

"War, Peace and Environment in Latin America. From the 19th century to the present day".

International Colloquium

Colloquium Date: August 28-30, 2024

Venue: National Museum of Colombia, Bogota, Colombia

Deadline for submission of proposals: February 15, 2024

In the last two decades, research on armed conflict and peace has increasingly focused on the environmental dimension. Indeed, a paradigm shift is currently in progress, beyond the division between Nature and Culture (Descola P., 2003) or between humans and non-humans (Latour B., 2014) that structured Western thought in Latin America since the 18th century (Nieto Olarte M., 2007). The rise of a greater awareness of the fragility of ecological systems, the contributions of subaltern knowledge and the impact of climate change has led to a change of perspective and a critique of the dominant development model (Gligo N. et al., 2020). Among the pioneers of this development, we must highlight anthropologists, who emphasized the ecological dimension of conflicts for indigenous peoples (Morey R. 1971; Gómez L. A.J. 1998). In addition, the rise of environmental history in Latin America has allowed us to renew our understanding of the continent (Meléndez Dobles S., 2002; Gallini S, 2009; Palacio G., 2018; Leal et al., 2019). On the other hand, this colloquium is also based on the latest research advances in environmental studies and peace studies that show how the inhabitants of war-torn regions have developed strategies for survival (Losonczy A.M., in Gómez D, Tobón Ocampo M., Romio S. Beyond conflict, 2023). From a multidisciplinary perspective, and with a special focus on history and anthropology, this colloquium aims to value innovative perspectives for thinking about the links between armed conflicts, peace processes and the environment in Latin America.

The scientific proposals submitted to the congress can be placed in one of the following thematic topics or in other related areas that correspond to the general theme of the colloquium.

1) In the Name of "Civilization": Wars and Resource Extraction

The dichotomy "Civilization" and "Barbarism" was central to the vision of Latin American elites in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. This contrast between a rural world defined as "barbaric" on the one hand and a literate "civilized" city on the other appears in paradigmatic works of Latin American identity such as *Facundo o Civilización y Barbarie en las pampas argentinas* (Sarmiento D. F., 1845), *La vorágine* in Colombia (Rivera J.E., 1924), *Os Sertões* in Brazil (Da Cunha E., 1902) and *Doña Bárbara* in Venezuela (Gallegos R., 1929). The territories where the States intended to extend their domination used to be presented as "deserts" to justify the dispossession of the lands of the native peoples, as was the case of Patagonia at the end of the 19th century (Navarro P., 2004 and 2011).

This discourse was also a support for the expansion of capital in territories where commodities were being sought, such as the Amazon for rubber (Pennano G., 1988), where entrepreneurs led a "civilizing process (...) forced by blood and fire" (Palacio G.,

2018, p. 287). This particular approach served as justification in later conflicts such as the "war of extermination" against the indigenous people in the Colombian-Venezuelan Orinoco (Gómez A.J., 1998).

2) Contested territories: warriors, civilians and the environment

During the wars of Independence, multiple groups of combatants have roamed the rural regions of America such as the pampas of the Rio de la Plata, or the plains of New Granada and Venezuela, which have been the refuge of patriot or royalist guerrillas (Halperín Donghi, 1972, Thibaud 2003, Rabinovich, 2013). These phenomena continued during the civil wars of the 19th century (Hébrard, 2023). From the 1950s, Marxist-inspired guerrillas were established in regions such as the Sierra Maestra, with the Cuban fighters of the M-26, or the Central Highlands of Peru with the Sendero Luminoso. We can ask ourselves what were the relationships between these groups and their environment, their struggles to control territory and resources? One can also analyze their representations of nature, such as the "eco-geographical roots of Fidelista hypermasculinity, personified in the nickname "barbudo" (Wolfe M., 2022).

To fight against these groups, regular armies had to go into remote regions and develop a strategy for counterinsurgency, taking into account the environment. In some cases, paramilitary groups were formed, with their own ways of affecting the territories. Paradoxically, conflicts can also benefit the preservation of certain ecosystems, as they drive away foreign investments and large extractive projects, as has been the case in the Colombian Amazon (Rodríguez Garavito and Rodríguez Franco, 2017). In these conflicts, peasants, people of African descent and indigenous peoples are vulnerable populations, in the context of processes driven by state authorities, landowners or armed groups. In this way, Mayan villages have faced "green wars" and the ambivalent acts of conservationist agencies (Ybarra M., 2018). In certain cases, the convergence between militarization and ecotourism can be questioned (Devine J., 2014). It is also worth asking what are the own visions and uses of the environment of subaltern groups in war contexts. In addition to mountains, forests, savannas, and other earth environments, water-related environments such as the seas, rivers, coasts, islands, lakes or marshes are also places where there are conflictive processes of territorialization that can be analyzed.

3) Post-war and peace processes: Opportunity or danger for the environment?

From the post-Civil War peace treaties in the 19th century to the peace processes signed by different armed groups in the 20th and 21st centuries, and their implementation phases, land tenure and land use have always been seen as a core issue in post-agreements. In addition, the environment can also be considered as a "victim of conflicts" (Lyons K., 2022) or, sometimes, as a "paradoxical beneficiary of the conflict" (Rodríguez Garavito, C. Rodríguez Franco D., Durán Crana, H., 2018). Moreover, wars are not always ended by peace processes, but sometimes by brutal military victories, for human beings as for Nature, which may imply to interrogate the notion of ecocide and to analyze the processes of resilience or readaptation, but also the vulnerability caused by war (Altez R., 2006). Moreover, the memory of the war is inscribed in post-conflict landscapes with the erection of monuments and stelae to commemorate them. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the specific environmental effects of armed conflicts and peace building processes in different socio-environmental contexts.

4) Animals, plants and other natural beings: between war and peace

Relationships between humans and non-humans are increasingly attracting the interest of the social sciences. Thus, mosquitoes and the diseases they transmit contributed to the Spanish defeat in the War of Independence (Mc. Neill J., 2010). In all conflicts since the 19th century, animals such as horses or mules have been strategic protagonists. Therefore, papers capable of assessing the role of these animals in political transition processes are welcome. Civilian animal owners in conflict territories are also part of this history. During the armed conflicts of the 20th century, violence against animals was also part of the tactics of groups such as Sendero Luminoso (Culp F. 2021). Wild animals must be considered because they are a source of food, but also because their habitat is disturbed by wars. In fact, by considering nature as a victim, the peace agreements in Colombia include animals as potential beneficiaries of the post-agreement (Rodríguez Garavito C., Rodríguez Franco D., Durán Crana, H., 2018). The damages suffered by other "non-humans", such as plants, forests, rivers and other natural beings and spaces during conflicts are also of great interest for this colloquium.

Each proposal consists of two texts in a single document (OpenOffice or Microsoft Word, Times New Roman, font size 12), in one of four languages: Spanish, Portuguese, French, English:

- 1) a personal presentation (less than 300 words).
- 2) a summary of the planned presentation (less than 500 words).

The personal presentation includes contact information (name and surname, e-mail, address) and a brief description of the academic profile and research areas.

Each abstract of the paper should propose a provisional title, a detailed problematization of the topic presented and describe the sources or field work that serve as a basis for scientific reflection.

Proposals should be sent no later than February 15, 2024 to these two mailboxes:

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