this route had been accompanied by the constitution.<sup>389</sup> Lemaitre Ripoll (2009:386) says that this choice is explained by “an emotion linked not to the concrete benefits, but to the political and cultural meanings invoked by the law”. The state still uses the law for the legitimisation of its own politics; however, the law also became the mechanism to control the state and social movement increasingly learned how to use it. Lemaitre Ripoll (2009:392) explains:

For activists, the law appears on the one hand as a constant threat, a threat of demobilisation, of remaining in pure promises, that the law always puts itself on the side of the strong. On the other hand, the right appears as a hope not only for real benefits, but also for the possibility of re-signifying identities, of recreating their lives, and above all, of giving meaning to the suffering of which they have been witnesses, to the things, they have seen and which they have survived.

In other words, law and justice might allow different political projects, but that implies being able to imagine an alternative reality and to strive for its materialisation. “The emotional investment in law is a political project, a project to liberalise politics and to defend human dignity” (Lemaitre Ripoll 2009:394).

The new constitution initiated the process of judicialisation of politics, a process that has the potential for empowerment (see also Cepeda-Espinoza 2005; Domingo 2004). As observed by

---

<sup>388</sup> The new Constitution can be linked to regional authoritarian rule (as discussed in Chapter 8) and to large scale privatisation of state businesses (as shown in Chapter 9). Furthermore, the 1990s and early 2000s were marked by new waves of violence connected to the spread of drug trafficking, the (political) rise of the paramilitary umbrella organisation AUC and the “war on drugs” (see Ávila Martínez 2012).

<sup>389</sup> Some scholars critically refer to the unbroken belief of social movements in the legal system as “legal fetish” or “fetish of the law”; see Chapter 6 (also Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 2009; Rodríguez Garavito 2011; Weitzner 2017).

Roa García (2017:61), “The Constitution of 1991 opened up a window of opportunity for broadening the horizon of contestation”. An important aspect of this was not only the defence and developments of rights, but also extending the participation of the regions (people and administrations) in the decision-making that concerned their environment (environmental democratisation). Accordingly, at El Quimbo, the social movement linked the struggle to questions regarding territorial autonomy, citizen participation and decentralisation of infrastructure.

### *Sovereignty in contestation*

After the filling of the dam, the situation at El Quimbo received much more attention from local and regional public authorities (as shown in Chapter 7). The anger of the population was provoked by the company’s ignorance and disrespect of the region, which coincided with the regional election. Consequently, a governor and mayors were elected who openly opposed El Quimbo dam and advocated for more regional decision-making capacity over land and resource use.

During his administration, Governor Carlos Julio Gonzáles extended his reach further when he was elected president of the National Federation of the Provinces in 2018 (*El Tiempo* 2018a; described in Box 7). His goal was to defend the interests of the regions within the state system. He summarised the successes of his first year in that position as follows, listing in particular three important advances in strengthening the regions: (1) territorial finances: laying the foundation to close the gap of tax allocation between central and regional governments, (2) regional support: discussing with the congress the General System of Participation<sup>390</sup> and the “Law of the Regions”<sup>391</sup> and (3) technical support for *regalías* (royalties)<sup>392</sup>: analysing the need for reforming the system of *regalías* with respect to the territorial entities (Gobernación del Huila 2019). His election to represent all governors around the country demonstrates the level of support in the Colombian regions of the idea of increased territorial autonomy.

---

<sup>390</sup> This is an aspect of the constitution that regulates the distribution of responsibilities between the territorial entities.

<sup>391</sup> Granted in December 2018 and allows *departamentos* with similar issues and interests to constitute institutionalised sub-regions called “Regiones Administrativas y de Planeación”. Such division can create and coordinate projects, funded by the state. Examples are the coffee-grower region “*eje cafetero*” and the “*departamentos* of the Caribbean Sea” (*El Espectador* 2018a).

<sup>392</sup> Royalties are the payments that the oil and mining companies make to the Colombian state for exploiting deposits of non-renewable natural resources.

### **Box 7. La Federación Nacional de Departamentos (FND)**

All 32 governors of Colombia are members of the FND. They regularly elect a president among their ranks to represent their interests on the level of national politics. The body has “the objective of working in the defence and the strengthening of the territorial entities as strategic and essential piece between the nation and the municipality”. Core principles of the FND are the administrative and financial autonomy of the territorial entities, respect for ideological plurality, the promotion of integral development and respect for the political constitution and the laws (Official mission statement, retrieved from [fnd.org.co](http://fnd.org.co) 06. Aug 2020).

While specifically ethnic minorities, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities have historical claimed territorial autonomy, the territorial administrations themselves have sought more autonomy and authority. One of the main points of contestation in this struggle over “resource sovereignty” (McNeish 2017a) between state divisions has been about who owns the subsoil. The central government has continuously argued that the subsoil is owned by the *nation* and therefore it can decide alone on its use, without needing to consult the receiving territorial authorities (see Decrees 934 of 2013 and 2691 of 2014). The central government claims ultimate authority over the national resources.<sup>393</sup> However, Article 3 of the Colombian Constitution of 1991 states that the nation’s sovereignty lies exclusively with the people (“*La soberanía reside exclusivamente en el pueblo, del cual emana el poder público*”), recognising the principle of popular sovereignty.

Popular sovereignty emphasises that the authority of the state is based on the consent of its people (democracy). The consent is guaranteed through majority vote or the participation of elected representatives in government (Patrick 2006). Furthermore, Article 322 of the Constitution says, “The *State* owns the subsoil and non-renewable natural resources, without prejudice to the rights acquired and perfected in accordance with the pre-existing laws” (emphasis added). It is therefore the responsibility of the state, which is constituted by its territorial entities. The 1991 Constitution states in its first article:

Colombia is a social State under the rule of law [constitutional state], organized in the form of a unitary decentralized republic with *autonomous territorial entities*. It is democratic, participatory and pluralist, founded on respect for human dignity, on the labour and solidarity of the persons constituting it and on the primacy of the general interest (emphasis added).<sup>394</sup>

---

<sup>393</sup> This also has a direct implication on the distribution of royalties from oil and mineral exploitation.

<sup>394</sup> “*Colombia es un Estado social de derecho, organizado en forma de República unitaria, descentralizada, con autonomía de sus entidades territoriales, democrática, participativa y pluralista, fundada en el respeto de la dignidad humana, en el trabajo y la solidaridad de las personas que la integran y en la prevalencia del interés general.*” Translated version at: [http://ceprcentre.org/doc/HRC/Colombia/CCPR.C.COL.6\\_En.pdf](http://ceprcentre.org/doc/HRC/Colombia/CCPR.C.COL.6_En.pdf) Retrieved 20 June 2020.

According to the same text, territorial entities are provinces (*departamentos*), districts, municipalities and indigenous territories (*resguardos*; Article 286).<sup>395</sup> “The territorial entities enjoy autonomy for the management of their interests, within the limits of the Constitution and the law” (Article 287). The “organic law of territorial planning” would establish “the distribution of powers between the Nation and the territorial entities” (Article 288). Further, Article 311 states:

The municipality, as a fundamental entity of the political-administrative division of the State, is responsible for providing public services as determined by law, building works that demand local progress, order the development of their territory, promote community participation, improve social and cultural rights of its inhabitants and fulfil the other functions assigned to it by the Constitution and the laws.

As mentioned in Chapter 8, the new constitution consolidated a process of decentralisation. Rueda Saiz (2010:42) explains what this meant in terms of political and administrative power:

Municipalities and regions could now elect their own mayors and governors, and they had greater control over their administration. Regional and municipal governments could now use their economic resources more freely, and they could acquire public and private debts without significant control from the central government. They also acquired greater leeway to increase their personnel and to decide how to distribute public resources.<sup>396</sup>

In light of this legal framework, the directly elected territorial administrations should have substantial say in the use of their subsoil and resources and the distribution of its benefits (*regalías*). Also, the peace agreement with the FARC in 2016 again emphasised that such territorial participation is necessary for peace (see Box 8 on territorial peace).

Accordingly, the constitutional court ruled in 2016 that the municipalities have the competence to decide on the use of their subsoil, and in that case, concerning mining activities. The municipalities can hold referenda (*consultas populares*) to take such decisions (Sentence T-445, Corte Constitucional 2016).<sup>397</sup>

Roa García (2017:69) explains the broader meaning of this ruling:

The evolution observed in the decisions of the Court regarding consultations, from ruling T-123 in 2009 [referenda as expression of citizen participation – scope and limits] up to decision T-445 in 2016, reflects a transformative political process, in line with other

---

<sup>395</sup> The meaning of *territorio* for ethnic minorities is defined in the victims and land restitution law (No. 1448; Ministerio del Interior de Colombia 2011; Articles 33, 40, 45).

<sup>396</sup> “The process of fiscal, administrative and partially political decentralisation” already began during the government of President Belisario Betancur (1982–1986) and was consolidated with the 1991 Political Constitution (Ávila Martínez 2012:4).

<sup>397</sup> For a more detailed account on this legal contention see McNeish (2017a).

processes that reflect, more than an independent court, a court that has undertaken a particularly sweeping pattern of activism (Landau 2015). The difference in the case of the defense of citizens' political participation in socio-environmental issues is that the Court has extended its base of support from the middle class to the historically marginalized peasant community. In the progressive rulings, the Court has legitimized the struggles of peasant communities across the country to protect their rights to a healthy environment and to recognition as legitimate decision makers, as well as the recognition of territories as configured through hydrosocial relations.

#### **Box 8. Territorial peace**

An important advance towards ending the internal armed conflict, and reason for hope, was the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC in November 2016. The agreement was the result of an active civil society engagement, and the "Rural Agenda" was the first and one of the most debated points. How should peace come to the regions? To take account of the diverse experiences and needs of the regions suffering from the war, the negotiating parties agreed on a so-called "territorial approach" to peace (*enfoque territorial*). The "Comprehensive Rural Reform" (*Reforma Rural Integral*) "views Colombia's rural areas [original: *territorios*] as a socio-historic setting of social and cultural diversity in which communities –men and women– play a major role in defining the improvements of their living conditions and in defining the development of the country as part of a vision of urban-rural integration" (Final Peace Agreement 2016:10).

It states further:

The territorial-based approach of the Agreement requires recognition and consideration of the economic, cultural and social needs, characteristics and peculiarities of Colombia's territories and communities, thereby guaranteeing socio-environmental sustainability; furthermore, it involves implementing the various measures comprehensively and in a coordinated way, with the active participation of all citizens. All of Colombia's regions and territories will contribute to the implementation of the Agreement, with the participation of territorial-based authorities and the various sectors of society. (Final Peace Agreement 2016:6–7)

The paragraphs on the territorial approach to peace sound promising; however, the discussion in a forum article on "territorial peace" (Cairo et al. 2018) elucidates that the different actors of the peace process (from the FARC and the government to opposition and civil society) still contest the way peace is to be put into practice. Cairo et al. (2018:4) notice that with the term "territorial peace", actors try to highlight the need for decentralisation and greater political participation in the peace process. This however faces a significant political opposition, as many conservative figures fear that parts of the national territory are, in effect, handed over to FARC interests and therefore impede neoliberal advances (privatisation and commodification), as already indicated by the weak state discourse. In his comment in the same forum article, Piazzini-Suárez criticises the way that the peace agreement still treats territory as the "rural" (region) and as a mere container of resources and people (place), instead of seeing it as "an active factor in the production of social dynamics" (*territorio*; Cairo et al. 2018:6–7).

Although the decision targeted the management of the subsoil, it enforced the positions of territorial administrations when dealing with land and resource use in general, as well as their

capacity to consult the population. It also encouraged local politicians in Huila to activate participatory mechanisms and to take a stance against the national government (see the following section on participation). El Agrado mayor, Waldina Losada, considers the ruling as having provided the municipalities with the legal means to defend their territory.<sup>398</sup>

In addition to the regulations on territorial autonomy, Article 79 of the 1991 Constitution was essential to the decision regarding Sentence T-445 of 2016. The article manifests: “All persons have the right to enjoy a healthy environment. The law will guarantee the participation of the community in the decisions that may affect it”. This resonates with the core principles of environmental democracy. In the following paragraphs, I discuss participation in environmental decision-making as it is granted by the law, and how this has been translated into practice. I concentrate on prior consultation processes, local referenda (*consultas populares*), public hearings, and thematic roundtables.<sup>399</sup>

### *Participation*

In Colombia, as in many other countries, the environmental licence needs to be granted in cases of investment projects with significant ecological and social influence and on the basis of an environmental impact assessment. Fischer (2018) considers the principle of environmental participation “enshrined” in environmental impact assessment law: “Such assessments require public consultation and participatory input on the part of citizens—in theory if not always in practice—throughout the research and decision processes” (Fischer 2018:260). Environmental impact assessments were included in Colombian law in 1993 (Ley 99; El Congreso de Colombia 1993). The same law considers environmental public hearings as *possibly* being included in the licensing process (Article 72). However, it demands participation, in the form of prior consultation, only if indigenous and black traditional communities are potentially affected by the project (Article 76). Prior consultation is a process where the public is invited to participate in the formulation, application and evaluation of projects, works and activities that may directly affect them (Línea de Investigación en Derecho Ambiental n.d.). This is in line with the Constitution of 1991 and as ratified by the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention the same year.<sup>400</sup>

---

<sup>398</sup> Interview 6

<sup>399</sup> Other civil control mechanisms, but not considered participatory, are petitions (*derecho de petición*) and the legal claim for the protection of rights (*acción de tutela*), guaranteed by the 1991 political constitution (see Sánchez Vanegas 2012).

<sup>400</sup> The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, also known as ILO Convention 169, was formulated by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1989. In Article 7 it states: “The peoples concerned shall have the right to decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and

In 2002, the Ministry of the Environment further specified community involvement in the environmental licensing process. Decree 1728 of 2002 states in Article 30:

The communities located in the area of direct influence of the project must be broadly and adequately informed in relation to the nature of the environmental impacts identified, and the measures provided in the environmental management plan; likewise, once the licensed activities have begun, they must be periodically informed and participate in the results of the implementation of the environmental management plan and the corrective measures derived from it (Minambiente 2002).

However, this law was soon modified. With Decree 1180 of 2003, the government erased Article 30 and limited all participation again to projects that affect indigenous or Afro-Colombian territories only (Minambiente 2003).<sup>401</sup>

Consequently, social movements confronting extractivist projects around Colombia started to demand referenda (“consultation with the people”).<sup>402</sup> In 2016, the constitutional court reacted with Sentence T-445 (mentioned in section above) and “confirmed the municipalities’ right to consult their citizens about issues dealing with mining and oil extraction in their territories” (Roa García 2017:58). Dietz (2018:101) explains the background to the ruling:

In Colombia, referenda are enshrined in the 1991 Constitution and its use is regulated by Articles 50 to 57 of the National Participation Law (Law 134 of 1994). In addition, Article 33 of the Municipal Law (Law 136 of 1994) gives local governments the right to conduct referenda on matters of vital importance for the future of a municipality or the welfare of the local population, for example, on issues related to land planning, land use or other economic activities. Until July 2015, only the mayors could initiate referenda, but with Law 1757 of 2015, the possibility of conducting popular citizen initiative referenda through the collection of signatures was established (own translation).

The first famous case of a referendum was held over mining activities in Piedras, Tolima, in 2013 (La Colosa; see Dietz 2018; McNeish 2017a). By October 2018, 92 municipalities had

---

spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control, to the extent possible, over their own economic, social and cultural development”.

<sup>401</sup> How prior consultation has been translated into practice, has been discussed in detail by authors such as Leifsen, Gustafsson, et al. (2017); Leifsen, Sánchez-Vázquez, et al. (2017); Machado et al. (2017); Orduz Salinas and Rodríguez Garavito (2012); Rodríguez Garavito (2011); Schilling-Vacaflor (2016); Weitzner (2017).

<sup>402</sup> Dietz (2018) translates the Spanish *consulta popular* (direct translation: popular consultation, consultation with the people) into “referendum”, however Roa García distinguishes between popular consultation and referendum: “in a referendum people have the opportunity to vote to approve or reject a draft legal rule, or to revoke one that is in place in the respective jurisdiction [e.g. the referendum on the peace agreement]; popular consultations give an electorate the opportunity to vote on a particular ‘yes or no question’ relevant to their jurisdiction” (Roa García 2017:58). This section refers to the latter. For a better distinction to prior consultations however, I use the English term referendum as Dietz here.

voted against extractivist activities on their lands (Sepúlveda 2018). Accordingly, Dietz (2018) considers the referendum a mechanism of protest, which has been used to veto Colombian mining politics and to decide over matters that affect the future of the regions.

The referenda against mining activities also animated the municipality of Oporapa to hold a referendum on Emgesa's plan to build another dam further up-stream of El Quimbo. Emgesa had applied for an environmental licence for the dam already in 2012. Asoquimbo and Ríos Vivos supported the local population in their quest for a referendum. The local council finally planned it for December 2016. However, the Huilan Administrational Tribunal stopped the process, because it considered the question to be voted on as unconstitutional (misleading and biased; *La Nación* 2017a). As Emgesa withdrew from the dam proposal soon after in 2017, the referendum became superfluous. In Cabrera, Cudinamarca (central Colombia), the municipality voted against Emgesa's plans to build several micro-dams in an endangered mountain system and prevented the project from being realised as planned (see Chapter 6). For the El Quimbo dam, it was too late to hold a referendum; however, the alliance of regional governments and civil society activated other participatory mechanisms guaranteed by the environmental law.

Decree 330 of 2007 regulates environmental public hearings as required by every environmental licensing process. The environmental authority should carry out a public hearing prior to the granting of a licence, its modification, or in case of occurring violations during the project's realisation (Article 3). The mechanism seeks to inform social organisations, the community, or public and private entities about the request for a licence, permits or environmental concessions, and about the mitigation measures proposed or implemented to correct or compensate for their impacts. The Decree states explicitly that "the public hearing is not an instance for debate or discussion" (Article 2). It states further in Article 2:

In the public hearing, opinions, information and documents will be received, which must be taken into account at the time of decision-making by the competent environmental authority. No decisions will be taken during the public hearing. This participation mechanism does not exhaust [*agota*] the right of citizens to participate through other instruments in the corresponding administrative action (Minambiente 2007).

In practice, "participation" became a technical procedure to inform the public about the project and its plans for mitigation and compensation (see also Sánchez Vanegas 2012:34). Nevertheless, even the implementation of only technical procedures for the provision of information has been highly irregular in Colombia. By February 2011, a total of 2,142

environmental licences had been granted, of which only 60 included a public hearing and only 141 included a prior consultation (see Figure IV-4; Rodríguez 2011). It can however be suggested that the number has increased drastically after February 2011, as the “mining-energy locomotive” put up speed just then, and communities increasingly demanded the law to be recognised. Until 2018, around 1,300 prior consultations were held within ethnic communities (Held 2018).

The environmental licence for the El Quimbo dam required a public hearing prior to the project’s initiation. The impact of that participation process was limited even in terms of information-sharing (as discussed in Chapter 6). Later, the anti-dam movement demanded a second public hearing to follow up on the licence and Emgesa’s compliancy with it. This was successful, with the support of the regional government.

Año	Licencias ambientales otorgadas	Consultas previas	Audiencias públicas
1993	77	0	0
1994	160	6	1
1995	183	7	13
1996	173	6	4
1997	137	10	3
1998	104	11	6
1999	115	6	6
2000	96	4	3
2001	92	11	3
2002	75	4	1
2003	107	0	0
2004	89	3	3
2005	138	1	0
2006	108	21	4
2007	105	16	3
2008	96	10	1
2009	99	8	7
2010	158	16	1
2011 (febrero)	30	1	1
Total	2142	141	60

Fuente: Respuesta a derecho de petición fechado el 9 de febrero de 2011. Ministerio de Ambiente, Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial.

Figure IV-4 List of environmental licences granted between 1993 and Feb. 2011 and the corresponding numbers on prior consultations (middle column) and public hearings taken out in these years (right column; Rodríguez 2011:13).

After the regional elections in 2015, the new governor Carlos Julio Gonzáles, together with Asoquimbo, designed and established a roundtable: the thematic roundtable on environment, water and territory. An environmental roundtable (*mesas tematicas/tecnicas ambientales*) is primarily a space for dialogue and mediation, increasingly made use of in recent years. Here,

different interest groups (officials, experts, industry and civil society representatives) come together during several sessions (held regularly over longer periods) to discuss environmental issues, territorial plans and resource management and to inform decision-makers. The central government is funding these spaces, which can be of open, invited or closed character. Because the roundtable cannot take decisions themselves, their political impact can be questioned. However, in the case of Huila, the civil society appropriated the space to guide the governor.

With the roundtable on environment, water and territory, the new alliance between Asoquimbo and politicians created and institutionalised a forum for sharing information, discussion and planning (see Figure IV-5). The regular meetings held were headed by at least one representative of the Huilan government (often the governor himself), the respective municipalities (usually the mayors), Asoquimbo (usually Miller Dussán), and the Pastoral Social (the lawyer to the diocese). Every meeting had a main topic and invited speakers to talk about it. In general, the roundtable brought together different actors to debate about environmental issues, and how to handle those issues. This process had been mostly open and transparent. Affected people attending were able to participate in the debate, ask questions and raise concerns. Through these meetings, the governor received the arguments to successfully pressure the ANLA to hold the public hearing on the environmental licence of El Quimbo and, once this was achieved, he received feedback on how the hearing should be designed.<sup>403</sup> The thematic roundtable is therefore a potentially important mechanism for environmental democratisation.

The public hearing to follow up on the environmental licence of El Quimbo dam, in November 2016, was the first of its kind within the energy sector in Colombia (Dussán Calderón 2017:260) and therefore marked another important achievement for environmental democratisation. The main purpose was for the Environmental Ministry and the ANLA to listen to all the contributions made by the affected population, as well as by experts and politicians. Many speakers highlighted violations of their rights, quoting human rights, the constitution and case-related sentences, such as T-135/13 that reopened the census. Politicians used the public hearing to attack Emgesa and the national decision-making. The Huilan Governor, Carlos Julio González, said at the public hearing that “the public policy allowed the systematic and permanent violation of the fundamental rights of the people having lived in the area, who handed over the lands to a multinational with the right to expropriate ... This is a rupture of the

---

<sup>403</sup> Important factor was the setup of the speakers: who speaks in what order and for how long. How much space does Emgesa get, how much the mayors etc. The governor negotiated this with the ANLA.

constitutional framework of the state”. The ombudsman (*defensora del pueblo*), Dr Eugenia Ponce de León, affirmed at the hearing that the local authorities need to be consulted.<sup>404</sup>



Figure IV-5 Thematic Roundtable Meeting, Garzón in February 2017 (taken by the author, Event 4).

Local politics were judicialised and confronted national politics. The public hearing, a technical procedure as granted by the law, was appropriated and re-politicised (Leifsen, Gustafsson, et al. 2017). The alliance turned it back into a tool of accountability. The two-day event received national attention, as it was the successful result of demanding the activation of participatory mechanisms as guaranteed in the law and an important step for environmental democratisation.

Even though the El Quimbo environment quieted down following the public hearing, the political pressure continued towards decentralising state infrastructure. Decentralising the state system is key to environmental democratisation, not only in terms of decision-making capacities but also in terms of social and economic infrastructure.

### *Decentralisation*

On 6 December 2018, the “National Commission to follow up on the non-compliances of the environmental licence of El Quimbo” was established (*la Comisión Nacional de Seguimiento a los incumplimientos de la Licencia Ambiental de El Quimbo*). Governor Gonzáles announced at that occasion: “We have not been, nor will we be, complaisant with the non-compliances of Emgesa” (Gobernación del Huila 2018). Two months later, the commission met for the first

---

<sup>404</sup> Actually, even Emgesa’s staff blamed the state as it is the one granting the environmental licence, which guides the compensation schemes applied (Interviews 38 and 52).

time. Delegates of the Ministry of the Environment, the ANLA, the National Land Agency, the Government of Huila, the CAM, Asoquimbo leaders and representatives of those affected attended. The stated purpose was to follow up on the obligations Emgesa had not complied with, specifically with land restitution, infrastructure and housing (Dussán Calderón 2019).

In response to the continued pressure from local authorities after the dam filling, Emgesa has become more flexible concerning the use of the reservoir. From a later communication with one of the inhabitants of Rioloro it appears that Emgesa changed El Quimbo dam from “single use” (energy generation) to “multiple use”. The company (together with the government) has started to fund initiatives for fish cultivation and tourism to re-initiate production in the region.<sup>405</sup> For instance, a ferry service over the reservoir would be installed to increase local connectivity as well as attract tourists. Additionally, Emgesa started to consult with the western municipalities of the dam about the possible route for the new ring-road which should increase the connectivity of the region. The missing link became especially apparent during the road collapse between Gigante and Garzón in 2019 (mentioned in Chapter 5).

Developing these infrastructures may spark new industries, and will include people in a system which has marginalised them. As discussed in Chapter 5, the mega-dam has disrupted and detached communities. The alternative proposal for a peasant reserve received wide support among the local population because it would have strengthened local infrastructure and institutions and embedded those into the national infrastructure of organic food production. As a technology of engagement, it had the potential to be socially and environmentally just. However, El Quimbo was realised and the local infrastructure degraded.

The new infrastructures that Emgesa had promised during several compensation negotiations (such as the ring road, a ferry, and aquaculture) could re-establish certain connectivity. The participation of the local population and local administrations in the planning and elaboration of such projects is essential to their successful implementation. Formerly compensated infrastructure lacked such participation and instead increased detachment, as seen in Chapter 5. For example, even though not a great deal of land was available for the resettlements, the design of the residential areas could have been done differently, if the needs and wishes of the receiving households had been taken into consideration.

---

<sup>405</sup> Private communication with Diego in Rioloro via chat in September 2019 (see Interview 44).

Working closely with the community action councils (see Box 9 for legal framework) could “democratise infrastructure” and support environmental democratisation. Instead of involving single households or family members as separate units, communities (*veredas* or neighbourhoods) could consult and discuss with each other what would be beneficial for all its members and not only for the individual (see Figure IV-6). The affected population initiated several of these processes, independent of Emgesa, to tackle common problems. By 2017, despite lacking a formalised community council, the new cattle-owners of Nueva Veracruz met regularly to discuss the limitations in their business and how they could develop it, for example by putting lands and herds together (so the herd could potentially become larger to increase profits for each cattle-owner).<sup>406</sup> In El Hobo, ten fishermen and women applied together for state funding to initiate a fish-farming business. The application was successful, and they started to set up the tanks and water pipes early in 2017 (see Figure IV-7).

**Box 9. Legal framework for *Juntas de Acción Comunal***

The 1991 Constitution states in Article 318:

In order to improve the provision of services and ensure the participation of citizens in the management of local public affairs, councils may divide their municipalities into communes in the case of urban areas, and in *corregimientos* (and *veredas*) in the case of rural areas. In each of the communes or *corregimientos* there will be a local administrative board of popular election, composed of the number of members determined by law, which will have the following functions:

1. Participate in the preparation of municipal plans and programs for economic and social development and public works.
2. Monitor and control the provision of municipal services in one’s commune or *corregimiento* and the investments made with public resources.
3. Formulate investment proposals before the national, departmental and municipal authorities responsible for preparing the respective investment plans.
4. Distribute the global items assigned by the municipal budget.
5. Exercise the functions delegated to them by the council and other local authorities. The departmental assemblies may organize administrative boards for the fulfillment of the functions indicated by the act of their creation in the territory that it determines.

The Constitutional Court Sentence C-580 of 2001 clarifies in Article 8 the definition of Community Action Organisations: “a) The community action council is a civic, social and community organization of social management, non-profit, of a solidary nature, with legal status and its own assets, voluntarily integrated by the residents of a place that combine efforts and resources to seek integral and sustainable development based on the exercise of participatory democracy”.

<sup>406</sup> Event 10



Figure IV-6 Community action council of Rioloro, meeting May 2017 (taken by the author, Event 11).



Figure IV-7 New tanks for aquaculture in El Hobo (taken by the author, March 2017).

The above examples show the importance of deliberation for infrastructure development. In the procedural logic of environmental democratisation, the involvement of more people who are potentially affected by development programmes would also lead to environmental protection. Such an approach puts the principle of deliberation in the foreground, with the understanding that it is in the interest of the local people to maintain or improve healthy environments. However, this is not always the case (Fischer 2018:262–63). For example, it is clear that fish-

farming bears economic benefits for the involved parties (if successful), but the wastewater might negatively affect the water quality in the area if released directly, as a consequence of a high concentration of nutrients and possible diseases (see FAO 2005). Therefore, the procedural logic is potentially in conflict with a concurrent logic of environmental democracy: the substantive logic. In this logic, interest-free solution-driven decision-making for environmental protection prevails as the overriding principle (Fischer 2018:262–63). The CAM operates according to that logic.

The regional environmental agencies (Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales, CARs), of which the CAM is one, are an important part of a decentralised state apparatus that was established for adequate territorial management of the environment in Colombia. CAM experts delivered important criticism of the El Quimbo dam project from the planning phase onwards. Throughout the project's realisation, the agency responded to local claims of environmental harmful practices, finding proof and declaring these publicly. However, this had limited impact. One columnist called the CARs “centres of bureaucracy at the service of politicians” and described them as being “without any teeth” to actually intervene in environmental harmful practices around the country (Calderón Molina 2019). The columnist sees the main challenge in the political interests surrounding many CAR-relevant activities. He affirms that CARs should have the freedom and strength to take and enforce decisions based solely on science and evidence, less on political or economic interests.

Throughout the El Quimbo dam struggle, the CAM experienced these limitations but was increasingly backed up by the constitutional court and local administrations. This augmented acknowledgement of the CAM can be considered part of environmental democratisation in Huila. However, the idea behind the institution of the CAM (and of CARs in general) potentially conflicts with the deliberation stream of environmental democracy (procedural logic) that emphasises the recognition of all interests of the involved actors, and most certainly of those directly affected, in the decision-making process.

This tension bears a limitation of the concept of environmental democratisation (Fischer 2018:262–63). Furthermore, the legal system has limited agency in terms of dealing with slow environmental changes that will only become visible in the future. As a response, Colombian judges have included ecological justice approaches in their rulings and declared non-human

entities, like rivers, to be subjects of rights since 2016 (Baxter 2005).<sup>407</sup> This happened also in the case of the Magdalena River.

In October 2019, two environmentalists in Neiva (independent of Asoquimbo) handed in an *acción de tutela* (legal claim for the protection of rights) to demand the protection and conservation of the Magdalena River, whose health they saw endangered by the El Quimbo dam project as well as by the contamination from municipal wastewaters. This resonates with what Asoquimbo has claimed for many years, that the victims of the dam (human and non-human) are the “subjects of rights” instead of “objects of the market” (Dussán Calderón 2017:74). Now this approach has received legal recognition.

The Magdalena enters the list of ecosystems which have been declared subjects of rights, following the Otún (September 2019), Cauca (June 2019), Combeima, Cocora, Coello (June 2019), and La Plata Rivers (March 2019), the Pisba Páramo (August 2018), the Amazon forest (April 2018) and the Atrato River (November 2016). Each ruling sought to preserve the corresponding ecosystems in order to guarantee the right to a healthy environment, also for future generations. In the case of the Combeima, Cocora and Coello Rivers, all based in Tolima, this decision implied the end of any mining activity (small and large scale) in the river basins. Their watersheds and tributaries are considered as individual entities, subject to rights to protection, conservation, maintenance and restoration by the state and communities (*Semana Sostenible* 2019b).

In the case of the Magdalena River, the ruling requires the state to

design and form, within three months, a commission of the *Guardians of the Magdalena River*, which is composed of representatives of the national government i.e. the Ministry of the Environment, Cormagdalena [CAR responsible for the Magdalena middle stream], the government of Huila and the CAM and shall work for the protection of the Magdalena River. An intersectoral roundtable shall oversee all actions that guarantee the right to the river to have a healthy environment [*el derecho al río de tener un medio ambiente sano*] (*Semana Sostenible* 2019a).

Even though the above decisions have forced state institutions to do additional studies and assessments and form roundtables about environmental risks confronting the respective ecosystems, it is difficult to imagine how the defence of rights of an ecosystem could look in practice. Along the upstream Magdalena basin, the municipalities should improve their

---

<sup>407</sup> For theory on the rights of nature, see Burdon (2012); Emmenegger and Tschentscher (1994); Gudynas (2014); and Stone (2010); for an assessment of Colombia’s rulings in this regard, see Richardson (2020).

wastewater treatment infrastructure. Also, Emgesa and local communities are required to find solutions for water contamination. The CAM would have much more leeway in enforcing protection measurements. However, much damage has already been done. The El Quimbo dam is built and it has irreversibly changed the flow of the river and the lives connected to it. As is the case with many prior laws in Colombia, this ruling risks having mainly a legal–discursive effect rather than causing a material improvement for the people suffering from environmental impacts. Despite a high court having (partially) support environmental democratisation, the possibility of decentralising infrastructure and institutions remains largely a potential. However, another form of the state has made itself visible.

### The territorial state as ally

It appears that the governor had not disappointed the electorate. In 2018, Carlos Julio Gonzáles was voted the second-favourite governor in Colombia (*El Tiempo* 2018b). Wilfredy Peña Fajardo, a merchant from Garzón, said at the public hearing in November 2016: “I don't believe in politicians; they are corrupt, but I feel proud of the governor. You made me trust in politics!” Henry de Jesús Montoya agreed, declaring that “the governor is like an angel who faces the devil, who has come not only to destroy our habitat but also our families”. And the lawyer Jesús López Fernández stated at the same occasion: “The affected were orphans of the authorities until the current governor arrived; he has led the current mayors and the parliamentarians of Huila to really take the lead and defend the interests of those affected”. The prior mentioned court rulings have given additional hope and provided openings that encourage the civil society in Huila and politicians to take up a confronting role with the national government.

In this chapter, I have highlighted the legal foundation of environmental democratisation in Colombia, connecting political processes and challenges. I have shown that there are important laws in place on which civil society can rely when faced with projects such as the El Quimbo dam. The constitutional court has kept the governments in check but has also made normative statements to guide politics. As a result, another idea of state made itself visible to the local population during the struggle, that of an ally. It represents what the local population (and parts of regional administrations) wish to have: a territorial state that, in line with the constitution, supports deliberation, decentralisation and the protection of places and related livelihoods. The state's sovereignty is founded on what Miller Dussán (2017:17, 152) calls “territorial power”: the power of the people, as subjects of rights (not as objects of the market), to commit to “new forms of local self-government inspired by radical democracy, equality, *campesino* and indigenous economy and worldviews”, based on solidarity and the rights of nature.

I have argued that many advances towards environmental democracy have remained within the discursive sphere and material outcomes have been rare. It remains to be seen whether Emgesa complies with its commitments, and whether tourism and aquaculture will indeed sprout around the dam reservoir in central Huila. No ferry has yet been launched. The ferry on Betania reservoir, which was operated by a private owner, closed down in 2015 (*Diario del Huila* 2019). Improving local infrastructure (such as schools, concrete road connections, water treatment plants) seems to lie mainly in the hands of local initiatives. The extent to which the locals feel part of a territorial state that protects their rights will depend on how much public support and acknowledgment in decision-making they encounter in their endeavours to re-establish productive activities. There have been important advances in this regard over the recent years and an active civil society continues to build from the local context the constitutional state.

## Epilogue: Territory and the two forms of state

*It is to highlight the fractures and frictions that create the space for alternatives and the need to intervene to realize more humane, democratic, and sustainable alternatives rather than submit to the logic of neo-liberalism.*

Jessop 2016:86

With the statement quoted above, Jessop expresses a more optimistic outlook for the future of the state. He suggests that there is an alternative to the capitalist (neoliberal) state and that it can be found in the “fractures and frictions” left by the system. In Part IV of this thesis, I have discussed apparent divisions and tensions within the Colombian state and have shown how the resistance made use of and contributed to these for the defence of life and territory. To answer research question (e) *what role did the Colombian state play in the El Quimbo dam struggle?*, I have taken the state as disaggregated and analysed the two ways it made itself visible during the El Quimbo dam conflict. In this way, I hope to have contributed to a nuanced understanding of the “national scale”.

The state is often perceived as a monolithic body, abstracted from actual practices. Abrams (1988:82) describes the idea of the state as “an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory account of practice”. Mitchell (1999:77) suggests that “the phenomenon we name ‘the state’ arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, nonmaterial form”. Also, in the Colombian context,

the state has often been taken as an abstract body of rule and order that would need to be strengthened to bring peace to the territories (see discussion Chapter 8).

However, the detailed examination of actual state practices, actors and outcomes in the El Quimbo case, questions an existing hegemonic political system and illustrates that the state is a multifaceted structure that accommodates a variety of state ideas, interests and aspirations.<sup>408</sup> Different powers are at play that can be attributed to the state and that intend to establish a certain form of sovereignty and hegemony for themselves. Miller Dussán (2017) identifies two co-existent powers: corporative power, or the power of corporations to infiltrate the state for economic profit, and territorial power, or the power emerging from the people in their territory to shape their own development paths.

Corporative power in Colombia has relied on the exercise of direct violence against the people (as indicated before) but seeks to be associated with social and environmental responsible practices due to international civil society pressure. While direct violence is still exercised for the realisation of controversial investments, as seen with the ESMAD interventions at El Quimbo, companies and the national government have increasingly moved towards neoliberal technologies and structural forms of violence.<sup>409</sup> For instance, the national government relies on the development discourse to present the El Quimbo dam as a national necessity and to stigmatise the anti-dam mobilisation as enemies of development and the state. It facilitates international investments which integrate territories and peasant communities into the market economy. The company Emgesa also followed these approaches (presenting its investment as an act of benevolence and seeing the affected population and environment as individual, fragmented objects), in trying to maintain the public image of a socially and environmentally responsible corporation. As a technology of neoliberalism in itself, El Quimbo dam fragmented communities, and left the residents fighting for their own benefits.

Despite the development promises, the affected population of El Quimbo was never entirely convinced that the dam development was in their best interest. Instead of a corporative power, the resistance envisioned another power that emanates from the territories. The aspirations of the defence of region-territory in Huila are linked to decentralisation, effective participation and territorial autonomy. As shown throughout Part IV, certain state entities have joined the

---

<sup>408</sup> The existence of a State for the organisation of the nation is not really questioned. What is normally criticised by social movements in Colombia is the elite control, the corporate interests and the form of governing.

<sup>409</sup> Owing to international and civil society pressures, the continued violent interventions against the own population on the side of the national government is legitimised through discourses of race, poverty (development) and security (terrorism; see Foucault 2003:256–59).

struggle for such technologies of deliberation, specifically the regional environmental agencies (CARs), the regional governments, partly regional courts and the constitutional court.

However, while I presented here a dichotomy of state practices – those that facilitated the corporate actions and produced closures for the people (as part of a capitalist state) and those that supported the resistance and reopened spaces for the affected population (as part of a constitutional state), I want to highlight that many state actors, entities and practices can be attributed to a variety of state ideas that change with time and location. Addressing research question (f) *how does the case fit into the wider political economy of the country?*, Chapter 8 has shown that territorial autonomy and decentralisation have historically been associated, not with environmental democratisation, but with regional authoritarianism and armed conflict. As mentioned, the political constitution of Colombia allows different political projects (see e.g. Arango 2011; Díaz Londoño 2009). While the civil society has sought to be empowered by the 1991 Constitution, Álvarez (2016) sees important advances of neoliberalism in it and Ávila Martínez (2012) considers the new constitution as having paved the way for regional authoritarianism. The traditional elites in the countryside have, to a large extent, maintained their status and extended their influence within the state apparatus through the use of force and violence: intimidation, threats and assassinations. This elite control has reached central state mechanisms and facilitated corporate control.

The law presents itself as a hope as well as a threat to the disadvantaged (Lemaitre Ripoll 2009:392). This was also true during the El Quimbo dam struggle. Even though the constitutional court proved itself an important ally in defending the rights of the affected and increasingly ruled in line with environmental democracy, whose fundamentals are found in the 1991 Constitution, the acquisition of the lands at El Quimbo was also possible as a direct result of the law (lands of “social interest and public utility”).

In addition, the regional administration relied heavily on the law when arguing for more decision-making capacity. But, looking at the history of the regional elites in Colombia, it is arguably questionable if the political leaders in Huila had mainly the well-being of their citizens in mind. They might have sought more autonomy from the central state primarily to enforce (again) their own systems of rule. While Carlos Julio Gonzáles’ decision to run for governor using the anti-dam narrative was certainly opportunistic, he committed to his stated principles throughout his mandate. It could also be seen as opportunistic that Gonzáles politicised the socio-economic and environmental consequences of El Quimbo to support arguments for, for

instance, a reform of the system of *regalías*, which would ultimately seek to distribute more money from extractivist industries into the regional administrations.

If public and political focus changes, it is likely that the regional government, as well as the constitutional court, legislate in line with other ideas of state. For example, the advance of environmental democratisation has experienced some recent political throwbacks at the national level. The national government stopped providing the financial resources to allow referenda to be held. By May 2018, 11 public consultation processes had been cancelled because of the lack of funding (Rubiano 2018). The president at that time, Juan Manuel Santos, maintained his position that public consultation processes were “illegal and have no legal impact” (quoted in García Segura, Gutiérrez Roa, and Herrera Durán 2013). As a result, the constitutional court ruled that local referenda cannot impede mining activities in the territories in October 2018 (Sentence SU-095/18; see Dejusticia 2018; Paz Cardona 2018; *Semana* 2018a). Moreover, after environmental roundtables arose all over Colombia, the director of the National Land Agency indicated in 2017 that the national government would not have any more budget for additional thematic roundtables.<sup>410</sup>

Consequently, the constitutional form of the state does not necessarily contradict the capitalist state. As indicated, the idea of the state in itself (as both forms presented here) is of Western origin and as several Latin-American political ecologists have powerfully illustrated, Latin-American countries are deeply embedded in historic dependencies to colonial powers and the capitalist world order (Gudynas 2005; Machado Aráoz 2017; Quijano 2000). Mining and other extractivist activities of high socio-ecological impact correspond to global market demands and transnational corporate politics (Gudynas 2018; Machado Aráoz 2011, 2012; Vélez-Torres 2014). Also hydropower has enjoyed substantial support from global financial institutions and their “development” agenda (Cardona et al. 2016; Goldman 2005; Soler Villamizar et al. 2014a). Discussing Emgesa’s (as such Enel’s) relationship to global investors in hydroelectricity, Daniel Libreros Calcedo (Professor of Political Science at the Colombian National University) points out that in the realisation of the El Quimbo dam project, Emgesa was able to rely on the experiences and governance designs of the World Bank, which successfully dammed rivers of the global south despite wide resistance for decades (Asoquimbo press conference on 4. Feb. 2021; see Chapter 1).<sup>411</sup>

---

<sup>410</sup> During a meeting with the agency and Asoquimbo in Bogotá, May 2017.

<sup>411</sup> As mentioned before, there are no indications for Emgesa having received financial support from the World Bank or other international financial institutions for the realisation of El Quimbo.

To return to Miller Dussán's "all monsters of power", mentioned in the beginning of this Part IV, the El Quimbo dam resistance faced a mega-dam project and its investors only in the first instance. In the second instance, it faced a capitalist state that paved the way for the accumulation by dispossession. In the third instance, it faced a corporate truth regime backed up by an ostensible growing energy demand and global (green) development discourses connected to hydropower. And finally, in the fourth instance, it faced the global hegemony of neoliberal capitalism that remunerates market liberalisation and large-scale economic development mechanisms.

Considering these monsters, which many environmental struggles in Colombia face, in light of the exponential surge of violence against environmental and human rights activists since the peace agreement in 2016, might make one doubt that any change is possible. However, I want to argue that both state forms presented here do not reflect the complete picture of the disaggregated Colombian state; other forms and constellations are possible and state formation is an ongoing process. As such, the disaggregation offers potential to shape national governance towards more democratic and just political frameworks. This could require finding ways to articulate between deliberation and neoliberalism. Movements around Colombia have already appropriated neoliberal technologies, like the EIA and connected participatory spaces (Leifsen, Gustafsson, et al. 2017), and contribute in building a territorial state from the local.

Foucault (2007) had emphasised that he does not consider resistance or "counter-conduct" as something opposing or external to power, but that both are in constant negotiation with each other. As Sieder (2001:217) points out, "State formation is a continuous process negotiated both from above [(inter-)national processes] and below [local processes]". Negotiations are ongoing and continue to be necessary within the state system and between the civil society and the population. The defence of life-territory in articulation with the defence of region-territory can contribute to this negotiation and increase public understanding for the need for more deliberation for the realisation of environmental democracy and peace.

In the last section, I will summarise my findings, answer my research questions set out at the beginning of this thesis, and conclude with a reflection on the study's limitations and possibilities for future research.

## Conclusion

*Mientras el estado no piense seriamente  
en el sector agropecuario,  
el campo no florece  
si no la guerra.*

*If the state does not start to think seriously  
about the agricultural sector,  
it is not the countryside that will flourish,  
but the war.*

Alfredo  
Nueva Veracruz<sup>412</sup>

---

<sup>412</sup> Interview 53

On arrival in Garzón, the morning of 11 November 2016, I sat down to have a *tinto* (cup of coffee) with two friends of the South-Colombian University and one of the friend's father, a coffee producer in El Agrado. The farmer told me how he found his coffee crops were affected by the increased temperatures and the pests that have appeared since the reservoir filling one year earlier, and that he thought of selling his plots in order to find a more productive activity. He and my friends considered the public hearing to evaluate Emgesa's compliance with the environmental licence of El Quimbo about to start on the event grounds next to us of high importance but also of rather symbolic character. The political attention the dam project had received was necessary to deliver the message to the national government that the territories and the people needed to be respected. As the epigraph above emphasises, if the underlying causes of territorial conflicts – many of which relate to the disregard of the *campesino* population – are not solved, the war in Colombia will continue. However, they were also aware that the event on that day would not improve the difficult circumstances the people of central Huila faced at that point.

The sun already stood high when the director of ANLA initiated the hearing and the many people attending, the majority wearing white – the colour of peace, sought shadow under a white tent spanning over the open-air stage. The atmosphere was calm and pleasant, the people cheery and optimistic. And indeed, what followed was a two-day ceremony for the affected population, for Huila. Arguments for the non-compliance of Emgesa with the region were brought forward by different experts in a structured, organised manner. The event was the apex of the anti-dam mobilisation that started in 2008 and consistently confronted the investment project on all possible fronts. But despite this resistance, the earlier negative evaluations of the environmental impacts, and the final opposition in regional politics, Emgesa was able to continue in their proceeding of damming the Magdalena River and to generate energy for central distribution.

I started out this research by asking, how this was possible: *how did Emgesa successfully dam the river in spite of the original negative evaluation and constant resistance?* I thought to answer this question exploring three dimensions and connected sub-questions.

In Part II of this thesis, I analysed the corporate actions of the energy company in the area affected by the dam. Answering question (a) *what kind of knowledge regime did the company produce around the El Quimbo dam project?*, I argued that with the environmental impact assessment and related baseline studies, Ingetec-S.A. and Emgesa established a corporate truth

of the place and its people that was favourable to the large-scale investment. Relying on conventional economic and ecological framings of the project's social-environmental influences, the two companies depoliticised issues of contestation. The techno-scientific language used produced an illusionary image of objectivity and provided business arguments with authority, at the same time devaluing experience based local knowledge. Accordingly, Chapter 4 showed the stark contrast between the corporate truth and the local and political ecology approaches to the impacts caused by the dam.

Next, with the singular goals of minimising costs, and maintaining a public image favourable to the industry, Emgesa endeavoured to "create a social reality that it suggests already exists". (Lemke 2001:13): a fragmented society and ecosystem that depended on external intervention. To answer question (b) *how has the corporate knowledge been inscribed onto the affected area?*, Chapter 5 looks at the changes inflicted on the affected areas and the people as a result of the dam construction and compensation mechanisms. I argue that the construction works caused three dimensions of dispossession: the new enclosure of lands, infrastructural deterioration and the contamination of the river. This process affected not only the local population but also the wider population of central Huila that was dependent on the agricultural production chain, the road connections or the river water for their livelihood strategies. Emgesa was able to deny responsibility for many of the impacts referring to its environmental impact assessment and using corporate politics of space and time.

The resulting vulnerability increased the likelihood of people to accept Emgesa's compensation offer or to move away. The out-migration together with an influx of professional workers to the towns caused a dissolution of social ties, trust and security. During compensation negotiations, the company took advantage of these fractures in the social fabric. It used gathered knowledge of families, their difficulties and conflicts with others, in order to pressure them into accepting their offered compensation. The company used coercion as well as soft social technologies of pacification: promising development and increased well-being to the people (Dunlap 2020). This manipulation of knowledge caused alienation and closed possible spaces for contestation (Ferguson 2003; T.M. Li 2007; F. Li 2013).

The compensation mechanisms only enforced disintegration. The new built environment was characterised by a fragmentation of the living space, the working space and of what was considered "natural". The infrastructure put in place by the company was used as a symbol of progress but acted as a technology of detachment for the receiving communities. The blueprint

for development closed possibilities for the people to develop alternative activities for subsistence or income generation. The process of engineering reality was completed through the incorporation of a rather peaceful territory and self-sufficient population into the neoliberal development model.

However, the affected population activated and mobilised processes that opened its range of actions. In Part III, I turned attention to a second dimension, the contentious politics, to answer questions (c) *how have local and regional reactions to the dam project changed over the years of struggle* and (d) *what has the resistance achieved?* Early on, a social movement organised itself in opposition to the dam. Over the years of struggle, it used a variety of strategies to create openings for political participation and alternative development paths. Chapter 6 argued that the movement expressed a defence of life-territory that disobeyed corporate politics, but primarily sought to counter-conduct and counterwork democratic control mechanisms to protect their life projects and the territory they depended on.

The resistance invested substantially in the understanding of the rights of the affected. Emgesa tried to close all participatory spaces surrounding the project from the start. It used consultation platforms as technical procedures to provide information on the project and to negotiate privately with key actors. Instead of conforming with the country's laws, it preferred convincing national public officials to bend the law towards the company's interests. It nevertheless used the law to defame and criminalise resistance leaders. Asoquimbo not only won the case of public disturbance against Emgesa but also legally contested many of the company's actions and the government's (in-)actions. It activated and re-politicised technical tools for participation and appropriated (opened) the spaces for the recognition of alternative perspectives to contest the corporate truth. In this, the association relied on local knowledge and powerful (environmental, human rights and decolonial) discourses that extended criticism towards national politics of extractivism. This helped establishing networks within civil society nationally and internationally. By "jumping scales" and through contentious politics of time and space, attention was not only focused on the El Quimbo dam case but also on other similar projects in earlier stages of their realisation.

The increased public attention, coupled with the circumstances of the reservoir filling in 2015, turned Asoquimbo into an important actor within regional politics, which reached its peak with the election of Carlos Julio Gonzáles as governor and the realisation of the public hearing in 2016. Chapter 7 argued that this political change triggered a rescaling of the movement. In the

midst of the corporate and contentious actions, affected families tried to manoeuvre through the challenges inflicted upon them to fight for the best outcome for themselves. The resistance shifted towards what I framed the defence of region-territory and lost its status of being a place-based reaction. The nucleus became the professionals and politicians in the provincial capital – which appropriated the local struggles to contest national environmental politics and advocated for a decentralised (territorial) state.

This led me to examine a third dimension in Part IV: the politics of national scale influential to the El Quimbo dam struggle. It was a private company that intervened in the territory and that interacted directly with the affected population and regional politicians. But it is the state that allegedly stands between the transnational and the local; it was meant to mediate between the company and the dam opposition and to control the action of this foreign actor on Colombian ground. In the eyes of the resistance, the state protected the investment and not its people. Although the state was identified by protesters as “the enemy”, their resistance relied on state entities and mechanisms to defend environmental and social rights. Acknowledging this apparent ambivalence, I had to understand in detail (e) *what role did the Colombian state play in the El Quimbo dam struggle* and (f) *how does the case fit into the wider political economy of the country?*

I started to answer these questions by critically discussing literature and narratives on Colombia’s state formation process in Chapter 8. In general, state formation implies nation-building to manifest sovereignty and hegemony. Governments seek to conduct the behaviour of their subjects in such a way that it serves their political projects. Post-colonial countries in particular face the challenges of navigating between traditional forms of rule, colonial systems of rule and those related to alternative ideologies. Colombia is no exception. Even though the nation seems to represent “the longest democratic tradition” in Latin America, the ruling elite did not manage to establish a monopoly over violence, nor did it achieve legitimacy among all its population. This leads to the common association of the armed conflict with a state that is too weak to control its regions. Seeing the El Quimbo dam struggle in light of the above, Chapter 8 showed on the one hand that the weak state discourse simplifies and distorts the diverse and complex realities surrounding conflicts in the country but justifies hard central interventions. On the other hand, it showed that the widely supported call by civil society for more decentralisation, is not necessarily the answer to internal conflicts. More regional authority can empower opportunistic regional political leaders to personally profit from public funds and to consolidate their own systems of rule.

Accordingly, Chapter 8 argued that the Colombian state has to be approached as substantially disaggregated. During the El Quimbo dam struggle, this disaggregation made itself visible as a division between two forms of state: the corporate state (enemy) in which I see the idea of the *capitalist state* materialised (analysed in Chapter 9), and the territorial state (ally) in which I see to a certain extent the idea of the *constitutional state* realised (analysed in Chapter 10).

With this, I added the final missing pieces to the answer of my overall research question: The resistance movement was successful in mobilising not only the Huilan public against the dam, but also regional politics and central state entities; nevertheless the company Emgesa achieved its goals relying on its corporate politics of knowledge, space, time and scale that was backed up by central capitalist state entities, international development discourses and a neoliberal world order.

Having answered my guiding research question, I finalise this thesis with some further reflections.

While, in this case, I presented two forms of state – the former supporting Emgesa in their actions and the latter challenging corporate politics, the apparent dichotomy cannot be generalised. Both forms do not necessarily rule out each other, nor do I want to argue they are the only existent forms characterising the Colombian state. Other cases in other spaces and times could uncover other characteristics and tensions.

The point Part IV allows to draw is that the disaggregation of the Colombian state has provided the space to accommodate different political projects which has presented itself as a threat as well as a source of hope for peace in the country. Peaceful social mobilisations have been innovative in their endeavour for territorial justice and deliberation which rarely rejects any form of governance, but rather struggles to be conducted differently. Environmental struggles have contested environmental harmful practices and opened the imagination for and implementation of alternative development pathways. The El Quimbo dam case has shown that the dimension of *construir* (construct/build) is crucial for such movements in Colombia. Their resistance, often a response to a policy or investment project that affects people locally, is strongly tied to a wish to transform the existing structures into more just and peaceful realities.

The El Quimbo dam case has, however, also shown that abstract political goals can run the risk of losing touch with the direct needs of the people affected. Having increasingly focused on strengthening territorial decision-making power, the movement did not seem to hold any benefits for the local population any longer. I argued, therefore, that especially local

associations and the community action councils are important bodies of democracy that need to be further recognised and supported by politics and society. If the people have decision-making power themselves, there is a good chance that they feel part of the political system that they themselves can influence and therefore support. The local empowerment could be put in articulation with neoliberal governance to develop strategies that allow to actively tackle violence in the country. This would imply rethinking the national economic model of *re-primarisation* (return of the primary commodities export sector) and extractivism and to include the local populations into defining appropriate strategies for “development” and peace (Ulloa and Coronado 2016b:35).

By examining the corporate and contentious politics surrounding the El Quimbo dam realisation, this thesis has contributed to a nuanced understanding of environmental politics in Colombia. I have looked at the interplay of actions that from different spaces and scales influenced the El Quimbo dam conflict, and how they have structured the “possible field of action” of the people (Foucault 1982:790). “Power is everywhere” (Foucault 1998:63) but it becomes tangible, and analysable, at points of struggle (Foucault 1982:780, 2007:3). Next to the use of force (hard overt social interventions), such as the eviction and demobilisation of the resisting population, I have identified different (soft) mechanisms of exercising power – to produce closures and openings: the production of knowledge of place, the configuration of space and infrastructure, the use of discourses and narratives and the enactment of networks across scales as well as of democratic control mechanisms.

With this analysis I contributed further to the critique of hydroelectricity and renewable energy. Hydroelectric dams are widely considered “clean” or “green” energy infrastructures. Emgesa and the national government were able to rely on these powerful discourses to support the mega-dam project’s realisation. They promoted the energy source as green and renewable and as essential to national security. Authorities claimed it would bring progress to a formerly abandoned region. They described critics of the dam as a minority who were the enemies of development, or who did not understand the larger necessity of the investment. These are soft social technologies of pacification that, through public relation and green washing (Dunlap 2020), delegitimised the opposition and consequently limited their credibility and their range of action. The analysis of these multiple impacts puts discussions about renewable energies, extractivism, and the defence of territory into dialogue. A further exploration of these interrelations, also in the case of other renewables such as solar and wind power, is crucial in times such as these, when the global call to reduce fossil fuel emissions gets increasingly louder.

Also it can be investigated to what extent the defence of territory in Colombia signifies an alternative governmentality, which would be in pursuit of liberation (Fletcher 2010:178). How could this art of government look in practical terms, how would it be different from neoliberal governmentality (Ferguson 2010; Fletcher 2010; Foucault 2008; Lemke 2001, 2002; Peters 2006) and how could it contribute to peace advances? Future analysis could include a more detailed gender and ethnicity dimension, or a general intersectionality (combining elements of race, gender, sex, sexuality, class, ability, nationality, citizenship, religion and body type that lead to marginalisation), which I was not able to examine in this thesis.

With this study, I intended to shed more light on the struggle of the *campesino* population and on the defence of territory in contemporary Colombia. By presenting the wide-ranging impacts of a mega-project which was enforced on the territory, and by examining the weaknesses and strengths of the corresponding resistance strategies, I hope my dissertation is a constructive contribution not only to the field of environmental politics and hydroelectricity in Colombia, but also to the people who, on a daily basis, invest their time and strength towards building territorial peace in the country. Their work is courageous and continues to demand support from all sides, especially when the national political leaders want to move backwards.

# References

- Abrams, Philip. 1988. "Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1(1):58–89.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. 1990. "The Romance of Resistance." *American Ethnologist* 17(1):41–55.
- Adger, W. Neil, Tor Arve Benjaminsen, Katrina Brown, and Hanne Svarstad. 2001. "Advancing a Political Ecology of Global Environmental Discourses." *Development and Change* 32(4):681–715.
- Agrawal, Arun. 2005. *Environmentality: Technologies of Government and the Making of Subjects*. Durham: Duke.
- Agudelo-Berrió, María Damaris. 2016. "Crecimiento y Productividad de Sistemas Agroforestales Con Cacao En Estados Tempranos de Desarrollo En El Bosque Seco Tropical Del Departamento de Antioquia." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Aguilar-Støen, Mariel, and Cecilie Hirsch. 2015. "Environmental Impact Assessments, Local Power and Self-Determination: The Case of Mining and Hydropower Development in Guatemala." *Extractive Industries and Society* 2(3):472–79.
- Aguilar-Støen, Mariel, and Cecilie Hirsch. 2017. "Bottom-up Responses to Environmental and Social Impact Assessments: A Case Study from Guatemala." *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 62:225–32.
- Alcaldía Bogotá. n.d. "Documentos Para PROCESO POLICIVO: Perturbación a La Posesión o a La Tenencia." Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.alcaldiabogota.gov.co/sisjur/listados/tematica2.jsp?subtema=20276&cadena=p>).
- Alimonda, Héctor. 2011. *La Naturaleza Colonizada: Ecología Política y Minería En América Latina*. Buenos Aires: CLASCO.
- Alimonda, Héctor. 2016. "Notas Sobre La Ecología Política Latinoamericana: Arraigo, Herencias, Diálogos." *Ecología Política* 51:36–42.
- Alimonda, Héctor, Catalina Toro Pérez, and Facundo Martín, eds. 2017. *Ecología Política Latinoamericana: Pensamiento Crítico, Diferencia Latinoamericana y Rearticulación Epistémica*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Alonso-Fradejas, Alberto. 2015. "Anything but a Story Foretold: Multiple Politics of Resistance to the Agrarian Extractivist Project in Guatemala." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):489–515.
- Althusser, Louis. 1971. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press.
- Álvarez, Astrid. 2018. "'No Podemos Seguir Dependiendo de La Hidroeléctrica': Director Del Ideam." *Semana*, 25. April. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/contenidos-editoriales/la-nueva-era-de-las-renovables/articulo/la-combustion-de-energias-fosiles/565105>).
- Álvarez, José. 2016. "La Constitución Del 91, Una Victoria Del Neoliberalismo En Colombia." *Los 2 Orillas*, 05. July. Retrieved February 20, 2020

- (<https://www.las2orillas.co/la-constitucion-del-91-una-victoria-del-neoliberalismo-en-colombia/>).
- Alvarez, Sonia E., Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar. 1998. "Introduction: The Cultural and the Political in Latin America Social Movements." Pp. 1–30 in *Cultures of Politics - Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Alvear Sanín, José. 2005. *Manuel Del Río Magdalena*. Bogotá: Cormagdalena.
- Amat, Yamid. 2018. "'Es Conveniente Buscar Nuevas Fuentes de Energía': Germán Arce." *El Tiempo*, 20. Jan. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.eltiempo.com/economia/sectores/entrevista-de-yamid-amat-a-german-arce-sobre-fuentes-de-energia-renovable-173344>).
- Anand, Nikhil. 2018. "A Public Matter: Water, Hydraulics, Biopolitics." Pp. 155–72 in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, edited by N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Anand, Nikhil, Akhil Gupta, and Hannah Appel, eds. 2018. *The Promise of Infrastructure*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Anderson, Veronica J., Brian K. Horton, Joel E. Saylor, Andrés Mora, Eliseo Tesón, Daniel O. Breecker, and Richard A. Ketcham. 2016. "Andean Topographic Growth and Basement Uplift in Southern Colombia: Implications for the Evolution of the Magdalena, Orinoco, and Amazon River Systems." *Geosphere* 12(4):1235–56.
- Angarita, Héctor, Albertus J. Wickel, Jack Sieber, John Chavarro, Javier A. Maldonado Ocampo, Guido A. Herrera, Juliana Delgado, and David Purkey. 2018. "Basin-Scale Impacts of Hydropower Development on the Mompós Depression Wetlands, Colombia." *Hydrology and Earth System Sciences* 22(5):2839–65.
- ANLA. n.d. "Licencia Ambiental Subdirección de Evaluación y Seguimiento." Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://portal.anla.gov.co/licencia-ambiental-subdireccion-evaluacion-y-seguimiento>).
- Appel, Hannah. 2018. "Infrastructural Time." Pp. 41–61 in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, edited by N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Arango, Rodolfo. 2011. "La Constitución de 1991: ¿neoliberal?" *El Espectador*, 06. July. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/opinion/la-constitucion-de-1991-neoliberal-columna-282460/>).
- Arce, Alberto, and Norman Long. 2000. *Anthropology, Development and Modernities - Exploring Discourses, Counter-Tendencies and Violence*. London: Routledge.
- Areiza, Ricardo. 2017a. "Avalanchas Que No Se Olvidan." *La Nación*, 21. Nov. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/avalanchas-no-se-olvidan/>).
- Areiza, Ricardo. 2017b. "Tragedia En El Embalse, Otros Culpables." *La Nación*, 31. July. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/tragedia-embalse-otros-culpables/>).
- Areiza, Ricardo. 2020. "Naufragó Plan Especial de Tierras En El Quimbo." *La Nación*, 31. Jan. Retrieved June 11, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/naufrago-plan-especial-de-tierras-en-el-quimbo/>).

- Argenti, Nicolas, and Daniel M. Knight. 2015. "Sun, Wind, and the Rebirth of Extractive Economies: Renewable Energy Investment and Metanarratives of Crisis in Greece." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 21(4):781–802.
- Argüello, Francisco. 2011. "El Quimbo, Una Hidroeléctrica Que Inundará Ocho Mil Hectáreas Colombianas." *El Mundo España*, 25. Jan. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elmundo.es/america/2011/02/25/colombia/1298669583.html>).
- Arias Arévalo, Paola, Erik Gómez Baggethun, Berta Martín López, and Mario Pérez Rincón. 2018. "Widening the Evaluative Space for Ecosystem Services: A Taxonomy of Plural Values and Valuation Methods." *Environmental Values* 27(1):29–53.
- Arias Arévalo, Paola, Berta Martín López, and Erik Gómez Baggethun. 2017. "Exploring Intrinsic, Instrumental, and Relational Values for Sustainable Management of Social-Ecological Systems." *Ecology and Society* 22(4):43.
- Arnstein, Sherry R. 1969. "A Ladder Of Citizen Participation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35(4):216–24.
- Artunduaga, Edgar. 2017. "Dos Loquitos Que Quieren Desmontar El Quimbo." *Diario Del Huila*, 15. June. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.diariodelhuila.com/opinion/dos-loquitos-que-quieren-desmontar-el-quimbo-cdgint20170615141200114>).
- La Asociación Nacional de Instituciones Financieras, and La Firma Comisionista de Bolsa. 2011. *Privatizaciones, Infraestructura y Mercado de Capitales*. Bogotá.
- Atarraya Films. 2015. "Antes y Después de El Quimbo." *YouTube*, 27. Dec. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sggjDwRyWO8>).
- Ávila Martínez, Ariel Fernando. 2012. "Homogeneización Política, Parapolítica y Democracia Local." *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung En Colombia* (Análisis 6).
- Bacca García, Javier Orlando. 2019. "Análisis de La Viabilidad de La Hidroelectricidad En Colombia." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Bakker, Karen. 2005. "Neoliberalizing Nature? Market Environmentalism in Water Supply in England and Wales." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 95(3):542–65.
- Baquero Melo, Jairo. 2015. "Regional Challenges to Land Restitution and Peace in Colombia: The Case of the Lower Atrato." *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 10(2):36–51.
- Baquero Melo, Jairo, ed. 2019. *Territorios, Conflictos Agrarios y Construcción de Paz: Comunidades, Asociatividad y Encadenamientos En El Huila y Sur Del Tolima*. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario.
- Baquero Melo, Jairo, and Emmanuel Quiroga. 2019. "La Economía Política Del Café y El 'Doble Movimiento': Neoliberalismo, Movilización Social y Asociatividad En El Huila." in *Territorios, conflictos agrarios y construcción de paz: Comunidades, asociatividad y encadenamientos en el Huila y sur del Tolima*, edited by J. Baquero Melo. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario.
- Barber, Nicholas William. 2010. *The Constitutional State*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bartolomé, Miguel Alberto. 2003. "En Defensa de La Etnografía. El Papel Contemporáneo de

- La Investigación Intercultural.” *Revista de Antropología Social* 12:199–222.
- Bassett, Thomas J., and Denis Gautier. 2014. “Regulation by Territorialization: The Political Ecology of Conservation & Development Territories.” *EchoGéo* (29):1–7.
- Batterbury, Simon. 2018. “Affirmative and Engaged Political Ecology: Practical Applications and Participatory Development Actions.” *Nordia Geographical Publications* 47(5):111–31.
- Baxter, Brian. 2005. *A Theory of Ecological Justice*. London: Routledge.
- Del Bene, Daniela, Arnim Scheidel, and Leah Temper. 2018. “More Dams, More Violence? A Global Analysis on Resistances and Repression around Conflicting Dams through Co-Produced Knowledge.” *Sustainability Science* 13(3):617–633.
- Benjaminsen, Grete, and Randi Kaarhus. 2018. “Commodification of Forest Carbon: REDD+ and Socially Embedded Forest Practices in Zanzibar.” *Geoforum* 93(July):48–56.
- Benjaminsen, Tor A., and Hanne Svarstad. 2008. “Understanding Traditionalist Opposition to Modernization: Narrative Production in a Norwegian Mountain Conflict.” *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 90(1):49–62.
- Berger, Markus, and Matthias Finkbeiner. 2010. “Water Footprinting: How to Address Water Use in Life Cycle Assessment?” *Sustainability* 2(4):919–44.
- Bernard, Mitchell. 1997. “Ecology, Political Economy and the Counter-Movement: Karl Polanyi and the Second Great Transformation.” Pp. 75–89 in *Innovation and Transformation in International Studies*, edited by S. Gill and J. H. E. Mittelman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Betancour Alarcon, Laura. 2014. “Agua y Territorio: Paisajes Desvanecidos. Análisis Del Discurso Periodístico Sobre El Agua En El Cubrimiento Del Conflicto Socio-Ambiental Generado Por La Construcción De La Hidroeléctrica Ituango EPM En Antioquia, Colombia.” Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.
- Betancur, Julio, and N. David Jiménez-Escobar. 2015. “Pitcairnia Huilensis: Una Atractiva Bromeliácea Nueva de Colombia.” *Caldasia* 37(1):91–98.
- Bichsel, Christine. 2016. “Water and the (Infra-)Structure of Political Rule: A Synthesis.” *Water Alternatives* 9(2):356–72.
- Blaikie, Piers, and H. C. Brookfield. 1987. *Land Degradation and Society*. London: Methuen.
- Blaser, Mario. 2004. “Life Projects: Indigenous Peoples’ Agency and Development.” Pp. 26–44 in *In the Way of Development: Indigenous Peoples, Life Projects and Globalization*, edited by M. Blaser, H. A. Feit, and G. McRae. New York: Zed Books.
- Boelens, Rutgerd. 2014. “Cultural Politics and the Hydrosocial Cycle: Water, Power and Identity in the Andean Highlands.” *Geoforum* 57(November):234–47.
- Boelens, Rutgerd, Jaime Hoogesteger, Erik Swyngedouw, Jeroen Vos, and Philippus Wester. 2016. “Hydro-Social Territories: A Political Ecology Perspective.” *Water International* 41(1):1–14.
- Boissière, Philippa de, Joanna Cabello, Thomas McDonagh, Aldo Orellana López, Jim Shultz, Pascoe Sabido, and Rachel Tansey. 2014. *Corporate Conquistadors: The Many Ways Multinationals Both Drive and Profit from Climate Destruction*. The Democracy

Center, Corporate Europe Observatory and The Transnational Institute.

- Bonilla, Daniel. 2011. "Liberalism and Property in Colombia: Property as a Right and Property as a Social Function." *Fordham Law Review* 80(3):1135–70.
- Borras, Saturnino M., and Jennifer C. Franco. 2013. "Global Land Grabbing and Political Reactions 'From Below.'" *Third World Quarterly* 34(9):1723–47.
- Borrini-Feyerabend, Grazia, and Mohammad Taghi Farvar. 2019. "ICCAS - Territories of Life." Pp. 208–11 in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by A. Kothari, A. Salleh, A. Escobar, F. Demaria, and A. Acosta. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*. edited by J. Goody. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1989. "Social Space and Symbolic Power." *Sociological Theory* 7(1):14–25.
- Boyer, Dominic. 2014. "Energopower: An Introduction." *Anthropological Quarterly* 87(2):309–33.
- Brenner, Neil. 2001. "The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration." *Progress in Human Geography* 25(4):591–614.
- Brenner, Neil. 2009. "A Thousand Leaves : Notes on the Geographies of Uneven Spatial Development." Pp. 27–49 in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, edited by R. Keil and R. Mahon. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Brent, Zoe W. 2015. "Territorial Restructuring and Resistance in Argentina." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):671–94.
- Bridge, Gavin, Begüm Özkaynak, and Ethemcan Turhan. 2018. "Energy Infrastructure and the Fate of the Nation: Introduction to Special Issue." *Energy Research and Social Science* 41(April):1–11.
- Brinkmann, Svend, and Steinar Kvale. 2015. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Brock, Andrea, and Alexander Dunlap. 2018. "Normalising Corporate Counterinsurgency: Engineering Consent, Managing Resistance and Greening Destruction around the Hambach Coal Mine and Beyond." *Political Geography* 62(January):33–47.
- Brockington, Dan. 2015. "The Enduring Power of Fortress Conservation in Africa." *Protected Areas, Biodiversity and Communities: Learning from Conservation Experiences in Africa*.
- Brosius, J. Peter. 1999a. "Analyses and Interventions." *Current Anthropology* 40(3):277–310.
- Brosius, J. Peter. 1999b. "Comment on: After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology, by A. Escobar." *Current Anthropology* 40(1):16–17.
- Brown, L. David, and Rajesh Tandon. 1983. "Ideology and Political Economy in Inquiry: Action Research and Participatory Research." *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 19(3):277–94.

- Brydon, Lynne. 2006. "Ethical Practices in Doing Development Research." Pp. 25–33 in *Doing Development Research*, edited by V. Desai and R. B. Potter. London: SAGE Publications.
- Budds, Jessica. 2009. "Contested H2O: Science, Policy and Politics in Water Resources Management in Chile." *Geoforum* 40(3):418–30.
- Burdon, Peter D. 2012. "A Theory of Earth Jurisprudence." *Australian Journal of Legal Philosophy* 37:28–60.
- Burke, Brian J., and Nik Heynen. 2014. "Transforming Participatory Science into Socioecological Praxis: Valuing Marginalized Environmental Knowledges in the Face of the Neoliberalization of Nature and Science." *Environment and Society* 5(1):7–27.
- Burke, Matthew J., and Jennie C. Stephens. 2018. "Political Power and Renewable Energy Futures: A Critical Review." *Energy Research and Social Science* 35(January):78–93.
- Business and Biodiversity Offsets Programme. 2009. *Biodiversity Offset Design Handbook*. Vol. 5. Washington D.C.: Forest Trends.
- Cadman, Louisa. 2010. "How (Not) to Be Governed: Foucault, Critique, and the Political." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 28(3):539–56.
- Cairo, Heriberto, Ulrich Oslender, Carlo Emilio Piazzini Suárez, Jerónimo Ríos, Sara Koopman, Vladimir Montoya Arango, Flavio Bladimir Rodríguez Muñoz, and Liliana Zambrano Quintero. 2018. "'Territorial Peace': The Emergence of a Concept in Colombia's Peace Negotiations." *Geopolitics* 23(2):464–88.
- Calderón Molina, Gabriel. 2019. "Corporaciones Autónomas Sin Dientes." *La Nación*, 30. March. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/corporaciones-autonomas-sin-dientes/>).
- Caldwell, Lynton K. 1989. "A Constitutional Law for the Environment: 20 Years with NEPA Indicates the Need." *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 31(10):6–28.
- Call, Charles T. 2008. "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State.'" *Third World Quarterly* 29(8):1491–1507.
- Calle, María Clara. 2015. "La Capilla Que Quedará Bajo Las Aguas de El Quimbo." *Semana*, 05. July. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/huila-la-parroquia-de-san-jose-de-belen-la-capilla-que-queda-bajo-las-aguas-de-el-quimbo/426720-3>).
- Camargo, Alejandro, and Diana Ojeda. 2017. "Ambivalent Desires: State Formation and Dispossession in the Face of Climate Crisis." *Political Geography* 60:57–65.
- Cambridge Dictionary of English. 2020. "'Territory.'" *Cambridge University Press*. Retrieved August 20, 2020 (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/territory>).
- Campbell, John. 2002. "A Critical Appraisal of Participatory Methods in Development Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 5(1):19–29.
- Canal RCN. 2015. "Fue Inaugurado El Viaducto Más Largo de Colombia En Huila." *Canal RCN*, 23. June. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://noticias.canalrcn.com/nacional->

pais/fue-inaugurado-el-viaducto-mas-largo-colombia-huila).

- Canal Uno. 2016. "Controversia Entre Emgesa y Pescadores Por Mortandad de Peces." *Noticias*, 30. Jan. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://noticias.canal1.com.co/que-tal-esto/controversia-entre-emgesa-y-pescadores-por-mortandad-de-peces/>).
- Cardona, César Alejandro, Marcela Pinilla, and Aida Gálvez. 2016. "¡A Un Lado, Que Viene El Progreso! Construcción Del Proyecto Hidroituango En El Cañon Del Cauca Medio Antioqueño, Colombia." Pp. 303–29 in *Extractivismos y posconflicto en Colombia: retos para la paz territorial*, edited by A. Ulloa and S. Coronado. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Carmen, Raff. 1996. *Autonomous Development: Humanizing the Landscape: An Excursion into Radical Thinking and Practice*. London: Zed Books.
- Castillo, Diego. 2015. "Emgesa Cumplirá Decreto Nacional y Prenderá Turbinas a Pesar de Negación Del Tribunal Del Huila." *La Nación*, 13. Nov. Retrieved June 12, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/emgesa-cumplira-decreto-nacional-y-prendera-turbinas-a-pesar-de-negacion-del-tribunal-del-huila/>).
- Castree, Noel. 2003. "Commodifying What Nature?" *Progress in Human Geography* 27(3):273–97.
- Cavanagh, Connor Joseph, and Tor A. Benjaminsen. 2015. "Guerrilla Agriculture? A Biopolitical Guide to Illicit Cultivation within an IUCN Category II Protected Area." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):725–45.
- Central Board Irrigation and Power. 1959. *Irrigation and Power*. Vol. xvi. India.
- Cepeda-Espinoza, M. J. 2005. "Judicialization of Politics in Colombia: The Old and the New." Pp. 67–104 in *The Judicialization of Politics in Latin America*, edited by A. Angell, L. Schjolden, and R. Sieder. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cernea, Michael M. 2000. *Impoverishment Risks, Risk Management, and Reconstruction: A Model of Population Displacement and Resettlement*. UN Symposium on Hydropower and Sustainable Development.
- Chambers, Robert. 1981. "Rapid Rural Appraisal: Rationale and Repertoire." *Public Administration and Development* 1(2):95–106.
- Chatterton, Brian, and Lynne Chatterton. 1996. "Closing a Water Resource: Some Policy Considerations." Pp. 355–61 in *Water Policy: Allocation and Management in Practice*, edited by P. Howsam and R. C. Carter. London: Chapman & Hall.
- Christophers, Brett. 2018. *The New Enclosure. The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain*. New York: Verso.
- Chutubtim, Piyaluk. 2001. "Guidelines for Conducting Extended Cost-Benefit Analysis of Dam Projects in Thailand." *Economy and Environment Program for Southeast Asia*.
- Cleaver, Frances. 1999. "Paradoxes of Participation: Questioning Participatory Approaches to Development." *Journal of International Development* 11:597–612.
- Colombia Plural. 2018. "Hidroituango: Inundar La Verdad." *Colombia Plural*, 21. May. Retrieved March 20, 2020 (<https://colombiaplural.com/secciones/hidroituango-la-inundacion-de-la-verdad/>).

- Comaroff, Jean, and John L. Comaroff. 2006. "Law and Disorder in the Postcolony: An Introduction." Pp. 1–56 in *Law and disorder in the postcolony*, edited by J. Comaroff and J. L. Comaroff. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Comaroff, John L., and Jean Comaroff. 2009. *Ethnicity Inc.* Chicago Studies in Practices of Meaning.
- La Comisión de Regulación de Energía y Gas. 2006. *Resolución No. 071: Por La Cual Se Adopta La Metodología Para La Remuneración Del Cargo Por Confiabilidad En El Mercado Mayorista de Energía.* Bogotá.
- El Confidencial Digital. 2009. "Endesa Necesitará La Protección de Un Batallón Del Ejército Colombiano (1.200 Efectivos) Para Su Nueva Central Hidroeléctrica En El Quimbo." *ECD*, 18. May. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elconfidencialdigital.com/articulo/dinero/Endesa-proteccion-colombiano-hidroelectrica-Quimbo/20090518000000055091.html>).
- El Congreso de Colombia. 1993. *Ley 99: Por La Cual Se Crea El MINISTERIO DEL MEDIO AMBIENTE.* Bogotá.
- El Congreso de Colombia. 2018. *Proyecto de Ley No. de 2018: Por Medio Del Cual Se Crean Las Mesas Ambientales En El Territorio Nacional Como Espacio de Participación Multisectorial, Institucional y Multidisciplinario.* Bogotá.
- Conpes, Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social. 2004. *3297: Agenda Interna Para La Productividad y La Copetitividad: Metodología.* Bogotá.
- Conpes, Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social. 2008. *3527: Política Nacional de Copetitividad y Productividad.* Bogotá.
- Conpes, Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social. 2013. *3762: Lineamientos de Política Para El Desarrollo de Proyectos de Interés Nacional y Estrategicos - PINES.* Bogotá.
- Consejo Superior de la Judicatura. 2016. *Constitución Política de Colombia 1991. Actualizada Con Los Actos Legislativos a 2016.* Bogotá.
- Contraloría de Bogotá DC. 2014. *Informe Final de Auditoría Modalidad Especial - PHE El Quimbo - Período Auditado 2009-2014.* Bogotá.
- Contraloría General de la República. 2011. *Informe Técnico: Verificación En Terreno Al PHE - El Quimbo.* Bogotá.
- Cooke, Bill, and Uma Kothari, eds. 2001. *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London: Zed Books.
- Cooppan, Vilashini. 2019. "Time-Maps: A Field Guide to the Decolonial Imaginary." *Critical Times* 2(3):396–415.
- Copeland, Nicholas. 2019. "Linking the Defence of Territory to Food Sovereignty: Peasant Environmentalisms and Extractive Neoliberalism in Guatemala." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 19(1):21–40.
- Cormagdalena. 2007. *Atlas Cuenca Del Río Grande de La Magdalena.* Barranquilla.
- Cornwall, Andrea. 2004. "Spaces for Transformation? Reflections on Issues of Power and Difference in Participation in Development." Pp. 75–92 in *Participation: from Tyranny*

- to Transformation?*, edited by S. Hickey and G. Mohan. London: Zed Books.
- Correa, Pablo. 2019. “Frente a Los Grandes Megaproyectos No Hay Nadie Que Haga Un Control”: Director de La ANLA.” *El Espectador*, 09. Feb. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/frente-los-grandes-megaproyectos-no-hay-nadie-que-haga-un-control-director-anla-articulo-838883>).
- Corte Constitucional. 2013. *Sentencia T-135: Participación y Concertación de Personas Afectadas Por El Desarrollo de Megaproyectos*. Bogotá.
- Corte Constitucional. 2014. *Sentencia T-581*. Bogotá.
- Corte Constitucional. 2016. *Sentencia T-445: Principio de Autonomía Territorial En El Contexto de Un Estado Unitario*. Bogotá.
- Coutinho, Carlos Nelson. 1980. *A Democracia Como Valor Universal*. São Paulo: Ciências Humanas.
- Couto, Leandro Freitas. 2005. “Initiative for the Integration of Regional Infrastructure in South-America - IIRSA.” *Global Forum on Governance: Modernising Government: Strategies & Tools for Change*.
- Cox, Kevin R. 1998. “Spaces of Dependence, Spaces of Engagement and the Politics of Scale.” *Political Geography* 17(1):1–23.
- Cox, Robert W. 2005. “Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations.” in *The Global Resistance Reader*, edited by L. Amoore. New York: Routledge.
- Cresswell, Tim. 2002. “Theorizing Place.” Pp. 11–32 in *Mobilizing Place, Placing Mobility: The Politics of Representation in a Globalized World*, edited by T. Cresswell and G. Verstraete. Amsterdam: Rodop.
- Dagnino, Evelina. 1998. “Culture, Citizenship, and Democracy: Changing Discourses and Practices of the Latin American Left.” Pp. 33–63 in *Cultures of Politics - Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, edited by S. E. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Dagnino, Evelina. 2008. “Challenges to Participation, Citizenship and Democracy: Perverse Confluence and Displacement of Meanings.” in *Can NGOs make a difference?: The challenge of development alternatives*, edited by A. Bebbington, S. Hickey, and D. Mitlin. London: Zed Books.
- Daniels, Joe Parkin. 2018. “Colombia: Tens of Thousands Ordered to Evacuate after Floods at Dam.” *The Guardian*, 16. May. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/may/16/colombia-tens-of-thousands-of-ordered-to-evacuate-after-floods-at-dam>).
- Darío Puentes, José. 2015. “El Viaducto Más Largo de Colombia Está En El Huila.” *El Tiempo*, 23. June. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-15994255>).
- Davidson, Arnold I. 2011. “In Praise of Counter-Conduct.” *History of the Human Sciences* 24(4):25–41.
- Dean, Mitchell. 2010. *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society*. 2nd ed. London: SAGE Publications.

- Deemer, Bridget R., John A. Harrison, Siyue Li, Jake J. Beaulieu, Tonya Delsontro, Nathan Barros, Jose F. Bezerra-Neto, Stephen M. Powers, Marco A. Dos Santos, and J. Arie Vonk. 2016. "Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Reservoir Water Surfaces: A New Global Synthesis." *BioScience* 66(11):949–64.
- Deetz, Stanley. 1992. *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization: Developments in Communication and the Politics of Everyday Life*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Dejusticia. 2018. "Sentencia Sobre Consultas Populares Limitaría El Poder de Ciudadanos y Municipios de Decidir Sobre Proyectos Mineros y Petroleros En Sus Territorios." *Dejusticia*, 11. Oct. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.dejusticia.org/sentencia-sobre-consultas-populares-limitaria-el-poder-de-ciudadanos-y-municipios-de-decidir-sobre-proyectos-mineros-y-petroleros-en-sus-territorios/>).
- Departamento del Huila. 2007. *Agenda Interna Del Huila Para La Productividad y La Competitividad*. Neiva.
- Desrosières, Alain. 1998. *The Politics of Large Numbers: A History of Statistical Reasoning*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Devine, Jennifer A., Diana Ojeda, and Soraya Maite Yie Garzón. 2020. "Formaciones Actuales de Lo Campesino En América Latina: Conceptualizaciones, Sujetos/as Políticos/as y Territorios En Disputa." *Antípoda. Revista de Antropología y Arqueología* 4:3–25.
- Diario del Huila. 2011. "El Puente Se Ha Quebrado." *Diario Del Huila*, 09. Aug. Retrieved February 14, 2018 (<https://diariodelhuila.com/economia/el-puente-se-ha-quebrado>).
- Diario del Huila. 2014. "Las Pruebas Contra Emgesa En El Caso Del Puente Paso de El Colegio." *Diario Del Huila*, 23. Sep. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://diariodelhuila.com/economia/las-pruebas-contra-emgesa-en-el-caso-del-puente-paso-de-el-colegio-cdgint20140923072209156>).
- Diario del Huila. 2015. "Las Tristezas Que Deja El Quimbo." *Diario Del Huila*, 21. April. Retrieved June 2, 2020 (<https://www.diariodelhuila.com/el-quimbo/las-tristezas-que-deja-el-quimbo-cdgint20150421074952158>).
- Diario del Huila. 2017. "Terraes Se Mantiene Sobre Riesgos de El Quimbo." *Diario Del Huila*, 14. July. Retrieved May 4, 2020 (<https://diariodelhuila.com/regional/terraes-se-mantiene-sobre-riesgos-de-el-quimbo-cdgint20170614115111153>).
- Diario del Huila. 2018a. "Necesitamos Autonomía Territorial: Gobernador Del Huila." *Diario Del Huila*, 04. May. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.diariodelhuila.com/necesitamos-autonomia-territorial-gobernador-del-huila>).
- Diario del Huila. 2018b. "Tribunal Falla a Favor de La ANLA En Tutela Sobre El Quimbo." *Diario Del Huila*, 02. April. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://diariodelhuila.com/tribunal-falla-a-favor-de-la-anla-en-tutela-sobre-el-quimbo>).
- Diario del Huila. 2019. "Se 'Hundió' Turismo En Yaguará." *Diario Del Huila*, 09. March. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.diariodelhuila.com/se-hundio-turismo-en-yaguara>).
- Díaz Londoño, Jorge Andrés. 2009. "Estado Social de Derecho y Neoliberalismo En

- Colombia: Estudio Del Cambio Social a Finales Del Siglo XX.” *Sociología & Antropología* 11:205–28.
- Díaz Polanco, Franklin, John Jairo Trujillo Quintero, and Liliana Marcela Pérez Bonilla. 2015. “Proyecto Hidroeléctrica El Quimbo: Un Análisis Frente Al Derecho a La Propiedad En El Sistema Interamericano de Derechos Humanos.” *Memorias* 13(23):21–40.
- Dietz, Kristina. 2018. “Consultas Populares Mineras En Colombia: Condiciones de Su Realización y Significados Políticos. El Caso de La Colosa.” *Colombia Internacional* 93:93–117.
- Dinero. 2011. “En Marcha Obras de La Hidroeléctrica El Quimbo.” *Dinero*, 24. Feb. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.dinero.com/negocios/articulo/en-marcha-obras-hidroelectrica-quimbo/114149>).
- Diocese of Garzón. 2017. “Informe Ejecutivo Sobre El Quimbo.” *Edición Mayo*.
- DNP, Departamento Nacional de Planeación. 2005. *Visión Colombia II Centenario 2019 - Fundamentar El Crecimiento y El Desarrollo Social En La Ciencia, La Tecnología y La Innovación*. Bogotá.
- DNP, Departamento Nacional de Planeación. 2010. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2010-2014: Prosperidad Para Todos*. Bogotá.
- Domingo, Pilar. 2004. “Judicialization of Politics or Politicization of the Judiciary? Recent Trends in Latin America.” *Democratization* 11(1):104–26.
- Donge, Jan Kees van. 2006. “Ethnography and Participant Observation.” Pp. 180–88 in *Doing Development Research*, edited by V. Desai and R. B. Potter. London: SAGE Publications.
- Duarte Abadía, Bibiana, Rutgerd Boelens, and Tatiana Roa Avendaño. 2015. “Hydropower, Encroachment and the Re-Patterning of Hydrosocial Territory: The Case of Hidrosogamoso in Colombia.” *Human Organization* 74(3):243–54.
- Dunlap, Alexander. 2018. “The ‘Solution’ Is Now the ‘Problem:’ Wind Energy, Colonisation and the ‘Genocide-Ecocide Nexus’ in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca.” *International Journal of Human Rights* 22(4):550–73.
- Dunlap, Alexander. 2019. “Renewing Destruction: Wind Energy Development in Oaxaca, Mexico.” *Vrije Universiteit*.
- Dunlap, Alexander. 2020. “Wind, Coal, and Copper: The Politics of Land Grabbing, Counterinsurgency, and the Social Engineering of Extraction Counterinsurgency, and the Social Engineering of Extraction.” *Globalizations* 17(4):661–82.
- Dunlap, Alexander, and James Fairhead. 2014. “The Militarisation and Marketisation of Nature: An Alternative Lens to ‘Climate-Conflict.’” *Geopolitics* 19(4):937–61.
- Dussán Calderón, Miller Armín. 2008. “Es Necesario Un Pacto Entre La Sociedad Civil de La Región y La Universidad Surcolombiana.” *Miller Dussán Blogia*, 29. April. Retrieved June 9, 2020 (<http://millerdussan.blogia.com/2008/050301-es-necesario-un-pacto-entre-la-sociedad-civil-de-la-region-y-la-universidad-surc.php>).
- Dussán Calderón, Miller Armín. 2009. “Declaración de La Asociación de Afectados Por La

- Construcción Del Proyecto Hidroelectrico El Quimbo ‘ASOQUIMBO.’” *Miller Dussán Blogia*, 29. Dec. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<http://millerdussan.blogia.com/2009/122901-declaracion-de-la-asociacion-de-afectados-por-la-construccion-del-proyecto-hidro.php>).
- Dussán Calderón, Miller Armín. 2012. “Diálogo Con El Gobierno Nacional Exige La Minga Por La Liberación de La Madre Tierra.” *Miller Dussán Blogia*, 14. Aug. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://millerdussan.blogia.com/2012/081401-dialogo-con-el-gobierno-nacional-exige-la-minga-por-la-liberacion-de-la-madre-ti.php>).
- Dussán Calderón, Miller Armín. 2017. *El Quimbo - Extractivismo, Despojo, Ecocidio y Resistencia*. Bogotá: Planeta Paz.
- Dussán Calderón, Miller Armín. 2019. “Opinión: Comisión de Seguimiento Al Proyecto Hidroeléctrico EL Quimbo, Camino Al Fracaso.” *La Voz de La Región*, 14. April. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://lavozdelaregion.co/opinion-comision-de-seguimiento-al-proyecto-hidroelectrico-el-quimbo-camino-al-fracaso/>).
- Dussel, Enrique. 1994. *El Encubrimiento Del Otro: Hacia El Origen Del Mito de La Modernidad*. 3rd ed. Quito: Abya-Yala.
- Dye, Barnaby. 2016. “The Return of ‘High Modernism’? Exploring the Changing Development Paradigm through a Rwandan Case Study of Dam Construction.” *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 10(2):303–24.
- Echavarría Alvarez, Josefina. 2010. *In/Security in Colombia: Writing Political Identities in the Democratic Security Policy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Ehrnström-Fuentes, Maria, and Markus Kröger. 2018. “Birthing Extractivism: The Role of the State in Forestry Politics and Development in Uruguay.” *Journal of Rural Studies* 57(January):197–208.
- Emgesa. 2008. “Presentación Del Tema: ‘Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo.’” *Cámara de Comercio Neiva*, 6. Oct. Retrieved May 29, 2020 (<https://slideplayer.es/slide/1048917/>).
- Emgesa. 2012. “Puente Paso El Colegio.” *Comunicado a La Opinión Pública*, 04. Jan.
- Emmenegger, Susan, and Axel Tschentscher. 1994. “Taking Nature’s Rights Seriously: The Long Way to Biocentrism in Environmental Law.” *Georgetown International Environmental Law Review* VI(3):545–92.
- Enel Américas. 2018. “Emgesa.” Retrieved March 19, 2020 (<https://www.enelamericas.com/en/aboutus/a201609-emgesa.html>).
- Enel Américas. 2019. “About Enel Américas.” Retrieved April 28, 2020 (<https://www.enelamericas.com/en/aboutus/a201609-about-enel-americas.html>).
- Enel Américas. 2020. “Ownership Structure.” Retrieved April 28, 2020 (<https://www.enelamericas.com/en/aboutus/a201609-information-on-our-shareholders.html>).
- Enel Group. 2016. “Information Statement Endesa Américas S.A.”
- Enel Group. 2019. “Enel Colombia: Presentación Corporativa 2019.” Retrieved June 15, 2020 (<https://www.enel.com.co/es/inversionista/enel-codensa/presentaciones-corporativas.html>).

- Enel Group. 2020. "Lucio Rubio: Enel Colombia General Director." Retrieved April 28, 2020 (<https://www.enel.com.co/en/investors/codensa-electric-power/senior-management/director-general.html>).
- Eren, Ayşen. 2016. "The Political Ecology of Uncertainty: The Production of Truth by Juridical Practices in Hydropower Development." *Journal of Political Ecology* 24(4):386–405.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1984. "Discourse and Power in Development: Michel Foucault and the Relevance of His Work to the Third World." *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 10(3):377–400.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1996. "Constructing Nature: Elements for a Poststructural Political Ecology." Pp. 46–67 in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, development, social movements*, edited by R. Peet and M. Watts. London: Routledge.
- Escobar, Arturo. 1999. "After Nature: Steps to an Antiessentialist Political Ecology." *Current Anthropology* 40(1):1–30.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2001. "Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization." *Political Geography* 20(2):139–174.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2006. "Difference and Conflict in the Struggle Over Natural Resources: A Political Ecology Framework." *Development* 49(3):6–13.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2008. *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Durham: Duke.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2010. "Latin America at a Crossroads: Alternative Modernizations, Post-Liberalism, or Post-Development?" *Cultural Studies* 24(1):1–65.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2012. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2015. "Transiciones: A Space for Research and Design for Transitions to the Pluriverse." *Design Philosophy Papers* 13(1):13–23.
- Escobar, Arturo. 2016. "Thinking-Feeling with the Earth: Territorial Struggles and the Ontological Dimension of the Epistemologies of the South." *AIBR Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana* 11(1):11–32.
- Escobar, Arturo, and Susan Paulson. 2005. "Collective Ethnic Identities." Pp. 257–77 in *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*, edited by S. Paulson and L. L. Gezon. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- El Espectador. 2012a. "El Director de Endesa En Colombia Defendió El Proyecto: 'El Quimbo Es Necesario.'" *El Espectador*, 24. March. Retrieved August 25, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/el-quimbo-es-necesario/>).
- El Espectador. 2012b. "Santos Defiende Desalojo Hecho Por La Policía En El Quimbo." *El Espectador*, 27. Feb. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/santos-defiende-desalojo-hecho-policia-el-quimbo-articulo-329060>).
- El Espectador. 2015. "Corte Constitucional Tumbó Decreto Que Puso En Marcha Hidroeléctrica de El Quimbo." *El Espectador*, 10. Dec. Retrieved February 20, 2020

- (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/judicial/corte-constitucional-tumbo-decreto-puso-marcha-hidroele-articulo-604734>).
- El Espectador. 2016a. “¿Necesitamos El Agua y La Energía! Represa El Quimbo No Puede Seguir Cerrada’: Juan Manuel Santos.” *El Espectador*, 07. Jan. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/economia/necesitamos-el-agua-y-energia-represa-el-quimbo-no-pued-articulo-609299>).
- El Espectador. 2016b. “Alerta Por Daño Ambiental de Hidroeléctricas En Colombia.” *El Espectador*, 18. Aug. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/nacional/alerta-dano-ambiental-de-hidroelectricas-colombia-articulo-649813>).
- El Espectador. 2018a. “¿De Qué Trata La Ley de Regiones Que Aprobó El Congreso?” *El Espectador*, 13. Dec. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/de-que-trata-la-ley-de-regiones-que-aprobo-el-congreso-articulo-829022>).
- El Espectador. 2018b. “Más de 25.000 Personas Han Evacuado Por Emergencia En Hidroituango.” *El Espectador*, 22. May. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/mas-de-25000-personas-han-evacuado-por-emergencia-de-hidroituango-articulo-789884>).
- Espeland, Wendy Nelson, and Mitchell L. Stevens. 1998. “Commensuration as a Social Process.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 24(1):313–43.
- Espinosa, Miguel Ángel. 2018. “Familias de Desaparecidos En Ituango Piden Frenar Llenado de Represa.” *El Tiempo*, 15. Feb. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/medellin/hidroituango-inundaria-tierras-con-cuerpos-de-desaparecidos-182934>).
- Esteva, Gustavo. 2019. “Autonomy.” Pp. 99–101 in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by A. Kothari, A. Salleh, A. Escobar, F. Demaria, and A. Acosta. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- European Commission. 2011. *Energy Infrastructure Priorities for 2020 and beyond — A Blueprint for an Integrated European Energy Network*. Luxembourg.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. 1979. “Investigating Reality in Order to Transform It: The Colombian Experience.” *Dialectical Anthropology* 4(1):33–55.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. 1999. “Orígenes Universales y Retos Actuales de La IAP.” *Análisis Político*, 38, Sept-Dec 38(Sept.-Dec.):73–89.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. 2006. “The North-South Convergence: A 30-Year First-Person Assessment of PAR.” *Action Research* 4(3):351–58.
- Fals Borda, Orlando. 2009. *Una Sociología Sentipensante Para América Latina*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores.
- FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization. 2005. “National Aquaculture Sector Overview: Colombia.” Retrieved February 20, 2020 ([http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/naso\\_colombia/en](http://www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/naso_colombia/en)).
- FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization. 2015. “Zonas de Reserva Campesina: Una Apuesta Por La Seguridad Alimentaria y La Construcción de Paz.” *YouTube*, 01. Oct. Retrieved

- June 9, 2020 ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=2&v=AOSoIi1O8-0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=2&v=AOSoIi1O8-0)).
- Fearnside, Philip M. 2015. "Emissions from Tropical Hydropower and the IPCC." *Environmental Science and Policy* 50:225–39.
- Fearnside, Philip M. 2016. "Greenhouse Gas Emissions From Hydroelectric Dams in Tropical Forests." Pp. 428–38 in *Alternative Energy and Shale Gas Encyclopedia*, edited by J. Lehr and J. Keeley. New York: John Wiley & Sons Publishers.
- Fearnside, Philip M., and Salvador Pueyo. 2012. "Underestimating Greenhouse-Gas Emissions from Tropical Dams." *Nature Climate Change* 2(6):382–84.
- Ferguson, James. 2003. *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development", Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. 6th ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Ferguson, James. 2010. "The Uses of Neoliberalism." *Antipode* 41(S1):166–84.
- Final Peace Agreement. 2016. *Final Agreement To End the Armed Conflict and Build a Stable and Lasting Peace*. Havana, Cuba: Oficina de Alto Comisionado Para La Paz Embajada de Noruega Social development Group.
- Finer, Matt, and Clinton N. Jenkins. 2012. "Proliferation of Hydroelectric Dams in the Andean Amazon and Implications for Andes-Amazon Connectivity." *PLoS ONE* 7(4):1–9.
- Fischer, Frank. 2018. "Environmental Democracy: Participation, Deliberation and Citizenship." Pp. 257–79 in *Environment and Society*, edited by M. Boström and D. J. Davidson. London: Palgrave Studies in Environmental Sociology and Policy.
- Fjellheim, Eva Maria. 2020. "Through Our Stories We Resist: Decolonial Perspectives on South Saami History, Indigeneity and Rights." in *Indigenous Knowledges and the Sustainable Development Agenda*, edited by A. Breidlid and R. Krøvel. London: Routledge.
- Fletcher, Robert. 2010. "Neoliberal Environmentalism: Towards a Poststructuralist Political Ecology of the Conservation Debate." *Conservation and Society* 8(3):171.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *POWER/KNOWLEDGE Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. edited by C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1982. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8(4):777–95.
- Foucault, Michel. 1990. *The History of Sexuality - An Introduction (Part 1)*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1998. *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 2002. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, Michel. 2003. *Society Must Be Defended*. New York: Picador.
- Foucault, Michel. 2007. *Security, Territory, Population*. New York: Picador.
- Foucault, Michel. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. New York: Picador.
- Fourie, Johan. 2006. "Economic Infrastructure: A Review of Definitions, Theory and Empirics." *South African Journal of Economics* 74(3):530–56.

- Franco, Jean. 1998. "Defrocking the Vatican: Feminism's Secular Project." Pp. 278–92 in *Cultures of Politics - Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, edited by S. E. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Freeman, Carla. 2001. "Is Local: Global as Feminine: Masculine? Rethinking the Gender of Globalization." *Signs* 26(4):1007–37.
- Front Line Defenders. 2018. "Stop the Killings." Retrieved August 20, 2020 (<https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/statement-report/stop-killings>).
- Garay Salamanca, Luis Jorge, and Eduardo Salcedo Albarán. 2012. *Redes Ilícitas y Reconfiguración de Estados - El Caso Colombia*. Bogotá: Centro Internacional para la Justicia Transicional -ICTJ, Vortex.
- García Segura, Hugo, Élber Gutiérrez Roa, and Natalia Herrera Durán. 2013. "'Se Puede Ganar En Primera Vuelta': Santos." *El Espectador*, 21. Dec. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/se-puede-ganar-primera-vuelta-santos-articulo-465498>).
- Garcia, Victor Atencio. 2000. "Impactos de La Hidroelectrica Urta En Los Peces Migratorios Del Rio Sinu." *Revista Temas Agrarios* 5(9).
- Gaventa, John. 2004. "Towards Participatory Governance: Assessing the Transformative Possibilities." Pp. 25–42 in *Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by G. Mohan and S. Hickey. London: Zed Books.
- Geenen, Sara, and Judith Verweijen. 2017. "Explaining Fragmented and Fluid Mobilization in Gold Mining Concessions in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo." *The Extractive Industries and Society* 4(4):758–65.
- George, Alexander L., and Andrew Bennett. 2005. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Gezon, Lisa L., and Susan Paulson. 2005. "Place, Power, Difference Multiscale Research at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century." Pp. 1–16 in *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*, edited by S. Paulson and L. L. Gezon. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1976. *New Rules in Sociological Method*. London: Hutchinson.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1984. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity press.
- Gieryn, Thomas F. 1983. "Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science: Strains and Interests in Professional Ideologies of Scientists." *American Sociological Review* 48(6):781–95.
- Gingembre, Mathilde. 2015. "Resistance or Participation? Fighting against Corporate Land Access amid Political Uncertainty in Madagascar." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):561–84.
- Global Witness. 2019. "Enemies of the State? How Governments and Business Silence Land and Environmental Defenders." *Economic and Political Weekly*. Retrieved August 20, 2020 (<https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/enemies-state/>).

- Gobernación del Huila. 2017. "Historia Del Huila." Retrieved April 28, 2020 (<https://www.huila.gov.co/publicaciones/145/historia--del-huila/>).
- Gobernación del Huila. 2018. "'No Hemos Sido Ni Seremos Complacientes Con Los Incumplimientos de Emgesa': Gobernador Del Huila." *07. Dec.* Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.huila.gov.co/publicaciones/8634/no-hemos-sido-ni-seremos-complacientes-con-los-incumplimientos-de-emgesa-gobernador-del-huila/>).
- Gobernación del Huila. 2019. "Gestión Del Gobernador Del Huila, Carlos Julio González Villa, Al Frente de La Federación Nacional de Departamentos -FND-." *01. Feb.* Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.huila.gov.co/publicaciones/8700/gestion-del-gobernador-del-huila-carlos-julio-gonzalez-villa-al-frente-de-la-federacion-nacional-de-departamentos--fnd-/>).
- Goldman, Michael. 2005. *Imperial Nature: The World Bank and Struggles for Social Justice in the Age of Globalization*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gómez Baggethun, Erik. 2015. "Commodification." in *DEGROWTH: A vocabulary for a new era*, edited by G. D'Alisa, F. Demaria, and G. Kallis. New York: Routledge.
- Gómez Baggethun, Erik, David N. Barton, Pam Berry, Robert Dunford, and Paula A. Harrison. 2016. "Concepts and Methods in Ecosystem Services Valuation." Pp. 99–111 in *Handbook of Ecosystem Services*, edited by M. Potschin, R. Haines-Young, R. Fish, and R. K. Turner. London: Routledge.
- Gómez Baggethun, Erik, and Roldan Muradian. 2015. "In Markets We Trust? Setting the Boundaries of Market-Based Instruments in Ecosystem Services Governance." *Ecological Economics* 117(September):217–24.
- González, Hernando. 2015. "Cronica de Una Tragedia Donde Murieron Mas de 200 Trabajadores En La Hidroelectrica Del Guabio Colombia." Retrieved April 28, 2020 (<http://utopialapalabra.blogspot.com/2015/08/cronica-de-una-tragedia-donde-murieron.html>).
- Goodman, Michael K., Maxwell T. Boykoff, and Kyle T. Evered. 2008. "Contentious Geographies: Environmental Knowledge, Meaning, Scale." Pp. 1–23 in *Contentious Geographies: Environmental Knowledge, Meaning, Scale*, edited by M. K. Goodman, K. Evered, and M. Boykoff. London: Ashgate.
- Goonewardena, Kanishka, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid, eds. 2008. *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*. New York: Routledge.
- Gordon, Colin. 1991. "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction." Pp. 1–52 in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality. With Two Lectures By and an Interview with Michel Foucault*, edited by G. Burchell, C. Gordon, and P. Miller. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Graham, Stephen. 2010. *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails*. London: Routledge.
- Grajales, Jacobo. 2015. "Land Grabbing, Legal Contention and Institutional Change in Colombia." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):541–60.
- Grajales, Jacobo. 2016. "Violence Entrepreneurs, Law and Authority in Colombia." *Development and Change* 47(6):1294–1315.
- Gramsci, Antonio. 2018. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. Delhi: Aakar.

- Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2006. "La Descolonización de La Economía Política y Los Estudios Postcoloniales: Transmodernidad, Pensamiento Fronterizo y Colonialidad Global." *Tabula Rasa* 1(4):17–48.
- Grueso, Libia, Carlos Rosero, and Arturo Escobar. 1998. "The Process of Black Community Organizing in the Southern Pacific Coast Region of Colombia." Pp. 196–219 in *Cultures of Politics - Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*, edited by S. E. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Grupo Kavilando. 2011. "Memoria de Los Abuelos (Video Completo)." *Youtube*, 12. March. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kE187-473X4>).
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2005. "Geografías Fragmentadas: Sitios Globalizados, Áreas Relegadas." *Revista Del Sur* 160:3–13.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2010. "The New Extractivism of the 21st Century: Ten Urgent Theses about Extractivism in Relation to Current South American Progressivism." *Americas Program Report* January 21:1–14.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2011. "Buen Vivir: Today's Tomorrow." *Development* 54(4):441–47.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2014. *Derechos de La Naturaleza: Ética Biocéntrica y Políticas Ambientales*. Lima.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. 2018. "Extractivisms: Tendencies and Consequences." Pp. 61–76 in *Reframing Latin American Development*, edited by R. Munck and R. Delgado Wise. London: Routledge.
- Guereña, Arantxa. 2016. "Unearthed: Land, Power and Inequality in Latin America." *Oxfam International*.
- Güesguán Serpa, Óscar. 2015a. "El Quimbo: Lecciones Para La Infraestructura." *El Espectador*, 17. Nov. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/economia/el-quimbo-lecciones-infraestructura-articulo-599801>).
- Güesguán Serpa, Óscar. 2015b. "La Realidad Jurídica de El Quimbo." *El Espectador*, 16. Dec. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/economia/realidad-juridica-de-el-quimbo-articulo-606118>).
- Guevara Ulloa, Luz Stella. 2016. "Seguimiento y Monitoreo En La Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental En Colombia." Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá.
- Gupta, Akhil. 2012. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gupta, Akhil. 2018. "The Future in Ruins: Thoughts on the Temporality of Infrastructure." Pp. 62–79 in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, edited by N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Gutiérrez-Sanín, F., and J. Vargas. 2017. "Agrarian Elite Participation in Colombia's Civil War." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(4):739–48.
- Guzman Campos, Monseñor Gerrman, Orlando Fals Borda, and Eduardo Umaña Luna. 1962. *La Violencia En Colombia: Estudio de Un Proceso Social*. 2nd ed. Bogotá: Ediciones

Tercer Mundo.

- Haarstad, Håvard, and Arnt Fløysand. 2007. "Globalization and the Power of Rescaled Narratives: A Case of Opposition to Mining in Tambogrande, Peru." *Political Geography* 26(3):289–308.
- Haesbaert, Rogério. 2013. "Del Mito de La Desterritorialización a La Multiterritorialidad." *Cultura y Representaciones Sociales* 8(15).
- Hall, Ruth, Marc Edelman, Saturnino M. Borrás, Ian Scoones, Ben White, and Wendy Wolford. 2015. "Resistance, Acquiescence or Incorporation? An Introduction to Land Grabbing and Political Reactions 'from Below.'" *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):467–88.
- Hansen, Thomas Blom, and Finn Stepputat. 2001. "Introduction States of Imagination." Pp. 1–38 in *States of Imagination: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, edited by T. B. Hansen and F. Stepputat. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Hansjürgens, Bernd, Nils Droste, and Klement Tockner. 2016. "Neglected Values of Major Water Engineering Projects: Ecosystem Services, Social Impacts, and Economic Valuation." Pp. 65–78 in *Society - Water - Technology: a critical appraisal of major water engineering projects*, edited by S. Hüttel, R.F., Bens, O., Bismuth, C., Hoechstetter. Cham: Springer Nature.
- Harvey, David. 1985. *The Urbanization of Capital: Studies in the History and Theory of Capitalist Urbanization*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Harvey, David. 1990. "Between Space and Time: Reflections on the Geographical Imagination." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 80(3):418–34.
- Harvey, David. 1999. *The Limits to Capital*. London: Verso.
- Harvey, David. 2000. *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Harvey, David. 2004. "The 'New' Imperialism: Accumulation by Dispossession." *Social Register* 40:63–87.
- Harvey, David. 2014. *Seventeen Contradictions and the End of Capitalism*. London: Profile Books.
- Harvey, David. 2016. "David Harvey Lecture 4: The Space and Time of Value." *YouTube*, 23. Nov. Retrieved January 13, 2021 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQsAOn5JfPA>).
- Harvey, Penny. 2018. "Infrastructure in and out of Time: The Promise of Roads in Contemporary Peru." Pp. 80–100 in *The Promise of Infrastructure*, edited by N. Anand, A. Gupta, and H. Appel. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Harvey, Penny, and Hannah Knox. 2012. "The Enchantments of Infrastructure." *Mobilities* 7(4):521–36.
- Harvey, William. 2011. "Strategies for Conducting Elite Interviews." *Qualitative Research* 11(4):431–441.
- Head, Emma. 2009. "The Ethics and Implications of Paying Participants in Qualitative Research." *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 12(4):335–44.

- Hébert, Karen. 2016. "Chronicle of a Crisis Foretold: Risk Scenarios and the Politics of Imperilment In Coastal Alaska." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22(S1):108–26.
- Held, Sergio. 2018. "Diecisiete Años de Consultas Previas." *Semana*, 14. Nov. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/contenidos-editoriales/hidrocarburos-son-el-futuro/articulo/diecisiete-anos-de-consultas-previas/590034>).
- Helmcke, Cornelia. 2013. "Replace One's Place: The Livelihood of Internally Displaced People in Colombia." Lund University.
- Herrera Durán, Natalia. 2020. "Encuentran Disparos En Tres Cadáveres Que Se Exhumaron En La Zona de Hidroituango." *El Espectador*, 12. March. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/colombia2020/justicia/jep/encuentran-disparos-en-tres-cadaveres-que-se-exhumaron-en-la-zona-de-hidroituango-articulo-909024>).
- Herrera Huérfano, Eliana, Francisco Sierra Caballero, and Carlos Del Valle Rojas. 2016. "Hacia Una Epistemología Del Sur. Decolonialidad Del Saber- Poder Informativo y Nueva Comunicología Latinoamericana. Una Lectura Crítica de La Mediación Desde Las Culturas Indígenas." *Chasqui. Revista Latinoamericana de Comunicación* (131):77–105.
- Hesse-Biber, Sharlene. 2012. "Feminist Approaches to Triangulation: Uncovering Subjugated Knowledge and Fostering Social Change in Mixed Methods Research." *Journal of Mixed Methods Research* 6(2):137–46.
- Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan. 2004a. *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation?* London: Zed Books.
- Hickey, Samuel, and Giles Mohan. 2004b. "Towards Participation as Transformation: Critical Themes and Challenges." Pp. 3–25 in *Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by G. Mohan and Samuel Hickey. London: Zed Books.
- Hochschild, Jennifer L. 2009. *Conducting Intensive Interviews and Elite Interviews*. Washington D.C.: National Science Foundation.
- Holloway, Immy, Lorraine Brown, and Richard Shipway. 2010. "Meaning Not Measurement: Using Ethnography to Bring a Deeper Understanding to the Participant Experience of Festivals and Events." *International Journal of Event and Festival Management* 1(1):74–85.
- Hommes, Lena, and Rutgerd Boelens. 2018. "From Natural Flow to 'Working River': Hydropower Development, Modernity and Socio-Territorial Transformations in Lima's Rímac Watershed." *Journal of Historical Geography* 62(October):85–95.
- Hornborg, Alf. 2001. *The Power of the Machine: Global Inequalities of Economy, Technology, and Environment*. Walnut Creek, California: AltaMira Press.
- Hornborg, Alf. 2005. "Undermining Modernity: Protecting Landscapes and Meanings among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia." Pp. 196–215 in *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*, edited by S. Paulson and L. L. Gezon. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Howe, Cymene, and Dominic Boyer. 2016. "Aeolian Extractivism and Community Wind in Southern Mexico." *Public Culture* 28(2 79):215–35.

- Howe, Cymene, Dominic Boyer, and Edith Barrera. 2015. "Wind at the Margins of the State: Autonomy and Renewable Energy Development in Southern Mexico." Pp. 92–114 in *Contested Powers – The Politics of Energy and Development in Latin America*, edited by J.-A. McNeish, A. Borchgrevink, and O. Logan. London: Zed Books.
- Huber, Amelie. 2019. "Hydropower in the Himalayan Hazardscape: Strategic Ignorance and the Production of Unequal Risk." *Water* 11(3):414.
- Huneus, Alexander, Javier Couso, and Rachel Sieder. 2010. "Cultures of Legality: Judicialization and Political Activism in Contemporary Latin America." Pp. 3–22 in *Cultures of Legality: Judicialization and Political Activism in Latin America*, edited by J. Couso, A. Huneus, and R. Sieder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hydrochina. 2013. *Master Plan The Magdalena River*.
- Hydropower Sustainability Governance Committee. n.d. "Hydropower Sustainability Tools." Retrieved May 7, 2020 (<https://www.hydrosustainability.org/sustainability-tools>).
- Hydroreview. 2008. "Colombia Developer to Invest US\$900 Million in 400-MW El Quimbo." *Hydroreview*, 10 Dec. Retrieved January 4, 2021 (<https://www.hydroreview.com/2008/12/10/colombia-developer-to-invest-us900-million-in-400-mw-el-quimbo/>).
- Hydroreview. 2010. "Impregilo to Build 400-MW El Quimbo Hydro Project in Colombia." *Hydroreview*, 15 Nov. Retrieved January 4, 2021 (<https://www.hydroreview.com/2010/11/15/impregilo-to-build/>).
- IHA, International Hydropower Association. 2018. *Hydropower Status Report: Sector Trends and Insights*. London.
- Illmer, Patrick. 2018. "The Defence of Territory and Local Struggle for More Democracy in Post-War Guatemala." *Democratization* 25(5):771–86.
- Ingetec-S.A. 2008. *Estudio de Impacto Ambiental Del Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo - Emgesa S.A.* Rev. 4 - Octubre 2008.
- Ingold, Tim. 2011. *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. New York: Routledge.
- Ingold, Tim. 2014. "That's Enough about Ethnography!" *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4(1).
- Ingram, Elizabeth. 2018. "Court Rules in Favor of 400-MW El Quimbo Hydropower Project Environmental License." *Hydroreview*, 5 April. Retrieved January 4, 2021 (<https://www.hydroreview.com/2018/04/05/court-rules-in-favor-of-400-mw-el-quimbo-hydropower-project-environmental-license/>).
- Insight Crime. 2016. "Colombia Elites and Organized Crime." *International Development Research Centre*. Retrieved August 2, 2020 (<https://www.insightcrime.org/investigations/colombia-elites-and-organized-crime-series/>).
- Instituto Alexander von Humboldt. 2014. "Presentación Libro: Bosques Secos Tropicales En Colombia." Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<http://www.humboldt.org.co/es/component/k2/item/529-el-bosque-seco-tropical-en-colombia>).

- International Commission of Jurists. 2016. *El Quimbo: Megaproyectos, Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales y Protesta Social En Colombia. Informe de Misión.*
- International Rivers. 2015. "The Many Faults of El Quimbo Dam." *International Rivers*, 07. Oct. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/436/the-many-faults-of-el-quimbo-dam>).
- James, Paul, and Paul van Seters. 2014. *Globalization and Politics*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Jaramillo, Sergio. 2014. "La Paz Territorial." *Lecture at Harvard University*. Retrieved July 16, 2020 (<http://www.interaktive-demokratie.org/files/downloads/La-Paz-Territorial.pdf>).
- Jasanoff, Sheila, and Brian Wynne. 1998. "Science and Decisionmaking." Pp. 1–87 in *Human Choice & Climate Change, Volume 1: The Societal Framework*, edited by S. Rayner and E. L. Malone. Columbus: Battelle Press.
- Jessop, Bob. 1982. *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods*. Oxford: Martin Robertson & Company.
- Jessop, Bob. 2016. "The State: Past, Present, Future." *Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities* 7:73–86.
- Johnsen, Kathrine Ivsett, Tor A. Benjaminsen, and Inger Marie Gaup Eira. 2015. "Seeing like the State or like Pastoralists? Conflicting Narratives on the Governance of Sámi Reindeer Husbandry in Finnmark, Norway." *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift - Norwegian Journal of Geography* (June):37–41.
- Johnston, Barbara Rose. 2018. "Large-Scale Dam Development and Counter-Movements: Water Justice Struggles around Guatemala's Chixoy Dam." Pp. 169–85 in *Water Justice*, edited by R. Boelens, T. Perreault, and J. Vos. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaika, Maria. 2006. "Dams as Symbols of Modernization: The Urbanization of Nature between Geographical Imagination and Materiality." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 96(2):276–301.
- Killingtveit, Ånund. 2014. "Hydroelectric Power." Pp. 453–70 in *Future Energy - Improved, Sustainable and Clean Options for Our Planet*, edited by T. M. Letcher. London: Elsevier.
- Kirsch, Stuart. 2014. *Mining Capitalism: The Relationship between Corporations and Their Critics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Klauser, Francisco R. 2012. "Thinking through Territoriality: Introducing Claude Raffestin to Anglophone Sociospatial Theory." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 30(1):106–20.
- Krehoff, Bernd. 2008. "Legitimate Political Authority and Sovereignty: Why States Cannot Be the Whole Story." *Res Publica* 14(4):283–97.
- Krupa, Christopher, and David Nugent. 2015. "Off-Centered States: Rethinking State Theory through an Andean Lens." Pp. 1–31 in *State Theory and Andean Politics - New Approaches to the Study of Rule*, edited by C. Krupa and D. Nugent. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Kuipers, James R., Ann S. Maest, Kimberley A. MacHardy, and Gregory Lawson. 2006. *Comparison of Predicted and Actual Water Quality at Hardrock Mines: The Reliability of Predictions in Environmental Impact Statements*. Kuipers & Associates and Buka Environmental.
- Kuriqi, Alban, António N. Pinheiro, Alvaro Sordo-Ward, and Luis Garrote. 2017. "Trade-off between Environmental Flow Policy and Run-of-River Hydropower Generation in Mediterranean Climate." *European Water* 60(July):123–30.
- Lagdijk, Vincent. 2015. "Divided Development: Post-War Ideas on River Utilisation and Their Influence on the Development of the Danube." *International History Review* 37(1):80–98.
- Landau, David Evan. 2015. "Beyond Judicial Independence: The Construction of Judicial Power in Colombia." Harvard University, Cambridge.
- Larkin, Brian. 2013. "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 42(1):327–43.
- Lasso, Carlos A., Francisco de Paula Gutiérrez, Mónica A. Morales Betancourt, Hernando Agudelo Córdoba, Edwin Ramírez Gil, and Rosa E. Ajiaco Martínez. 2011. *II. Pesquerías Continentales de Colombia: Cuenca Del Magdalena-Cauca, Sinú, Canalete, Atrato, Orinoco, Amazonas y Vertiente Del Pacífico*. Serie Edit. Bogotá: Instituto de Investigación de los Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt.
- Latorre Tomás, Sara. 2009. *El Ecologismo Popular En El Ecuador: Pasado y Presente*. Quito: FLASCO.
- Ledec, George, and Juan David Quintero. 2003. "Good Dams and Bad Dams: Environmental Criteria for Site Selection of Hydroelectric Projects." *Latin America and the Caribbean Region: Sustainable Development Working Paper* 16(The World Bank).
- Lederach, Angela J. 2017. "'The Campesino Was Born for the Campo': A Multispecies Approach to Territorial Peace in Colombia." *American Anthropologist* 119(4):589–602.
- Legg, Stephen. 2018. "Subjects of Truth: Resisting Governmentality in Foucault's 1980s." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37(1):27–45.
- Leguizamón Castillo, Yeimmy Rocío. 2015. "Conflictos Ambientales y Movimientos Sociales: El Caso Del Movimiento Embera Katío En Respuesta a La Construcción de La Represa Urrá (1994-2008)." *Memoria y Sociedad* 19(39):94–105.
- Leifsen, Esben. 2017. "Wasteland by Design: Dispossession by Contamination and the Struggle for Water Justice in the Ecuadorian Amazon." *Extractive Industries and Society* 4(2):344–51.
- Leifsen, Esben, Maria-Therese Gustafsson, Maria A. Guzmán-Gallegos, and Almut Schilling-Vacaflor. 2017. "New Mechanisms of Participation in Extractive Governance: Between Technologies of Governance and Resistance Work." *Third World Quarterly* 38(5):1043–57.
- Leifsen, Esben, Luis Sánchez-Vázquez, and Maleny Gabriela Reyes. 2017. "Claiming Prior Consultation, Monitoring Environmental Impact: Counterwork by the Use of Formal Instruments of Participatory Governance in Ecuador's Emerging Mining Sector." *Third World Quarterly* 6597(March):1–18.

- Leitner, Helga, and Eric Sheppard. 2009. "The Spatiality of Contentious Politics: More than a Politics of Scale." Pp. 231–45 in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, edited by R. Keil and R. Mahon. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Lemaitre Ripoll, Julieta. 2009. *El Derecho Como Conjuro - Fetichismo Legal, Violencia y Movimientos Sociales*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores y Universidad de los Andes.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2001. "'The Birth of Bio-Politics': Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality." *Economy and Society* 30(2):190–207.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2002. "Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique." *Rethinking Marxism* 14(3):49–64.
- Li, Fabiana. 2009. "Documenting Accountability: Environmental Impact Assessment in a Peruvian Mining Project." *PoLAR Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 32(2):218–36.
- Li, Fabiana. 2013. "Contesting Equivalences: Controversies over Water and Mining in Peru and Chile." Pp. 18–35 in *The Social Life of Water*, edited by J. R. Wagner. New York: Berghahn.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2007. *The Will to Improve - Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. London: Duke University Press.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2009. "To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations." *Antipode* 41(S1):66–93.
- Lima Andrade, André De, and Marco Aurélio Dos Santos. 2015. "Hydroelectric Plants Environmental Viability: Strategic Environmental Assessment Application in Brazil." *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 52:1413–23.
- Línea de Investigación en Derecho Ambiental. n.d. "¿Qué Es La Consulta Previa?" *Universidad Del Rosario*. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.urosario.edu.co/jurisprudencia/catedra-viva-intercultural/ur/La-Consulta-Previa/Que-es-la-Consulta-Previa/>).
- Loftus, Alex, Hug March, and Fiona Nash. 2016. "Water Infrastructure and the Making of Financial Subjects in the South East of England." *Water Alternatives* 9(2):319–35.
- Long, Norman. 2001. *Development Sociology - Actor Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- López Llanos, Víctor Hugo. 2014. "Sobre El Concepto de Estado En La Globalización: ¿Cómo Aproximarnos Al Estado Desde América Latina?" *LÉXICO DE LA POLÍTICA*.
- Lorente, Roberto. 2010. "An Analysis of Colombia's Democracy." *E-International Relations*. Retrieved March 4, 2020 (<https://www.e-ir.info/2010/04/15/an-analysis-of-colombia's-democracy/>).
- Lukes, Steven. 2005. *Power: A Radical View*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lund, Christian. 2014. "Of What Is This a Case?: Analytical Movements in Qualitative Social Science Research." *Human Organization* 73(3):224–34.
- Lund, Christian. 2016. "Rule and Rupture: State Formation through the Production of Property and Citizenship." *Development and Change* 47(6):1199–1228.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. 2003. *The Accumulation of Capital*. New York: Routledge.

- Machado Aráoz, Horacio. 2010. "La 'Naturaleza' Como Objeto Colonial. Una Mirada Desde La Condición Eco-Bio-Política Del Colonialismo Contemporáneo." *Boletín Onteiken* (10):35–47.
- Machado Aráoz, Horacio. 2011. "El Auge de La Minería Transnacional En América Latina: De La Ecología Política Del Neoliberalismo a La Anatomía Política Del Colonialismo." Pp. 135–79 in *La Naturaleza Colonizada: Ecología política y minería en América Latina*, edited by H. Alimonda. Buenos Aires: CLASCO.
- Machado Aráoz, Horacio. 2012. "Desarrollismo Extractivista y Conflictos Socioterritoriales. De La Depredación Ecológica a La Degradación de La Democracia." *Aportes Científicos Desde Humanidades* 9:1646–65.
- Machado Aráoz, Horacio. 2017. "'América Latina' y La Ecología Política Del Sur. Luchas de Re-Existencia, Revolución Epistémica y Migración Civilizatoria." in *Ecología Política Latinoamericana: Pensamiento crítico, diferencia latinoamericana y rearticulación epistémica*, edited by H. Alimonda, C. Toro Pérez, and F. Martín. Buenos Aires: CLASCO.
- Machado, Marilyn, David López Matta, María Mercedes Campo, Arturo Escobar, and Viviane Weitzner. 2017. "Weaving Hope in Ancestral Black Territories in Colombia: The Reach and Limitations of Free, Prior, and Informed Consultation and Consent." *Third World Quarterly* 38(5):1075–91.
- Maguire, Patricia. 1987. *Doing Participatory Research: A Feminist Approach*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts.
- Maher, David. 2015. "The Fatal Attraction of Civil War Economies: Foreign Direct Investment and Political Violence: A Case Study of Colombia." *International Studies Review* 17(2):217–248.
- Mahon, Rianne. 2006. "Of Scalar Hierarchies and Welfare Redesign: Child Care in Three Canadian Cities." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 31(4):452–66.
- Mahon, Rianne, and Roger Keil. 2009. "Introduction." Pp. 3–26 in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, edited by R. Keil and R. Mahon. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Mains, Daniel. 2012. "Blackouts and Progress: Privatization, Infrastructure, and a Developmentalist State in Jimma, Ethiopia." *Cultural Anthropology* 27(1):3–27.
- Maldonado Copello, Alberto. 2011. "Descentralización Territorial En Colombia: Situación y Perspectivas de Política." *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung En Colombia* (Policy Paper 1).
- Mann, Michael. 1984. "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins Mechanisms and Results." *European Journal of Sociology* 25(2):185–213.
- Mann, Michael. 1987. "Ruling Class Strategies and Citizenship." *Sociology* 21(3):339–54.
- Manzanal, Mabel, Mariana Arzeno, and Maria Andrea Nardi. 2011. "Desarrollo, Territorio y Desigualdad En La Globalización: Conflictos Actuales En La Agricultura Familiar Del Nordeste de Misiones, Argentina." *Mundo Agrario* 12(23).
- Martinez Alier, Joan. 2002. *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

- Martinez Alier, Joan. 2003. "Scale, Environmental Justice, and Unsustainable Cities." *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 14:43–63.
- Martinez Alier, Joan, Isabelle Anguelovski, Patrick Bond, Daniela Del Bene, Federico Demaria, Julien-Francois Gerber, Lucie Greyl, Willi Haas, Hali Healy, Victoria Marín Burgos, Godwin Ojo, Marcelo Porto, Leida Rijnhout, Beatriz Rodríguez Labajos, Joachim Spangenberg, Leah Temper, Rikard Warlenius, and Ivonne Yáñez. 2018. "Between Activism and Science: Grassroots Concepts for Sustainability Coined by Environmental Justice Organizations." *Journal of Political Ecology* 21(1):19.
- Martínez, Viviana, and O. L. Castillo. 2016. "The Political Ecology of Hydropower: Social Justice and Conflict in Colombian Hydroelectricity Development." *Energy Research and Social Science* 22:69–78.
- Marx, Karl. 2009. *Das Kapital - Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie*. Köln: Anaconda.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 1968. *A Critique of The German Ideology*. Progress Publishers.
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels. 2008. *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Pluto Press.
- Masaki, Katsuhiko. 2010. "Rectifying the Anti-Politics of Citizen Participation: Insights from the Internal Politics of a Subaltern Community in Nepal." *Journal of Development Studies* 46(7):1196–1215.
- Mathews, Andrew S. 2005. "Power/Knowledge, Power/Ignorance: Forest Fires and the State in Mexico." *Human Ecology* 33(6):795–820.
- Mathews, Andrew S. 2009. "Unlikely Alliances - Encounters between State Science, Nature Spirits, and Indigenous Industrial Forestry in Mexico, 1926–2008." *Current Anthropology* 50(1):75–101.
- Mathews, Andrew S., and Jessica Barnes. 2016. "Prognosis: Visions of Environmental Futures." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22:9–26.
- Maxwell, Joseph A. 2013. *Qualitative Research Design - An Interactive Approach*. London: SAGE Publications.
- McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. 2004. *Dynamics of Contention*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McAllister, Karen E. 2015. "Rubber, Rights and Resistance: The Evolution of Local Struggles against a Chinese Rubber Concession in Northern Laos." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 42(3–4):817–37.
- McCully, Patrick. 2001. *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams*. 2nd ed. New York: Zed Books.
- McDonagh, Fr. Seán. 2019. "Christian Eco-Theology." Pp. 118–20 in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by A. Kothari, A. Salleh, A. Escobar, F. Demaria, and A. Acosta. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- McGregor, JoAnn. 2006. "Diaries and Case Studies." Pp. 200–206 in *Doing Development Research*, edited by V. Desai and R. B. Potter. London: SAGE Publications.
- McLafferty, Sarah. 1995. "Counting for Women." *Professional Geographer* 47:436–42.

- McNeish, John-Andrew. 2015. "Latin America Transformed?" Pp. 254–89 in *Contested Powers – The Politics of Energy and Development in Latin America*, edited by J.-A. McNeish, A. Borchgrevink, and O. Logan. London: Zed Books.
- McNeish, John-Andrew. 2017a. "A Vote to Derail Extraction: Popular Consultation and Resource Sovereignty in Tolima, Colombia." *Third World Quarterly* 38(5):1128–45.
- McNeish, John-Andrew. 2017b. "Extracting Justice? Colombia's Commitment to Mining and Energy as a Foundation for Peace." *The International Journal of Human Rights* 21(4):500–516.
- McNeish, John-Andrew. 2018. "Resource Extraction and Conflict in Latin America." *Colombia Internacional* 93:3–16.
- McNeish, John-Andrew, and Axel Borchgrevink. 2015. "Introduction: Recovering Power from Energy - Reconsidering the Linkages between Energy and Development." Pp. 1–38 in *Contested Powers – The Politics of Energy and Development in Latin America*, edited by J.-A. McNeish, A. Borchgrevink, and O. Logan. London: Zed Books.
- McNeish, John-Andrew, Axel Borchgrevink, and Owen Logan. 2015. *Contested Powers – The Politics of Energy and Development in Latin America*. London: Zed Books.
- McNeish, John-Andrew, and Owen Logan. 2012. *Flammable Societies: Studies on the Socio-Economics of Oil and Gas*. London: Pluto Press.
- McNeish, John-Andrew, Gabriel Rojas Andrade, and Catalina Vallejo. 2015. *Striking a New Balance? Exploring Civil-Military Relations in Colombia in a Time of Hope*. Bergen: CMI Working Paper.
- Medina Torres, Andrés. 2018. "En Firme Vía Perimetral de El Quimbo." *La Nación*, 06. Nov. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/en-firme-via-perimetral-del-quimbo/>).
- Meehan, Katie M. 2014. "Tool-Power: Water Infrastructure as Wellsprings of State Power." *Geoforum* 57(November):215–24.
- Meger, Sara, and Julia Sachseder. 2020. "Militarized Peace: Understanding Post-Conflict Violence in the Wake of the Peace Deal in Colombia." *Globalizations* 17(6):953–73.
- Mercer, Claire. 2006. "Working with Partners: NGOs and CBOs." Pp. 94–103 in *Doing Development Research*, edited by V. Desai and R. B. Potter. London: SAGE Publications.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton University Press.
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente. 2002. *Decreto No. 1728: Por El Cual Se Reglamenta El Título VIII de La Ley 99 de 1993 Sobre La Licencia Ambiental*. Bogotá.
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial. 2003. *Decreto No. 1180: Por El Cual Se Reglamenta El Título VIII de La Ley 99 de 1993 Sobre Licencias Ambientales*. Bogotá.
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial. 2007. *Decreto No. 330: Por El Cual Se Reglamentan Las Audiencias Públicas Ambientales y Se Deroga El Decreto 2762 de 2005*. Bogotá.

- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente Vivienda y Desarrollo Territorial. 2009. *Licencia Ambiental PHEQ*. Bogotá.
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. 2012. *Acta de Compromisos y Acuerdos*. Bogotá.
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. 2018a. “Las Mesas Ambientales Subregionales, Espacios Clave Para La Transformación de Las Regiones.” *Noticias*, 02. June. Retrieved September 9, 2020 (<http://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/noticias/3912-las-mesas-ambientales-subregionales-espacios-clave-para-la-transformacion-de-las-regiones>).
- Minambiente, Ministerio de Ambiente y Desarrollo Sostenible. 2018b. “Minambiente Oficializa Creación de La Mesa Intersectorial Para La Democracia Ambiental.” *Noticias*, 07. Aug. Retrieved September 9, 2020 (<https://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/noticias/4099-minambiente-oficializa-creacion-de-la-mesa-intersectorial-para-la-democracia-ambiental>).
- Ministerio de Minas y Energia. 2008. *Resolución No. 321: Por La Cual Se Declara de Utilidad Pública e Interés Social Los Terrenos Necesarios Para La Construcción y Operación Del Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo*. Bogotá.
- Ministerio de Transporte de Colombia. 2017. “La Economía y El Desarrollo Se Mueven Por El Río Magdalena.” Retrieved May 5, 2020 (<https://mintransporte.gov.co/micrositios/cci/la-economia-y-el-desarrollo-se-mueven-por-el-rio-magdalena.html>).
- Ministerio del Interior de Colombia. 2011. *Ley 1448: Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras y Decretos Ley - Grupos Étnicos (4633+4635)*. Bogotá.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1999. “Society, Economy, and the State Effect.” Pp. 76–97 in *State/Culture: State formation after the cultural turn*, edited by G. Steinmetz. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Mohamud, Maimuna, and Harry Verhoeven. 2016. “Re-Engineering the State, Awakening the Nation: Dams, Islamist Modernity and Nationalist Politics in Sudan.” *Water Alternatives* 9(2):182–202.
- Mohan, Giles, and Samuel Hickey. 2004. “Relocating Participation within a Radical Politics of Development: Critical Modernism and Citizenship.” Pp. 59–75 in *Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation?*, edited by G. Mohan and S. Hickey. London: Zed Books.
- Molano Bravo, Alfredo. 2009. “La Mala Energía Del Quimbo (II).” *El Espectador*, 21. March. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/impreso/articuloimpreso129588-mala-energia-del-quimbo-ii>).
- Molle, Francois, Peter P. Mollinga, and Philippus Wester. 2009. “Hydraulic Bureaucracies: Flows of Water, Flows of Power.” *Water Alternatives* 2(3):328–49.
- Moncayo C., Víctor Manuel. 2012. “¿Cómo Aproximarnos Al Estado En América Latina?” in *El Estado en América Latina. Continuidades y rupturas*, edited by M. Thwaites Rey. Clacso.
- Mongabay Latam. 2018. “La Muerte de Hugo y Luis, Dos Líderes Que Se Enfrentaban a Hidroituango.” *Semana Sostenible*, 14. May. Retrieved March 21, 2020

- (<https://sostenibilidad.semana.com/impacto/articulo/hidroituango-asesinato-de-dos-lideres-sociales-que-se-aponian-al-proyecto-energetico/40986>).
- Monterrosa, Heidy. 2018. "Fallas y Consultas Frenan Entrada a Operación de Grandes Hidroeléctricas." *La Republica*, 21. May. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.larepublica.co/economia/fallas-y-consultas-frenan-la-ejecucion-de-grandes-hidroelectricas-2729087>).
- Moore, Jason W. 2000. "Sugar and the Expansion of the Early Modern World-Economy. Commodity Frontiers, Ecological Transformation, and Industrialization." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 23(3):409–33.
- Moore, Jason W. 2015. *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital*. New York: Verso.
- Mozzo, Javier. 2009. "Endesa Colombia Eyes \$700 Million for El Quimbo." *Reuters Latin America*, 8 May. Retrieved January 4, 2021 (<https://lta.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE54707N20090508>).
- Mulvaney, Dustin. 2019. *Solar Power Innovation, Sustainability, and Environmental Justice*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Murton, Galen, Austin Lord, and Robert Beazley. 2016. "'A Handshake across the Himalayas': Chinese Investment, Hydropower Development, and State Formation in Nepal." *Eurasian Geography and Economics* 57(3):403–32.
- Museo Nacional de Colombia. 2007. "El Río Magdalena." Retrieved March 18, 2020 (<http://www.museonacional.gov.co/sitio/magdalena/magdario.html>).
- N-24.col. 2017. "El Quimbo: Los Riesgos No Previstos Destacado." *N-24 Colombia*. Retrieved May 4, 2020 (<https://n-24.co/la-region/huila/el-quimbo-los-riesgos-no-previstos-destacado/>).
- La Nación. 2012a. "'El Corredor Del Sexo.'" *La Nación*, 29. April. Retrieved June 2, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/el-corredor-del-sexo/>).
- La Nación. 2012b. "Ferry Se Abrió Paso." *La Nación*, 18. May. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/ferry-se-abrio-paso/>).
- La Nación. 2012c. "Transbordo Gratis En El Paso El Colegio." *La Nación*, 11. May. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/transbordo-gratis-en-el-paso-el-colegio/>).
- La Nación. 2013. "Afectados Por El Quimbo, Entre El Desarraigo y La Incertidumbre." *La Nación*, 24. Feb. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/afectados-por-el-quimbo-entre-el-desarraigo-y-la-incertidumbre/>).
- La Nación. 2015a. "Detienen Llenado Del Quimbo." *La Nación*, 07. Feb. Retrieved June 11, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/salvavidas-para-piscicultores/>).
- La Nación. 2015b. "Extrema Vigilancia a Filtraciones de El Quimbo." *La Nación*, 08. Sep. Retrieved November 17, 2018 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/extrema-vigilancia-a-filtraciones-de-el-quimbo/>).
- La Nación. 2015c. "Puente Paso Del Colegio Será Entregado En Diciembre." *La Nación*, 17. Nov. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/puente-paso-del->

- colegio-sera-entregado-en-diciembre/).
- La Nación. 2015d. "Veracruz No Existe En El Mapa de Gigante." *La Nación*, 08. Dec. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/veracruz-no-existe-en-el-mapa-de-gigante/>).
- La Nación. 2017a. "Magistrados Represaron Consulta Verde En Oporapa." *La Nación*, 11. June. Retrieved September 18, 2019 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/2017/06/11/magistrados-represaron-consulta-verde-en-oporapa/>).
- La Nación. 2017b. "Suspender La Licencia de El Quimbo Pidió El Gobernador." *La Nación*, 16. May. Retrieved May 4, 2020 (<https://www.lanacion.com.co/suspender-la-licencia-de-el-quimbo-pidio-el-gobernador/>).
- Naranjo Aristizábal, Sandra Paola. 2014. "Conflictos Territoriales Generados Por Las Macropolíticas y Sus Respective Impactos, En Relación Con Los Pobladores Del Territorio Donde Éstas Se Materializan. Estudio de Caso Del Megaproyecto de La Hidroeléctrica El Quimbo." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Nardi, Maria Andrea. 2011. "Rural Development and Territorial Dynamics in the Province of Misiones, Argentina." Lund University.
- Nelson, Michael. 2013. "Viewpoint - Fifty Years of Hydroelectric Development in Chile: A History of Unlearned Lessons." *Water Alternatives* 6(2):195–206.
- Nightingale, Andrea J. 2003. "A Feminist in the Forest: Situated Knowledges and Mixing Methods in Natural Resource Management." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 2(1):77–90.
- Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Noticias Uno Colombia. 2012. "Reportan Mortandad de 23 Especies de Peces Tras Desvío Del Río Magdalena." *You Tube*, 15. April. Retrieved February 17, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwntPrCve8o>).
- Noticias Uno Colombia. 2015. "Llenaron Sin Previo Aviso La Represa de El Quimbo." *You Tube*, 05. July. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFaNvLIDYhw>, min 0:28, accessed 01/05/2018).
- Nüsser, Marcus. 2014a. *Large Dams in Asia: Contested Environments between Technological Hydroscapes and Social Resistance*. Heidelberg: Springer.
- Nüsser, Marcus. 2014b. "Technological Hydroscapes in Asia: The Large Dams Debate Reconsidered." Pp. 1–14 in *Large Dams in Asia: Contested Environments between Technological Hydroscapes and Social Resistance*, edited by M. Nüsser. Heidelberg: Springer.
- O'Brien, Kevin J. 2007. "Rightful Resistance." *World Politics* 49(01):31–55.
- O'Connor, Martin. 1994. "On the Misadventures of Capitalist Nature." in *Is Sustainable Capitalism Possible?*, edited by M. O'Connor. New York: Guilford Publications.
- Obertreis, Julia, Timothy Moss, Peter P. Mollinga, and Christine Bichsel. 2016. "Water, Infrastructure and Political Rule: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Water Alternatives*

9(2):168–81.

- Ojeda, Diana. 2013. “War and Tourism: The Banal Geographies of Security in Colombia’s ‘Retaking.’” *Geopolitics* 18(4):759–78.
- Orduz Salinas, Natalia, and César A. Rodríguez Garavito. 2012. *Adiós Río: La Disputa Por La Tierra, El Agua y Los Derechos Indígenas En Torno a La Represa de Urrá*. Bogotá: Dejusticia.
- OXFAM, and Planeta Paz. 2017. *Agenda Común Para La Paz Desde Los Territorios*. Bogotá.
- Oxford Business Group. 2017. “Political Stability Generates New Optimism in Colombia.” Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://oxfordbusinessgroup.com/overview/giving-peace-chance-benefits-political-stability-are-generating-new-optimism>).
- El País. 2015. “Santos Pide a Jueces Que Permitan Funcionamiento de Hidroeléctrica El Quimbo.” *El País*, 13. Dec. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.elpais.com.co/economia/santos-pide-a-jueces-que-permitan-funcionamiento-de-hidroelectrica-el-quimbo.html>).
- Pardo Ibarra, Tatiana. 2018. “Las 142 Represas Que Ponen En Riesgo La Cuenca Amazónica.” *El Tiempo*, 31. Jan. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.eltiempo.com/vida/medio-ambiente/estudio-fragmentacion-de-la-conectividad-de-los-andes-al-amazonas-por-represas-hidroelectricas-177480>).
- Parenti, Christian. 2014. “The 2013 ANTIPODE AAG Lecture The Environment Making State: Territory, Nature, and Value.” *Antipode* 47(4):829–48.
- Pascual, U., P. Balvanera, S. Diaz, G. Pataki, E. Roth, M. Stenseke, R. Watson, EB Dessane, SJ Breslow, M. Islar, E. Kelemen, H. Keune, V. Maris, W. Pengue, M. Quaas, SM Subramanian, H. Wittmer, AA Mohamed, YS Al-Hafedh, ST Asah, P. Berry, E. Bilgin, C. Bullock, D. Cáceres, C. Golden, E. Gómez-Baggethun, D. González-Jiménez, J. Houdet, R. Kumar, PH May, A. Mead, P. O’Farrell, D. Pacheco-Balanza, R. Pandit, R. Pichis-Madruga, F. Popa, S. Preston, H. Saarikoski, BB Strassburg, M. Verma, N. Yagi, SE Ahn, E. Amankwah, H. Daly-Hassen, E. Figueroa, K. Ma, M. van den Belt, and F. Wickson. 2017. “Valuing Nature’s Contributions to People: The IPBES Approach.” *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability* 26–27(June):7–16.
- Pascual, Unai, Roldan Muradian, Luke Brander, Erik Gómez Baggethun, Berta Martín López, and Madhu Verma. 2011. “The Economics of Valuing Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity.” Pp. 183–255 in *The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity: The Ecological and Economic Foundations*, edited by P. Kumar. London: Routledge.
- Patrick, John J. 2006. *Understanding Democracy: A Hip Pocket Guide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Paulson, Susan. 2019. “Pluriversal Learning: Pathways toward a World of Many Worlds.” *Nordia Geographical Publications* 47(5):85–109.
- Paulson, Susan, Lisa L. Gezon, and Michael Watts. 2005. “Politics, Ecologies, Genealogies.” Pp. 17–37 in *Political Ecology across Spaces, Scales, and Social Groups*, edited by S. Paulson and L. L. Gezon. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Paz Cardona, Antonio José. 2018. “Colombia: Prohíben Consultas Populares Para Frenar Proyectos Extractivos.” *Mongabay*, 29. Oct. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://es.mongabay.com/2018/10/prohiben-consultas-populares-mineria-hidrocarburos->

colombia/).

- Peace Brigades International. 2018. "Campesino Reserve Zones." *PBI Colombia*, 12. Jan. Retrieved June 9, 2020 (<https://pbicolombia.org/2018/01/12/campesino-reserve-zones/>).
- Peet, Richard, and Michael Watts. 1996. "Liberation Ecology: Development, Sustainability, and Environment in an Age of Market Triumphalism." Pp. 1–45 in *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, development, social movements*, edited by R. Peet and M. Watts. London: Routledge.
- Peluso, Nancy Lee, and Christian Lund. 2011. "New Frontiers of Land Control: Introduction." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38(4):667–81.
- Peña-Huertas, Rocío del Pilar, Luis Enrique Ruiz, María Mónica Parada, Santiago Zuleta, and Ricardo Álvarez. 2017. "Legal Dispossession and Civil War in Colombia." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(4):759–69.
- Perdomo, Pamela. 2018. "El Viaducto Del Sexo, Drogas, Alcohol, Piques y Muertes." *Diario Del Huila*, 04. March. Retrieved February 17, 2010 (<https://www.diariodelhuila.com/el-viaducto-del-sexo-drogas-alcohol-piques-y-muertes>).
- Pérez Rincón, Mario Alejandro. 2014. "Conflictos Ambientales En Colombia: Inventario, Caracterización y Análisis." Pp. 253–325 in *Minería en Colombia: Control público, memoria y justicia socio-ecológica, movimientos sociales y posconflicto*, edited by L. J. Garay Salamanca. Contraloría General de la República Colombia.
- Pérez Trujillo, Carlos Andrés. 2019. "El Quimbo Es Una Represa Que Nació Mal." *Diario Del Huila*, 10. Aug. Retrieved February 2, 2020 ([https://diariodelhuila.com/-el-quimbo-es-una-represa-que-nacio-mal-?fbclid=IwAR27-\\_o700vz4UeFHNysDzfKDVJt5p13m5HtkulNhnGrfgz5uBsdgj10Ho8](https://diariodelhuila.com/-el-quimbo-es-una-represa-que-nacio-mal-?fbclid=IwAR27-_o700vz4UeFHNysDzfKDVJt5p13m5HtkulNhnGrfgz5uBsdgj10Ho8)).
- Perreault, Tom. 2013. "Dispossession by Accumulation? Mining, Water and the Nature of Enclosure on the Bolivian Altiplano." *Antipode* 45(5):1050–69.
- Perreault, Tom. 2015. "Performing Participation: Mining, Power and the Limits of Public Consultation in Bolivia." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 20(November):433–51.
- Peters, Michael Adrian. 2006. "Neoliberal Governmentality: Foucault on the Birth of Biopolitics." Pp. 37–49 in *Gouvernementalität und Erziehungswissenschaft: Wissen–Macht–Transformation*, edited by S. Weber and S. Maurer. Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.
- Pizano, Camila, and Hernando García. 2014. *El Bosque Seco Tropical En Colombia*. Bogotá.
- Polanyi, Karl. 2001. *The Great Transformation - The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*. 2nd ed. Boston: Beacon Press books.
- Poole, Deborah. 2009. "The Minga of Resistance: Policy Making From Below." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 42(1):24–26.
- Porter, Theodore M. 1995. *Trust in Numbers: The Pursuit of Objectivity in Science and Public Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pöttsch, Horst. 2009. "Rechtsstaat." *Bundeszentrale Für Politische Bildung*. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.bpb.de/politik/grundfragen/deutsche->

demokratie/39300/rechtsstaat?p=all).

- Powell, Dana Elizabeth. 2010. "Landscapes of Power: An Ethnography of Energy Development on the Navajo Nation." University of North Carolina.
- El Presidente de la República. 2015. *Decreto 1979: "Por El Cual Se Desarrolla El Decreto 1770 Del 7 de Septiembre de 2015 y Se Autoriza El Inicio de La Generación de Energía Eléctrica En El Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo."* Bogotá.
- Pulido, Alejo. 2014. "Susurros Del Magdalena - Los Impactos de Los Megaproyectos En El Desplazamiento Forzado." *Comisión de Ayuda Al Refugiado En Euskadi*.
- Purcell, Mark. 2009. "Resisting Neoliberalization: Communicative Planning or Counter-Hegemonic Movements?" *Planning Theory* 8(2):140–65.
- Purcell, Thomas F., and Estefania Martinez. 2018. "Post-Neoliberal Energy Modernity and the Political Economy of the Landlord State in Ecuador." *Energy Research and Social Science* 41(April):12–21.
- Quijano, Anibal. 2000. "Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America." *Nepantla: Views from South* 1(3):533–80.
- Quinta División del Ejército Nacional. 2011. "Batallón Especial Energético y Vial No. 12 Cr. José María Tello." *15. Feb.* Retrieved February 18, 2020 ([https://www.quintadivision.mil.co/quinta\\_division\\_ejercito\\_nacional/brigadas/novena\\_brigada/unidades\\_tacticas/batallon\\_especial\\_energetico\\_vial\\_277527](https://www.quintadivision.mil.co/quinta_division_ejercito_nacional/brigadas/novena_brigada/unidades_tacticas/batallon_especial_energetico_vial_277527)).
- Quintero, Jorge. 2009. "Ejército Creó En Huila Batallón Energético Para Cuidar Polémico Proyecto El Quimbo." *El Tiempo*, 12. May. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-5181719>).
- Rabinow, Paul. 1997. *Michel Foucault - Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. New York: The New Press.
- Racine, Jean-Bernard, and Claude Raffestin. 2007. "Response: Jean-Bernard Racine and Claude Raffestin, Translated by Gerald Moore." Pp. 31–33 in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, edited by J. W. Crampton and S. Elden. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Radio Mundo Real. 2009. "Endesa Tendrá Su Base Militar En Colombia." *RMR*, 23. April. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.realworldradio.fm/Cadena-de-favores?lang=es>).
- Rahman, Muhammad Anisur. 1995. "Participatory Development: Towards Liberation and Co-Optation?" Pp. 24–32 in *Community Empowerment: A Reader in Participation and Development*, edited by G. Craig and M. Mayo. London: Zed Books.
- Ramírez Jiménez, Erika Andrea, and Tania Helena Gómez Alarcón. 2019. "El Departamento Del Huila y Los Nuevos Conflictos Agrarios." in *Territorios, conflictos agrarios y construcción de paz: Comunidades, asociatividad y encadenamientos en el Huila y sur del Tolima*, edited by J. Baquero Melo. Bogotá: Universidad del Rosario.
- Ramírez, María Clemencia. 2015. "The Idea of State in Colombia: An Analysis from the Periphery." Pp. 35–55 in *State Theory and Andean Politics - New Approaches to the Study of Rule*, edited by C. Krupa and D. Nugent. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Rasmussen, Mattias Borg. 2016. "Water Futures: Contention in the Construction of Productive Infrastructure in the Peruvian Highlands." *Anthropologica* 58(2):211–26.
- Rasmussen, Mattias Borg, and Christian Lund. 2018. "Reconfiguring Frontier Spaces: The Territorialization of Resource Control." *World Development* 101:388–99.
- RCN La Radio Colombia. 2012. "Noticias, 04. Nov."
- RCN La Radio Colombia. 2015. "Huilenses Mostrarán Su Rechazo Por El Quimbo." *RCN*, 20. Nov. Retrieved June 14, 2020 (<https://www.rcnradio.com/colombia/region-central/huilenses-mostraran-su-rechazo-por-el-quimbo>).
- RED MÁS Noticias. 2016. "Mortandad de Peces Crece Por Reapertura de El Quimbo." *YouTube*, 15. Jan. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAI68jhfZqE>).
- Restrepo Echeverri, J. D., and V. L. Franco Restrepo. 2011. "La Toma de La Tierra: Lógicas de Guerra y Acumulación En El Bajo Atrato." in *La Economía de los Paramilitares. Redes de Corrupción, Negocios y Política*, edited by M. Romero. Bogotá: Random House Mondatori.
- Ribot, Jesse C., and Nancy Lee Peluso. 2003. "A Theory of Access." *Rural Sociology* 68(2):153–81.
- Richards, David. 1996. "Elite Interviewing: Approaches and Pitfalls." *Politics* 16(3):199–204.
- Richardson, Whitney. 2020. "Nature's Rights in Colombia: An Exploration of Legal Efforts to Secure Justice for Humans and Nature." Norwegian University of Life Sciences.
- Rico, Guillermo. 2018. "Hidroeléctricas En Colombia: Entre El Impacto Ambiental y El Desarrollo." *Mongabay*, 6. June. Retrieved March 20, 2020 (<https://es.mongabay.com/2018/06/hidroelectricas-colombia-hidroituango/>).
- Ríos Vivos. 2016. *Política Energética Colombiana y Propuestas Para Su Transformación. Documento de Debate Para La Mesa Social Minero Energética y Ambiental Para La Paz*. Bogotá.
- Ríos Vivos. 2018. *Tesis Para Transformar El Modelo Energético Prevalente y La Construcción de Buen Vivir, Desarrollos Alternativos y Bien-Estar*. Bucaramanga.
- Riou, Michel. 2007. "Response: Michel Riou, Translated by Gerald Moore." Pp. 35–39 in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, edited by J. W. Crampton and S. Elden. Hampshire: Ashgate.
- Rivera Rueda, Mónica. 2015. "La Polémica Detrás Del Proceso de Llenado de La Represa El Quimbo." *El Espectador*, 30. June. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elspectador.com/noticias/nacional/polemica-detras-del-proceso-de-llenado-de-represa-el-qu-articulo-569304>).
- Roa García, María Cecilia. 2016. "Environmental Democratization in Post-War Colombia." *GIGA Focus - Latin America* 5(September).
- Roa García, María Cecilia. 2017. "Environmental Democratization and Water Justice in Extractive Frontiers of Colombia." *Geoforum* 85(October):58–71.
- Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd ed. Oxford: John Wiley

& Sons Publishers.

- Robbins, Paul, Ashwini Chhatre, and Krithi Karanth. 2015. "Political Ecology of Commodity Agroforests and Tropical Biodiversity." *Conservation Letters* 8(2):77–85.
- Robertson, Morgan M. 2000. "No Net Loss: Wetland Restoration and the Incomplete Capitalization of Nature." *Antipode* 32(4):463–93.
- Robertson, Morgan M. 2006. "The Nature That Capital Can See: Science, State, and Market in the Commodification of Ecosystem Services." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24(3):367–87.
- Robertson, Morgan M. 2012. "Measurement and Alienation: Making a World of Ecosystem Services." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 37(3):386–401.
- Rocha Lessa, Ana Carolina, Marco Aurélio Dos Santos, John Edwin Lewis Maddock, and Clauber Dos Santos Bezerra. 2015. "Emissions of Greenhouse Gases in Terrestrial Areas Pre-Existing to Hydroelectric Plant Reservoirs in the Amazon: The Case of Belo Monte Hydroelectric Plant." *Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews* 51:1728–36.
- Rodgers, Dennis, and Bruce O'Neill. 2012. "Infrastructural Violence: Introduction to the Special Issue." *Ethnography* 13(4):401–412.
- Rodríguez Garavito, César A. 2011. "Ethnicity.Gov: Global Governance, Indigenous Peoples, and the Right to Prior Consultation in Social Minefields." *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies* 18(1):263–305.
- Rodríguez Garavito, César A. 2013. "Democracia Ambiental." *El Espectador*, 17. Dec. Retrieved June 15, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/opinion/democracia-ambiental-columna-464559/>).
- Rodríguez Garavito, César A., and Luis Carlos Arenas. 2005. "Indigenous Rights, Transnational Activism, and Legal Mobilization: The Struggle of the U'wa People in Colombia." Pp. 241–266 in *Law and Globalization from Below: Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality*, *Cambridge Studies in Law and Society*, edited by B. de Sousa Santos and C. A. E. Rodríguez-Garavito. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rodríguez, Gloria Amparo. 2011. *Las Licencias Ambientales y Su Proceso de Reglamentación En Colombia*. Bogotá.
- Rose, Gillian. 1997. "Situating Knowledges: Positionality, Reflexivities and Other Tactics." *Progress in Human Geography* 21(3):305–20.
- Rose, Nikolas. 1991. "Governing by Numbers: Figuring out Democracy." *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 16(7):673–92.
- Rosol, Marit. 2014. "On Resistance in the Post-Political City: Conduct and Counter-Conduct in Vancouver." *Space and Polity* 18(1):70–84.
- Rubiano, Maria Paula. 2018. "Freno Financiero a Las Consultas Populares." *El Espectador*, 20. May. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/freno-financiero-las-consultas-populares-articulo-789571>).
- Rueda Saiz, Pablo. 2010. "Legal Language and Social Change during Colombia's Economic Crisis." Pp. 25–50 in *Cultures of Legality: Judicialization and Political Activism in Latin America*, *Cambridge Studies in Law and Society*, edited by J. Couso, A. Huneeus, and R.

- Sieder. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rusca, Maria, Tatiana dos Santos, Filippo Menga, Naho Mirumachi, Klaas Schwartz, and Michaela Hordijk. 2018. "Space, State-Building and the Hydraulic Mission: Crafting the Mozambican State." *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 37(5):868–88.
- Sachs, Wolfgang. 2017. "The Sustainable Development Goals and Laudato Si': Varieties of Post-Development?" *Third World Quarterly* 38(12):2573–87.
- Sachseder, Julia. 2020. "Cleared for Investment? The Intersections of Transnational Capital, Gender, and Race in the Production of Sexual Violence and Internal Displacement in Colombia's Armed Conflict." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22(2):162–86.
- Said, Edward. 1989. "Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's Interlocutors." *Critical Inquiry* 15:205–25.
- Salas Ortiz, Camilo Francisco. 2011. *Huila: Montaña Luminosa*. 2nd ed. Neiva: Fondo de Autores Huilenses.
- Salazar Bedoya, Sandra Julieth, Erika Johen Barreiro Ibata, Marlon Andrés Fernandez, and Marta Lorena Vargas Andrade. 2012. "Efectos Psicosociales En Personas Desplazadas Por Construcción Del Megaproyecto Hidroelectrico El Quimbo." Universidad Surcolombiana.
- Salazar, Neyder Jhoan. 2011. "Comunidades de Colombia En Resistencia Por La Defensa Del Territorio." *Etiquetas*, 28. Aug. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.neydersalazar.com/2011/08/comunidades-de-colombia-en-resistencia.html#.Xk0LHHt7nmE>).
- Salcedo Montero, Camilo Andrés. 2010. "Negociaciones y Coaliciones de Política: El Caso de La Hidroeléctrica El Quimbo - Huila, Colombia (2007-2010)." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Salcedo Montero, Camilo Andrés. 2014. "Campesinos y Conflictos Sociales Por El Proyecto Hidroeléctrico El Quimbo - Huila, Colombia." Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro.
- Salcedo Montero, Camilo Andrés, and Andrea Marcela Cely Forero. 2015. "Expansión Hidroeléctrica, Estado y Economías Campesinas: El Caso de La Represa Del Quimbo, Huila-Colombia." *Mundo Agrario* 16(31).
- Salinas, María Fernanda Paz. 2017. "Luchas En Defensa Del Territorio. Reflexiones Desde Los Conflictos Socio Ambientales En México." *Acta Sociológica* 73:197–219.
- Sánchez Espitia, Bladimir. 2012a. "Documental El Quimbo." *YouTube*, 16. May. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J1tA3qvRGfM>).
- Sánchez Espitia, Bladimir. 2012b. "El Vídeo Que El Gobierno Colombiano No Quiere Que Veamos!" *Youtube*, 20. Feb. Retrieved June 28, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFv4HG8ALeA>).
- Sánchez Espitia, Bladimir. 2012c. "Segunda Parte Lo Que El Gobierno Colombiano No Quiere Que Veamos." *Youtube*, 11. March. Retrieved June 18, 2020 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTcYivbdOAs>).
- Sánchez Vanegas, María Clara. 2012. "Análisis de La Participación Ciudadana En Los Procesos de Evaluación de Impacto Ambiental." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.

- Santos, Milton. 2017. *Toward an Other Globalization: From the Single Thought to Universal*. Cham: Springer.
- Sañudo, María Fernanda, Aida Julieta Quiñones, Juan David Copete, Juan Ricardo Díaz, Nicolás Vargas, and Alirio Cáceres. 2016. "Extractivismo, Conflictos y Defensa Del Territorio: El Caso Del Corregimiento de La Toma (Cauca-Colombia)." *Desafíos* 28(II):367–409.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2006. *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages*. Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Sassen, Saskia. 2013. "When Territory Deborders Territoriality." *Territory, Politics, Governance* 1(1):21–45.
- Sawyer, Suzana. 2004. *Crude Chronicles: Indigenous Politics, Multinational Oil, and Neoliberalism in Ecuador*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sayer, Andrew. 2000. *Realism and Social Science*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Schilling-Vacaflor, Almut. 2016. "Who Controls the Territory and the Resources? Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as a Contested Human Rights Practice in Bolivia." *Third World Quarterly* 6597(June):1–17.
- Scott, James C. 1985. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*. London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1990. *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. London: Yale University Press.
- Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing like a State*. London: Yale University Press.
- Semana. 2016. "Invertir En Colombia Se Ha Convertido En Toda Una Odisea." *Semana*, 11. June. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/galeria/inversion-territorial-como-llegar-a-todas-las-regiones-de-colombia/477243>).
- Semana. 2018a. "Corte Constitucional Le Pone Freno a Las Consultas Populares." *Semana*, 11. Oct. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/corte-constitucional-le-pone-freno-a-las-consultas-populares/586482>).
- Semana. 2018b. "Hidroituango: La Tragedia Que Pudo Ser Peor." *Semana*, 12. May. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/hidroituango-la-tragedia-que-pudo-ser-peor/566970>).
- Semana. 2018c. "'Vivimos Una Angustia Permanente': La Tragedia Que Viven Los Afectados Por Hidroituango." *Semana*, 14. June. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/vivimos-una-angustia-permanente-la-tragedia-que-viven-los-afectados-por-hidroituango/571151>).
- Semana. 2019a. "Hidroituango ¿qué Viene Ahora?" *Semana*, 09. Feb. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/hidroituango-despues-de-la-tragedia-ambiental-que-viene-ahora/600740>).
- Semana. 2019b. "La JEP Busca La Verdad Sobre Desaparecidos En Zona de Hidroituango." *Semana*, 10. Aug. Retrieved March 22, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-jep-busca-la-verdad-sobre-desaparecidos-en-zona-de-hidroituango/635170>).

- Semana Sostenible. 2019a. “Fallo de Tutela Reconoce Al Río Magdalena Como Nuevo Sujeto de Derechos.” *Semana*, 25. Oct. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://sostenibilidad.semmana.com/medio-ambiente/articulo/declaran-al-rio-magdalena-sujeto-de-derechos/47279>).
- Semana Sostenible. 2019b. “Fallo Histórico Reconoce a Tres Ríos Del Tolima Como Sujetos de Derechos.” *Semana*, 06. June. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://sostenibilidad.semmana.com/medio-ambiente/articulo/ordenan-el-cese-definitivo-de-actividades-mineras-en-las-cuencas-de-los-rios-combeima-cocora-y-coello/44493>).
- Sepúlveda, Laura. 2018. “¿En Qué Quedaron Las Consultas Populares Mineras Del Quindío?” *El Tiempo*, 22. Oct. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/en-que-quedaron-las-consultas-populares-mineras-del-quindio-284010>).
- Sheppard, Eric. 2002. “The Spaces and Times of Globalization: Place, Scale, Networks, and Positionality.” *Economic Geography* 78(3):307–30.
- Sieder, Rachel. 2001. “Rethinking Citizenship: Reforming the Law in Postwar Guatemala.” Pp. 203–20 in *States of Imaginaion: Ethnographic Explorations of the Postcolonial State*, edited by T. Blom Hansen and F. Stepputat. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Sieder, Rachel. 2011. “Contested Sovereignties: Indigenous Law, Violence and State Effects in Postwar Guatemala.” *Critique of Anthropology* 31(3):161–84.
- Silveira, María Laura. 2008. “Globalización y Territorio Usado: Imperativos y Solidaridades.” *Cuadernos Del Cendes Año 25* 25(69):1–19.
- Simpson, Audra. 2014. *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Soler Villamizar, Juan Pablo. 2018. “Las Grandes Represas En Colombia Son Un Desafío Para La Construcción de Paz.” *Revista Semillas* 69/70.
- Soler Villamizar, Juan Pablo, Bibiana Duarte Abadía, and Tatiana Roa Avendaño. 2014a. “¿Por Qué y Cómo Se Imponen Las Hidroeléctricas En Colombia?” Pp. 137–59 in *Extractivismo. Conflictos y resistencias*, edited by T. Roa Avendaño and L. M. Navas. Bogotá: Censat Aqua Viva.
- Soler Villamizar, Juan Pablo, Bibiana Duarte Abadía, and Tatiana Roa Avendaño. 2014b. “Hidroeléctricas: Conflictos Ecológico-Distributivos. Una Lectura Desde Los Movimientos de Afectados.” Pp. 107–36 in *Extractivismo. Conflictos y resistencias*, edited by T. Roa Avendaño and L. M. Navas. Bogotá: Censat Aqua Viva.
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. 2010. *Refundación Del Estado En América Latina - Perspectivas Desde Una Epistemología Del Sur*. Lima: Instituto Internacional de Derecho y Sociedad.
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de. 2014. *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against Epistemicide*. Boulder: Paradigm Publishers.
- Sousa Santos, Boaventura de, and César A. Rodríguez-Garavito, eds. 2005. *Law and Globalization from Below - Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Standal, Karina. 2018. "Challenges of Gender, Power and Change in Solar Energy Interventions in Rural India: Imagined Beneficiaries and the Makings of Women's Empowerment in the Village Electrification Project." University of Oslo.
- Stone, Christopher D. 2010. *Should Trees Have Standing? Law, Morality, and the Environment*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Strang, Veronica. 2016. "Infrastructural Relations: Water, Political Power and the Rise of a New 'Despotic Regime.'" *Water Alternatives* 9(2):292–318.
- Suárez Gómez, Juan Diego. 2017. "The New Imagined Communities: The Case of Hidroituango in Colombia." University of Missouri.
- Sullivan, Sian. 2009. "Green Capitalism, and the Cultural Poverty of Constructing Nature as Service-Provider." *Radical Anthropology* 3:18–27.
- Sullivan, Sian. 2013. "After the Green Rush? Biodiversity Offsets, Uranium Power and the Calculus of Casualties in Greening Growth." *Human Geography* 6(1):80–101.
- Supper, Alexandra. 2012. "Lobbying for the Ear : The Public Fascination with and Academic Legitimacy of the Sonification of Scientific Data." Datawyse, Universitaire Pers Maastricht.
- Svampa, Maristella. 2012. "Consenso de Los Commodities, Giro Ecoterritorial y Pensamiento Crítico En América Latina." *OSAL* 13(32):1–25.
- Svampa, Maristella. 2013. "«Consenso de Los Commodities» y Lenguajes de Valoración En América Latina." *Nueva Sociedad* 244:30–46.
- Svarstad, Hanne, and Tor A. Benjaminsen. 2020. "Reading Radical Environmental Justice through a Political Ecology Lens." *Geoforum* 108(January):1–11.
- Svarstad, Hanne, Tor A. Benjaminsen, and Ragnhild Overå. 2018. "Power Theories in Political Ecology." *Journal of Political Ecology* 25(Special Section):350–425.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 1992. "Territorial Organization and the Space Technology Nexus." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 17(4):417–33.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2004. "Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, Territories and Rescaling." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17(1):25–48.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2007. "Technonatural Revolutions: The Scalar Politics of Franco's Hydro-Social Dream for Spain, 1939-1975." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 32(1):9–28.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2009a. "Producing Nature, Scaling Environment: Water, Networks, and Territories in Fascist Spain." Pp. 121–39 in *Leviathan Undone? Towards a Political Economy of Scale*, edited by R. Keil and R. Mahon. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2009b. "The Political Economy and Political Ecology of the Hydro-Social Cycle." *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education* (142):56–60.
- Swyngedouw, Erik. 2015. *Liquid Power - Contested Hydro-Modernities in Twentieth-Century Spain*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Swyngedouw, Erik, and Nikolas C. Heynen. 2003. "Urban Political Ecology, Justice and the Politics of Scale." *Antipode* 35(5):898–918.

- Tamayo G., Eduardo. 2003. "Colombia: Ataque Presidencial a Defensores de Derechos Humanos." *América Latina En Movimiento* # 375. Retrieved July 2, 2020 (<https://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/190424>).
- Tarrow, Sidney. 2011. *Power in Movement - Social Movements and Contentious Politics*. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Temper, Leah, Federico Demaria, Arnim Scheidel, Daniela Del Bene, and Joan Martinez Alier. 2018. "The Global Atlas of Environmental Justice (EJAtlas): Ecological Distribution Conflicts as Forces for Sustainability." *Sustainability Science* 13(3).
- The International Renewable Energy Agency. 2012. *Hydropower*. Vol. 1: Power s. Bonn.
- Thorkildsen, Kjersti. 2018. "'Land Yes, Dam No!' Justice-Seeking Strategies by the Anti-Dam Movement in the Ribeira Valley, Brazil." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 45(2):347–67.
- El Tiempo. 2015a. "'El Quimbo Daría Un Respiro Al Río Magdalena.'" *El Tiempo*, 31. Dec. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/DR-1105082>).
- El Tiempo. 2015b. "'Llegó Tarde Investigación Contra Emgesa Por Embalse El Quimbo.'" *El Tiempo*, 30. July. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.eltiempo.com/archivo/documento/CMS-16173777>).
- El Tiempo. 2018a. "Gobernador Del Huila Es Nombrado Presidente de La FND." *El Tiempo*, 19. Jan. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/presidente-de-la-federacion-nacional-de-departamentos-2018-172960>).
- El Tiempo. 2018b. "Gobernadores de Atlántico y Huila Se Destacan En Encuesta Anual." *El Tiempo*, 03. Nov. Retrieved July 13, 2020 (<https://www.eltiempo.com/colombia/otras-ciudades/gobernadores-de-atlantico-y-huila-se-destacan-en-encuesta-anual-panel-de-opinion-2018-289484>).
- Tilly, Charles. 1978. *From Mobilization To Revolution*. Michigan: Addison-Wesley.
- Tortajada, Cecilia, Dogan Altinbilek, and Asit K. Biswas, eds. 2012. *Impacts of Large Dams: A Global Assessment*. Berlin: Springer.
- Troyan, Brett. 2015. *Cauca's Indigenous Movement in Southwestern Colombia: Land, Violence, and Ethnic Identity*. New York: Lexington Books.
- Tsing, Anna. 2000. "The Global Situation." *Cultural Anthropology* 15(3):327–60.
- Tullos, Desiree, Philip H. Brown, Kelly Kibler, Darrin Magee, Bryan Tilt, and Aaron T. Wolf. 2010. "Perspectives on the Salience and Magnitude of Dam Impacts for Hydro Development Scenarios in China." *Water Alternatives* 3(2):71–90.
- Tyner, James A. 2012. *Space, Place, and Violence: Violence and the Embodied Geographies of Race, Sex and Gender*. New York: Routledge.
- Tyner, James A. 2016. *Violence in Capitalism: Devaluing Life in an Age of Responsibility*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Ulloa, Astrid. 2001. "El Nativo Ecológico: Movimientos Indígenas y Medio Ambiente En Colombia." *Movimientos Sociales, Estado y Democracia En Colombia*. Mauricio Archila y Mauricio Pardo (Eds.). ICANH-CES-Universidad Nacional. 286–320.

- Ulloa, Astrid, and Sergio Coronado, eds. 2016a. *Extractivismos y Posconflicto En Colombia: Retos Para La Paz Territorial*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Ulloa, Astrid, and Sergio Coronado. 2016b. "Territorios, Estado, Actores Sociales, Derechos y Conflictos Socioambientales En Contextos Extractivistas: Aportes Para El Posacuerdo." Pp. 23–58 in *Extractivismos y posconflicto en Colombia: retos para la paz territorial*, edited by A. Ulloa and S. Coronado. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- UNDP. 2010. *Huila: Análisis de La Conflictividad*.
- UNHCR. 2020. "Colombia: Human Rights Activists Killings." *Press Briefing Note*. Retrieved May 14, 2020 (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25461&LangID=E>).
- Uribe, Simón. 2019. "Illegible Infrastructures: Road Building and the Making of State-Spaces in the Colombian Amazon." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37(5):886–904.
- Uribe Vélez, Álvaro. 2013a. "Confianza Inversionista." Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://alvarouribevelez.com.co/confianza-inversionista/>).
- Uribe Vélez, Álvaro. 2013b. "Tres Pilares." Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://alvarouribevelez.com.co/tres-pilares/>).
- Valbuena, Carlos. 2012. "En El Quimbo, Primero La Obra y Después La Licencia." *Desde Abajo*, 13. Feb. Retrieved February 18, 2020 (<https://www.desdeabajo.info/colombia/item/19170-en-el-quimbo-primero-la-obra-y-después-la-licencia.html>).
- Vanegas Cantarero, Maria Mercedes. 2020. "Of Renewable Energy, Energy Democracy, and Sustainable Development: A Roadmap to Accelerate the Energy Transition in Developing Countries." *Energy Research and Social Science* 70(December):101716.
- Vanegas Galindo, Alix Stella. 2018. "Cambios En Los Conflictos Ambientales Generados Por La Construcción de Las Centrales Hidroeléctricas de Betania y El Quimbo." Universidad Nacional de Colombia.
- Vargas, Jennifer, and Sonia Uribe. 2017. "State, War, and Land Dispossession: The Multiple Paths to Land Concentration." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(4):749–58.
- Vargas Nieto, María Daniela. 2018. "Hidroeléctricas, ¿Energía Amigable Con El Medio Ambiente?" *Pesquisa Javeriana*. Retrieved March 20, 2020 (<https://www.javeriana.edu.co/pesquisa/hidroelectricas-energia-amigable-con-el-medio-ambiente/>).
- Vásquez Marazzani, Claudia. 2018. "Los Peligros de La Energía Hidroeléctrica." *Semana*, 25. April. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<https://www.semana.com/contenidos-editoriales/la-nueva-era-de-las-renovables/articulo/los-peligros-de-la-energia-hidroelectrica/564836>).
- Vasstrøm, Mikaela. 2016. "Openings and Closures of the Environmental Planning Horizon: Participation Experiences from Norway." Pp. 167–89 in *Commons, Sustainability, Democratization: Action Research and the Basic Renewal of Society*, edited by H. P. Hansen, B. S. Nielsen, N. Sriskandarajah, and E. Gunnarsson. New York: Routledge.

- Vatn, Arild, and Paul Vedeld. 2012. "Fit, Interplay, and Scale: A Diagnosis." *Ecology and Society* 17(4):12.
- Vayda, Andrew P., and Bradley B. Walters. 1999. "Against Political Ecology." *Human Ecology* 27(1):167–79.
- Velasco, Marcela. 2016. "Injustice and Organisation in Anchicayá, Colombia: An Environmental Legal Case in a Hydropower Watershed." *Local Environment: The International Journal of Justice and Sustainability* 21(6):707–29.
- Velásquez Ospina, Mauricio. 2017. "Peasant Differentiation and Service Provision in Colombia." *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17(4):779–88.
- Velásquez Ruiz, Marco Alberto. 2018. "Collective Land Tenure in Colombia: Background and Current Status." *Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)* 217(info brief May).
- Vélez-Torres, Irene. 2014. "Governmental Extractivism in Colombia: Legislation, Securitization and the Local Settings of Mining Control." *Political Geography* 38:68–78.
- Vuola, Elina. 2019. "Liberation Theology." Pp. 231–33 in *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*, edited by A. Kothari, A. Salleh, A. Escobar, F. Demaria, and A. Acosta. New Delhi: Tulika Books.
- Walker, Peter A. 2005. "Political Ecology: Where Is the Ecology?" *Progress in Human Geography* 29(1):73–82.
- Walker, Peter A. 2006. "Political Ecology: Where Is the Policy?" *Progress in Human Geography* 30(3):382–95.
- WCD, The World Commission on Dams. 2000. *Dams and Development - a New Framework for Decision-Making*.
- Weitzner, Viviane. 2017. "'Nosotros Somos Estado': Contested Legalities in Decision-Making about Extractives Affecting Ancestral Territories in Colombia." *Third World Quarterly* 38(5):1198–1214.
- Wight, Charles, and International Rivers. 2015. "Maps Project - Potential Flooded Areas of Dams in the Magdalena River." Retrieved March 27, 2016 (<http://www.internationalrivers.org/resources/9195>).
- Willis, Katie. 2006. "Interviewing." Pp. 144–52 in *Doing Development Research*, edited by V. Desai and R. B. Potter. London: SAGE Publications.
- Wilson, Japhy. 2014. "Model Villages in the Neoliberal Era: The Millennium Development Goals and the Colonization of Everyday Life." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 41(1):107–25.
- Wolf, Eric. 2001. "Facing Power - Old Insights, New Questions." in *Pathways of Power: Building an Anthropology of the Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolford, Wendy, Saturnino M. Borrás, Ruth Hall, Ian Scoones, and Ben White. 2013. "Governing Global Land Deals: The Role of the State in the Rush for Land." *Development and Change* 44(2):189–210.

- Wood, Christopher. 2003. *Environmental Impact Assessment: A Comparative Review*. 2nd ed. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- World Bank, Development Research Group. 2017. "Gini Index - Colombia." Retrieved June 12, 2019 (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI?locations=CO>).
- World Resource Institute. 2015a. "Colombia." *Environmental Democracy Index*. Retrieved February 20, 2020 (<http://environmentaldemocracyindex.org/country/col>).
- World Resource Institute. 2015b. "Environmental Democracy Background." *Environmental Democracy Index*. Retrieved February 20, 2020 ([http://environmentaldemocracyindex.org/about/background\\_and\\_methodology](http://environmentaldemocracyindex.org/about/background_and_methodology)).
- Wu, Wenyan. 2019. *Chinese Oil Enterprises in Latin America: Corporate Social Responsibility*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Wynne, Brian. 2002. "Risk and Environment as Legitimatory Discourses of Technology: Reflexivity Inside Out?" *Current Sociology* 50(3):459–77.
- Wynne, Brian. 2008. "Elephants in the Rooms Where Publics Encounter 'Science': A Response to Darrin Durant, 'Accounting for Expertise: Wynne and the Autonomy of the Lay Public.'" *Public Understanding of Science* 17(1):21–33.
- Zarfl, Christiane, Alexander E. Lumsdon, Jürgen Berlekamp, Laura Tydecks, and Klement Tockner. 2015. "A Global Boom in Hydropower Dam Construction." *Aquatic Sciences* 77(1):161–70.
- Zografos, Christos, Beatriz Rodríguez-Labajos, Cem İskender Aydın, Andrea Cardoso, Paul Matiku, Serah Munguti, Martin O'Connor, Godwin Ojo, Begüm Özkaynak, Todor Slavov, Desislava Stoyanova, and Lidija Zivcic. 2014. "Economic Tools for Evaluating Liabilities in Environmental Justice Struggles: The EJOLT Experience." (EJOLT Report no: 16):75.
- Zwarteveen, Margreet Z., and Rutgerd Boelens. 2014. "Defining, Researching and Struggling for Water Justice: Some Conceptual Building Blocks for Research and Action." *Water International* 39(2):143–58.



# Appendix 1

## List of Events

No.	Event	Location	Date	Description	Record	Public
1	Peace March	Neiva	20/10/2016	March in white in favour of the peace agreement with speech of the Governor Gonzales at the town square	X	✓
2	Public hearing, environmental licence El Quimbo dam	Garzón	11-12/11/2016	Two-day public hearing to follow up on environmental licence of El Quimbo dam, hosted by ANLA, up to 3,000 participants and 170 interventions	✓	✓
3	Festival La Alegria Resiste	Rioloro	20-24/02/2017	one-week art festival organised by Cerbatana to bring touristic attention to Rioloro	X	✓
4	Thematic Roundtable Environment, Water, Territory	Garzón	21/02/2017	Panel discussion with Governor Gonzales, Miller Dussán, CAM and Mission San José, among others, to evaluate public hearing in Nov. and plan the roundtable's agenda for the year	✓	✓
5	Asoquimbo reunion	El Hobo	05/03/2017	Asoquimbo vice-president and legal coordinator to consult the fisher association of El Hobo	X	✓
6	Concert Canto de Agua	Neiva	14/03/2017	Concert to celebrate the International day against dams and for water, organised by Huilan government and Asoquimbo	X	✓
7	Asoquimbo staff meeting	Neiva	04/04/2017	Meeting of Asoquimbo staff and associates at the South-Colombian University to discuss agenda	X	X
8	Easter Celebration	Rioloro	16/04/2017	Easter service in Church and parade through village	X	✓
9	Thematic Roundtable Environment, Water, Territory	Neiva	24/04/2017	The organisation Terrae presents the results of their geological evaluation of El Quimbo	✓	✓
10	Cattle owner reunion	Nueva Veracruz	30/04/2017	Meeting between cattle owners of the resettlement area to discuss problems and possible solutions	X	X
11	Meeting of the Rioloro Community Action Council	Rioloro	08/05/2017	The president called for a meeting to discuss the upcoming celebration of San Pedro and San Juan in the village (104 attendees)	X	✓
12	Guided tour, Pilot area for environmental compensation	Finlandia	11/05/2017	Organised by organisation Fundación Natura, included presentation of advances, visit to the green houses and breeding stations and walk through reforested area (following a private invitation after e-mail request)	X	X
13	Asoquimbo meeting with National Land Agency	Bogotá	26/05/2017	Meeting between Director for Land Access, Asoquimbo (Miller Dussán, Jennifer Chavarro and legal coordinator, two fishermen), International Rivers and Planeta Paz	X	X

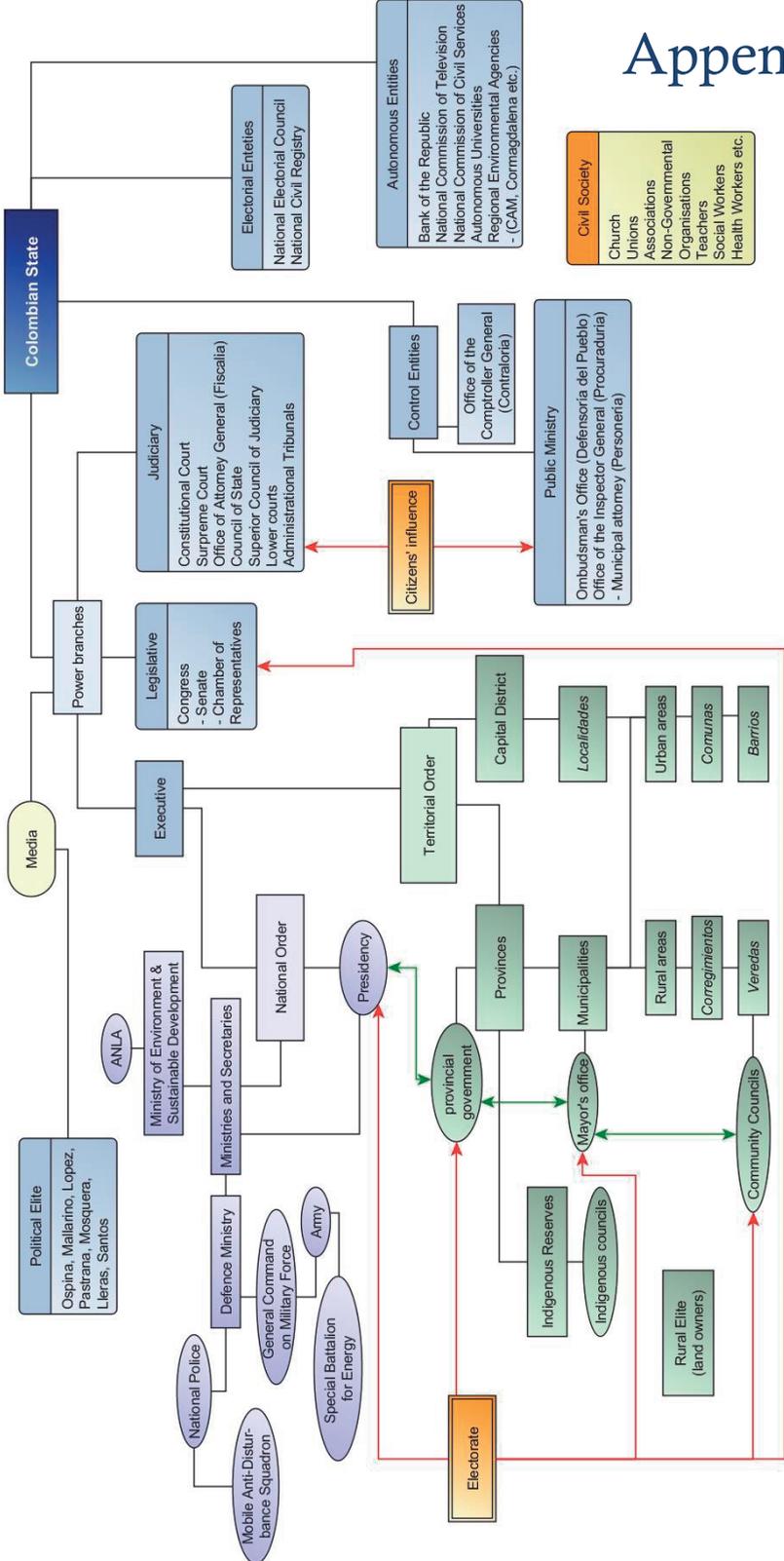
# Appendix 2

## List of Interviews

No.	Name*	Date	Description	Record	formal
Interview 1	Taxi-Drivers on Mopeds	13/07/2012	Former farm workers at La Honda; affected but not compensated; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 2	Don Jaime (and Doña Rosa)	13/07/2012	Farm manager of finca at La Honda; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 3	Resistance at La Honda	14/07/2012	Farm workers and fisherfolk that occupied the farms at La Honda; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 4	Fredy	20/10/2016	Student at South-Colombian University; part of Asoquimbo, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 5	Juan Carlos Albarracín	21/10/2016	Expert on Media and Communication at South-Colombian University; part of Asoquimbo, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 6	Waldina Losada Vega	18/11/2016	Mayor of El Agrado	✓	✓
Interview 7	Miller Armin Dussán Calderon	28/11/2016	Professor at South-Colombian University and leader of Asoquimbo, Neiva	✓	✓
Interview 8	Jhon	07/02/2017	Lawyer at South-Colombian University; part of Asoquimbo, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 9	Edgar Cortes Vanegas	08/02/2017	Expert on Forestry at CAM, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 10	Felipe	20/02/2017	Former fisherman of Veracruz; resettled to Nueva Veracruz; formerly part of Asoquimbo	X	✓
Interview 11	Carlos Yepes	01/03/2017	Economic consultant for Huilan government, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 12	David	05/03/2017	Fisherman at El Hobo; affected but not compensated; part of Asoquimbo	X	unofficial
Interview 13	Miriam	05/03/2017	Fisherwoman at El Hobo; affected but not compensated; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 14	Álvaro	05/03/2017	Fisherman at El Hobo; affected but not compensated; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 15	Henry	11/11/2016	Fisherman at El Hobo; affected but not compensated; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 16	Juanita	08/03/2017	Lawyer; formerly part of Asoquimbo, Neiva	X	✓
Interview 17	Fishery Scientist	08/03/2017	Professor of Biology at South-Colombian University, Neiva; research funded by Emgesa	X	✓
Interview 18	Monica Aviles Bernal	07/04/2017	Expert on Agriculture and Mining for Huilan Government, Neiva	✓	✓
Interview 19	Tomás	08/04/2017	Lawyer from Bogotá; activist	X	✓
Interview 20	Miller Armin Dussán Calderon	12/04/2017	see Interview 7	✓	✓
Interview 21	Jaime Vanegas	17/04/2017	Expert on Soil and Irrigation for Huilan government, Neiva	✓	✓
Interview 22	Javier Roa Salazar	18/04/2017	Lawyer and legal consultant for Huilan government, Neiva	✓	✓
Interview 23	Armando Saavedra	18/04/2017	Head of Planning (infrastructural development) of Huilan Government, Neiva	✓	✓
Interview 24	Leyla Marleny Rincon Trujillo	19/04/2017	Professor of Biology at South-Colombian University; environmental activist and member of the Neiva city council	✓	✓
Interview 25	Eva	27/04/2017	Farm worker in Rioloro; received little payment as compensation	✓	✓
Interview 26	Juan	27/04/2017	Farm worker in Rioloro; affected but not compensated; formerly part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 27	Alisa	30/04/2017	Social leader in Rioloro; affected and compensated; formerly part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 28	Tea	30/04/2017	Sister of Alisa	✓	✓
Interview 29	Mother of Alisa	30/04/2017	Born and raised in Veracruz	✓	✓

Interview 30	Luis	30/04/2017	Fisherman in Rioloro; former farm worker; received compensation; formerly part of Asoquimbo	X	✓
Interview 31	Ana María	02/05/2017	Wife of Luis; former farm worker; compensated	✓	✓
Interview 32	Javier	02/05/2017	Former farm worker in Rioloro; affected but not compensated	✓	✓
Interview 33	Pedro	03/05/2017	Farm worker in Rioloro; affected but not compensated	X	✓
Interview 34	Pablo	03/05/2017	Former farm manager and landowner in Veracruz; received compensation in Rioloro	✓	✓
Interview 35	Marisol	04/05/2017	Wife of Felipe (Interview 10); housewife	X	✓
Interview 36	Fernando	04/05/2017	Former fisherman in Veracruz; resettled to Nueva Veracruz; part of Asoquimbo	✓	✓
Interview 37	Camila	04/05/2017	Social worker/Psychologist of Emgesa in resettlement areas	X	unofficial
Interview 38	Oscar	05/05/2017	Responsible for the management of compensation money at Emgesa, Garzón	X	unofficial
Interview 39	Sofía	06/05/2017	Social leader of San José de Belén; individually resettled	✓	✓
Interview 40	Fernanda	06/05/2017	Mother of Sofía, resettled with her and uncle	✓	✓
Interview 41	Rudolfo	08/05/2017	Former farm worker and truck driver in Rioloro; employed by Reforcosta (NGO for animal protection)	✓	✓
Interview 42	Hernando Calderon	09/05/2017	Director of CAM, Garzón	✓	✓
Interview 43	Patricia Zuluaga Ospina	09/05/2017	Lawyer for the Catholic Church, Social Pastoral, Garzón	✓	✓
Interview 44	Diego	10/05/2017	Son of landowner in Rioloro, activist	X	✓
Interview 45	Olivia	10/05/2017	Shop owner in Rioloro	X	unofficial
Interview 46	Daniel	10/05/2017	Son of Olivia; farm worker; affected but not compensated	X	unofficial
Interview 47	Solimari	10/05/2017	Daughter of Olivia, helping in the shop	X	unofficial
Interview 48	Isabel	10/05/2017	Girlfriend of Daniel, helping in the shop	X	unofficial
Interview 49	Hair-dresser family	11/05/2017	Affected and compensated in Rioloro	X	✓
Interview 50	Women selling pastries	10/05/2017	Wives of unemployed farm workers in Rioloro	X	✓
Interview 51	Andrés	10/05/2017	Former farm worker and fisherman in Veracruz; compensated as fisherman in Rioloro	✓	✓
Interview 52	Diana Polania	11/05/2017	Public relations of Emgesa's pilot project for environmental compensation, Garzón	X	✓
Interview 53	Alfredo	13/05/2017	Lost property in Veracruz, resettled to Nueva Veracruz	✓	✓
Interview 54	Laura	13/05/2017	Shop owner of Veracruz; resettled to Nueva Veracruz	✓	✓
Interview 55	Doña Lucía	13/05/2017	Resettled to Nueva Veracruz; housekeeper	✓	✓
Interview 56	Alejandra	14/05/2017	Community leader of La Escalereta; individually resettled	✓	✓
Interview 57	Clara	14/05/2017	Sister of Alejandra; resettled to Llano de la Virgen	X	✓
Interview 58	Julian	19/05/2017	Ombudsman's Office, Neiva	X	unofficial
Interview 59	Ana Marcela Casas	25/05/2017	Head of Energy projects at ANLA, Bogotá	X	✓
Interview 60	Antonio	06/05/2017	Indirectly affected as owner of coffee plantations in El Agrado	X	unofficial
* First name only: Pseudonym					

# Appendix 3



The Colombian State Apparatus



ISBN: 978-82-575-1736-6

ISSN: 1894-6402



Norwegian University  
of Life Sciences

Postboks 5003  
NO-1432 Ås, Norway  
+47 67 23 00 00  
[www.nmbu.no](http://www.nmbu.no)