

**COLOMBIA**

**WATER AND SOCIETY  
SOUTH “VALLE DEL CAUCA” AND NORTH “CAUCA”**

***TOWARDS A RESEARCH CENTER OF WATER***

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**CONTENT**

OVERVIEW

1. Biogeography and Regional Geopolitics
2. Relations between urban and rural population
3. Interest private national and transnational
4. Presence and interest of the State
5. Costumes of violence in the country: Vacate and occupy the territory (cosmovision).
6. Necessity and collective consciousness, since local it
7. Identity, Unity and Diversity
8. Instruments social in defense water
9. Results
10. Proposal



## 1. Biogeography and Regional Geopolitics.

The region of study is a valley between the south Valle del Cauca Department and north of the Cauca Department, the municipal circuit that begins north to the city of Cali, south towards the town of Jamundí, finishing in the Suarez municipality in Cauca, where is the dam the Salvajina (all in a strip longitudinal line approximately 70 km), and between the Cauca River to the east, and the eastern side of the Cordillera Occidental to the west ( strip cross approximately 30 km online approximately). The rivers of the study area, have their birth in the wooded mountains of the western mountains and flow into the Cauca River, which passes through from south to north of the country, leading it into the Magdalena River, which in turn delivers to its waters Atlantic Ocean.

The city of Cali, metropolis with a population of 2,500,000 inhabitants, is known as the city of seven rivers, six of whom (river Melendez, Cañaveralejo, Lili, Aguacatal, Santa Rita and Cali river), were turned into sewers, in less than 45 years, for the extension projects of infrastructure for the provision of public service water for the population. The last of the seven rivers, the river Pance, who still retains high quality in its crystalline water, but not in quantity, currently supports the same pressure, given the rapid urban expansion to the south of the city.

The municipality Jamundí, with a population of 120,000 inhabitants, settled 80% of the population in the urban area of 42 km<sup>2</sup>, and the rest in a rural area of 610 km<sup>2</sup>, is known as the "Hydrographic Municipality of Valle del Cauca" , as having a complex web of secondary rivers and streams, flowing waters three major watersheds: River Jamundí, Ríoclaro and the river Timba, flows average year of 5.0, 5.6 and 17 cubic metres per second channels and basins 26, 25 and 28 km respectively. All subsoil of the study area, is rich in water from all types of aquifers, groundwater levels ranging between 1 m and 30 m, of water volumes that remain to be calculated.

The wealth of water in the area, combined with the high fertility of the land and mountain slopes, with low impact of pesticides and without extensive monoculture, which extend from the Cauca River to the west (900 Meters high) up the side East of the Cordillera Occidental populated of jungles and cloud forests (3,600 Meters high), forming climates warm, cold and moor.

Nothing has been undertaken on an inventory of biodiversity, but it is known that many species are disappearing:

The existing native vegetation is used in wood, fodder, food, medicine, gloomy for livestock, erosion control, protection of banks, melliferous, pincipalmente: manleso, guadua, mortiño, chontaduro, guayacán, laurel, caracolí, cedar pink jigua, saman, walnut of coffee, huesito, busilico, coal giant arrayán, kapok, nacedero, cascarillo, matapalo, niguito, balloon pomarrosa, cafetillo, guava, tip, seven skins, varieties of mangoes, oranges and lemons and native wildlife.

In the area inhabited by different species of animals, especially dispersed in the mountainous: Mammals: chucha common mico cariblanco, common fox, dog mount or bus, bats, squirrels common guatín or armadillo, anteater, cusumbo and rabbits. Birds: common heron, eagle common turtledoves, torcaza naguiblanca, catarnica, parakeets, parrots, cardinals, orchards, pinches, chorolas, sparrows, mirlas, azomas, pedreros, tiles, canaries, garrapateros, pellares, and varieties of wild ducks.

For the diversity of climates, hydrographic and topographic features of the territory, agriculture is one of the main pillars of the economy. In the lowland areas of sugar cane is grown for the production of small-scale panela de cana, rice, cassava, bananas, fruit trees, banana, guava, mango, countless species of medicinal plants for traditional use, pulses, beans, beans, arbeja, chickpea, lentils, grains such as corn, sorghum, soybeans, millet, vegetables such as onion, carrot, tomato and lettuce. In the upper area: coffee, blackberry, lulo, pineapple, tomato tree and medicinal plants. Also soils are rich in variety of excellent pasture for livestock for meat and milk.

Of the amount and quality of previous products benefit farmers in the region, through an economy ancestral natural "pancoger" (for own use everyday), and supply abundant surplus to the market places in urban next Jamundí, Santander de Quilichao and Cali, through very good road vehicle.

There fledgling mining, almost without state controls, gold, coal, drag materials (stone, sand, clay), bauxite, quartz.

Everything south of this area is affected by the accelerated urban growth in the city of Cali, capital of the department of Valle del Cauca, second or third largest city in the country, for its industry, commerce and proximity to the port of Buenaventura, the principal port in the country, on the Pacific Ocean, the other side of the mountain West (Cordillera Occidental), also excellent roads.

## **2. Relations between urban and rural population.**

The rural area, mainly of Jamundí, is populated in part flat by ethnic African descent who retain their customs and cultural ancestral productive, with little mixing of race, which is considered "cimarrona" (African descent who chose this territory, fleeing slavery in the time of the colony), with surnames Africans are preserved: Mina, Carabalí, Amú, Lucumí, Ararat Mezú, Balanta, Mandinga.

The upper part is inhabited by peasant settlers from diverse backgrounds: nariñenses (of Narino Department), "paisas" (of Antioquia Department), some caucanos (of Cauca Department) and some indigenous groups ethnic Kiwues-Kiwe Nasa, Guambianos and Yanaconas, also with ancestral customs. This ethnic diversity has facilitated the exchange of knowledge, the refinement of the manual techniques of cultivation, not only in the use of inputs, and species selection, but also in shaping and using hand tools, and in these processes the strengthening of the social fabric and the exercise of leadership.

Relations between the urban and rural population are structured at the discretion of the occupation of the countryside by two forces: the rapid growth of the city of Cali southward without any metropolitan planning, which is putting pressured by real estate business to demand for land, raising their costs; and the development of a disorganized tourism to the territory of Jamundí, which is "invaded" massively, mainly on weekends, with influx of people also of the city of Cali. This situation strongly pressed breakdown of the peasant economy and the establishment of a fledgling tourism industry and anarchic, deteriorated dramatically as it progresses, customs families of native islanders and their ancestral values of identity, integrity, greed, responsibility, concern, empathy, self-reliance and hope, primarily impacting the young native islanders, who are generationally shifting their ancestral customs and cultural production, based on rural, to the conception of urban tourism, culturally influenced by the component of diversion "slight" that is imposed on the re-creation, contemplation and relaxation. Both the pressures of urban growth and tourism, you can not cushion since these have an offer economical differentially much higher compared to traditional rural activities without any form of support and made without state presence, that situation is not resolved just by training or modification of curriculum school.

## **3. Interest private national and transnational.**

The interests of the various external actors to populations native islanders, are confined in one: the fight for the occupation of the territory.

Companies that are pressing urban growth, estate agents, builders, developers, exploitation of construction materials to construct housing in the area to more wealthy social strata.

Companies that are pushing tourism, with the construction of recreational facilities, restaurants, hotels, nightclubs, conveyors.

Companies that take the pressure of natural resources especially water, is good for export or for local consumption by setting tariffs.

Companies that are pressing the occupation of territory, for the exploitation of cheap labour: Waste deposits regional industry papalera and plastics, pharmaceutical and agrochemical.

Drug trafficking, the press area, taking rural areas to illicit crops, mainly coca and poppy, "using" native workforce.

And armed groups that are fighting this territory as the "door" that go in all directions of the country: to the south, the jungles of Patía, north the capital Cali, west jungle of Farallones National Natural Park and the Pacific Ocean and to the east ancestral territories of indigenous reserves settled in the western slopes of the Cordillera Central (central mountain).

#### 4. Presence and interest of the State.

The region is under the jurisdiction of two types of authority: the environmental authority and the authority territorial government. The environmental authority is of departmental level board, its board of directors is made up of 13 civil society representatives, chosen by the organizations registered with the Environmental Corporation, each of the sectors most representative of civil society. With regard to territorial authorities are under municipal jurisdiction of the municipalities of Cali, Jamundí, Robles, Timba and Suarez, whose agents are the five mayors; the first three belonging to the department of Valle del Cauca and the last two at department of Cauca, whose agents are the two governors concerned, all elected by popular vote every four years.

The environmental authorities are responsible for licensing environmental and water concessions, planning and regulation of the use of natural resources and water. The departmental and municipal authorities are responsible for licensing construction and planning and regulation of the distribution and land use, utilities home aqueduct, energy, sewerage and cleanliness.

Locally relations of state authority in front of natural resources, their management, use or exploitation, are crossed by the political see-saw of the country, generating politic customers and land ownership in a few large extenciones owners. These relationships determine the low interest of the state, in the commitment to promote better conditions of life and sustainable development, becoming a region forgotten, socially, economically and environmentally.

#### 5. Costumes of violence in the country: Vacate and occupy the territory (cosmovision).

The fight for territory embodied in making the same by private interests, drug trafficking and armed groups, fight provided by the State, for his "non-presence" in development and unilateral decisions of changes in land use and regulations natural resources especially water, should force an exodus in the area farmer to the city, as is already known when speaking of the displaced in Colombia. But not, **vacate is not the case**. The territory stigmatized worldwide, is a territory where peace reigns of its inhabitants, peace that breathes with the exuberance of natural resources, water and landscapes, and establishment of native islanders, which makes, against all odds, perform without risk, all community activities, with leadership based social organizations.

This situation of calm in the area, "it is not believed" by environmental authorities, or municipal, who avoided the maximum transit through it to carry out its duty, here finding the best excuse to leave out of state planning, this territory, and therefore the official version is that of terrorism, that makes invisible to the population or is believing that "vacate" territory.



Pance River in a weekend of summer

Cali, a city of seven rivers, is famous for civility and civic culture of their native islanders. But this characterization has been losing as they have been losing rivers.

In this study area, the development is inconceivable without family walks to the river. The rivers are an important part of family life, from children to old age, are natural school where transmitting and exercises, week by week, the family morality, civility, tolerance, coexistence and solidarity, so much stronger civic culture.

In a centuries-old custom of all social classes, are mobilized at distances that do not exceed one hour by road, every weekend from the city of Cali, about 70,000 people, families or groups of

friends until the river Pance and many others to rural Jamundí, seeking recreation and leisure, at distances that do not exceed one hour per ground transportation, at a cost of public transport US\$ 2 roundtrip or private transport is consumed 1 gallon of gasoline whose cost is US\$ 3/Gallon., in a car of 1000 cc.

The fragmented vision of the occupation of territory, this ideologically authorized from the regulations, the plans for territorial management, watershed or development; Planning this constitute a threat to our lands, natural resources, environment and above all for our most vulnerable populations, because they are a matter concerning the administration of government turn. "Everything that this vacated, we should occupy," is the slogan institutional.

In contrast, the ethnic cosmovision of indigenous and afro-descendants "everything is occupied and plays a role " any area with grass, "clear that this busy" - say indigenas -, "Do not you see the oxygen, the grass, insects in it, the rocks that are sacred to us?, what happens is that as you obey the laws made by men, we obey the laws of nature "; to govern is to preserve the culture and to conserve nature, and this is the strength of the resistance that "one does not leave vacate"; "space corresponds to each time and rituals that are required by each stage of the cycle of life, the order is not only the territory must also be human beings, should be ordered thinking, feeling and acting."

For indigenous and afro-descendants in the area, the land (the territory) is not a place, is a sacred entity (spiritual), which welcomes us, protects and provides everything for the existence of all beings, visible and invisible and hence is sacred, there is talk of *agroculture* ( is a living space). In contrast to governments and institutions, the territory is an extension of land to produce food (for example *agriculture*), or monetary resources (space circumstantial, usage).

Therefore, any attempt to occupation of the territory, whether regulatory, institutional, corporate or persuasive, ethnic communities, peasant, or communities with a strong relationship with the natural environment, is a aggression cultural, social and environmental of incalculable costs when it achieves produce displacement of the population. This dimension allows to visualize the importance of rootedness.

## **6. Necessity and collective consciousness, since local it.**

To help or contribute, to protect and maintain the balance of the area, the native ecosystem, which is being heavily pressured, it is the responsibility of external civil society to the communities settled in this territory: it is not a responsibility of the population raizal, it is customary for them naturally do, it is part of their everyday life and their ancestral culture. These communities are "**tied**" to their land by the water.

It is assumed this responsibility by providing tools that help native islanders to strengthen and protect their culture, slowly permeated by the forces described above.

According to our relationship reciprocal raised to the top in the Overview, **these tools must be designed for the generation of knowledge, skills and strengthening practices native islanders, to monitor accurately the increased quantity and quality of water resources in and from locality and hence of the associated natural resources.**

This **control** incorporated into the daily practice locally, were returned in strengthening communities settled in the territory and their sense of belonging to it and not to another. The solution based social prove to be a political solution, unintended. So the control of water means here, sustainable development, autonomy, governance and therefore a path to peace

## **7. Identity, Unity and Diversity.**

In the region rural people and urban, "are water".

As we are losing the rivers as benchmark social organization, is losing the anchoring (*arraigo*) the territory, especially in the urban area, however, the wealth in water and natural resources of the territory, which makes rural communities, indigenous, afros and peasants, not moving of their territory or their culture, which provides ideologically a collective identity beyond ethnicity, which provides cohesion and its influence extends to the urban population.

Here the concept of unity in diversity and its exercise in a natural way.

This force identity facilitates the development and although in the light of the eyes "western" from "progress" is poverty, there is happiness in fact, not a result of the conformity, but the possibility of enjoyment, which enables everyone to perform satisfactorily what it needs to live with a tissue collective strategies natural, everyday, invisible, but clearly with little state presence and business.

## **8. Instruments social in defense water.**

Certainly, in the rural area, the most important instrument for the protection of water and associated natural resources, is the community organization that emerged from the base, inspired by the collective sense of identity rooted, which operates ideologically to the natural development of the protection of the environment, strengthening relationships ecosystemicas with the same, the protection of the territory and therefore the community.

The need to be organised in all the usual round of community life, is transmitted generationally through the various productive practices, cultural and political. Community councils, communal action boards, community associations aqueducts, "mingas" community work for the common good, groups of planting and harvesting, mining groups, assemblies to decide on matters affecting the collective, parent associations, folk groups and artistic, political groups themselves, the group of "older" (most of the adults) who are the guide of the community and have the highest respect for their wisdom, businesses and community productive projects, recently NGOs.

This "activism" community-based organizations, slowly be transformed in a threat to the cohesion centenarian, as these are beginning to change their cultural and productive customs by the influence of urbanism, private tourism and industrialization of land, imposing ideologically in the groups other needs and other priorities of realization, which change the collective goal, by the group or by individual target, and this symptom, more accentuated in the area of the river Pance, next to the city Capital Cali.

The instrument, the organization of community-based, requiring only entry of new technologies, in order to be more effective against the pressures endured and continue to maintain the natural control of the territory, produces normativity "outward" to promote youth leadership as made their majors, facilitates communication of lessons learned in both ways.

There is a lot to learn, but there is also a lot to teach of/in a rural area as possible. This is the dynamics that incorporate effective instrument stands, without to represent aggression to established custom and therefore operating ideologically.

## **9. Results.**

The investigation has been an academic purpose parallel to community work done.

This work has revealed the rural region, its people, its leaders, their organizations have a precise knowledge about their different social and cultural environment, and basically have generated confidence to be taken into account to participate with them in making decisions, which has facilitated the achievement articulate own shares in defense of water and land, recognized widely in the region.

In the city of Cali, local government, businesses responsible for the public service of water, the environmental authorities and politicians, discussed publicly on the best solution that requires the city to the water supply. The discussed complies the same years of the six rivers finishes and despite achieving create more infrastructure at the expense of tarifar water to the inhabitants, institutionally never reaches the water, even though we have recently shown, as well as recognized the contradictions of formulations made.

Failure to generate a vision, that is not available, and new social practices required as a matter of urgency, in the coming years to complete the disaster and the rulers be finishing all the rivers of the region and with natural resources associated with the consequences of an ecological disaster of immense proportions that travel as a wave, this side of the Andes Americans.

## **10. Proposal.**

Develop a Center for Water Research high technology and technical support specialist with wide community participation, it put a wall of containment to pressure that is subjecting the region.

Colombia just learns to make his first Watershed Management Plans and Land Management, in fact the first to the region does not exist yet and both are influenced by politics, but are intended as rules of law to comply, in the midst of an environmental legislation fragmented, which favors the crops, industrial agriculture, changes in land use other than agricultural, the expropriation of lands traditionally occupied by indigenous, Afroc-colombians and peasants.

The Center for Water Research should be extended to research for the promotion of sustainable development in the area, in a formal educational process, at the university level, including with respect to the social and natural sciences on specific themes and priorities, for what this requires the support of the State in its programmatic approval.

**The Center for Water Research and the University for Sustainable Development**, in the rural area of southern Valle del Cauca and northern Cauca, constitute the tool is innovative and essential for the protection of this territory of great wealth hidryc, which is based on the existence of communities that the dwelling ancestors, for the benefit and example of the region and the world.

**You could protect this territory now ... for you.**

**Partners cooperation or more information, contact:**

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