

Report - Santander Travel Award

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The Santander Travel award supported the execution of my fieldwork in Bogotá, Colombia for the completion of the dissertation towards my MSc studies in Practising Sustainable Development. My dissertation was entitled *Toward an Intercultural Praxis in Colombia: Health Experiences among Internally Displaced Indigenous and Afro-descendant People Living in Bogotá*.

Indigenous and Afro-descendants in Latin America and the Caribbean have been discriminated and marginalised during the colonial period and after the creation of the new republics. In Colombia, they are among the poorest populations and have some of the worst health indicators in comparison to the *mestizos*. Even more, Colombia has experienced internal armed conflict for more than 50 years and it has the largest number, Syria second, of internally displaced persons (IDP) worldwide, with 7.7 million IDP as of 2016. In addition to the historical discrimination faced

by indigenous and Afro-descendants, they have also been disproportionately affected by the armed conflict and forced displacement.

The Santander award allowed me to cover the transportation expenses of my flights between the United Kingdom and Colombia. During the fieldwork I used qualitative data (individual and group semi-structured interviews, and participant observation) to understand the health experiences of the Misak, the Emberá, and diverse groups of Afro-descendants living in Bogotá. I analysed their experiences through the lens of interculturality to examine the intersections between ethnicity, displacement, health, and right to health.



Plate 1. Participants and representatives of IDP Afro-descendants in Bogotá

I used the notion of interculturality presented by Catherine E. Walsh who states that the acceptance of a multicultural society should go beyond concepts of respect, tolerance, and recognition of diversity. Instead, it should advocate for new forms of societies in which there are not only economic and political changes, but also the inclusion of other cosmologies including the relationship with nature, with ancestral memory and practices, and with spirituality. These changes

should therefore include the experiences and inputs of indigenous and afro-descendants in Latin America.

During the fieldwork, I shared with a very diverse group of people in which discussions about culture were often present. For example, during the execution of a semi-structured group interview with Afro-descendants, a participant shared a poem he had written regarding the changes in food in his hometown. Below is the translation of the poem and the audio in Spanish can be found at: <https://soundcloud.com/vanessa-urbina-bermudez/el-tiempo-de-ayer-y-el-de-hoy-poema-de-daniel-gongora>

El tiempo de ayer y el de hoy

No podemos comparar el tiempo de ayer con el de hoy
Ayer comíamos con achiote y hoy comemos es con color
Al ladito de mi casa agarrábamos las pianguas, mi mamá le echaba buen coco y le echaba su chillangua
Luego le echaba su achiote, cilantro y oregano, y con buena leña de mangle atizaba su fogón
El achiote era indispensable casi en todas las comidas, ahora comemos es con maggi y se nos acorta la vida
Porque la Maggi es un químico que le hace daño a la gente, que casi todos lo comemos y pasa por inocente
El camarón, la concha, y la jaiba y así mismo el pescado, eran los platos indispensables en aquel bello pasado
Las pianguas que ahora conseguimos están en un congelador, tienen un mes que están bien frías y ya tienen un mal sabor
Además la cocinera cuando la manda a la olla, le echa una bolsa de leche Maggi y también cebolla
El camarón, la langosta, el piacuil, y la zangara eran los platos exquisitos que comíamos en Las Varas
Las Varas es un pueblo de Nariño en donde yo me crié, comiendo pescado fresquito y así yo me alimenté
El plátano era sin químico, maduro y también pintón y lo cocinaban con leña porque teníamos fogón
El líquido que bebíamos se los digo pa' que lo sepa, lo molian con molino y era chocolate en pepa
Espeso y con buen sabor y con buena leche de vaca y unas balas alrededor por aparte en una vianda
De huevo de gallina criolla mi mamá me hacía pericos y las balas que me hacían eran de plátano dominico
Ahora todo es muy distinto, la bala desapareció porque el plátano es muy duro y tiene químico
Por cierto en el desayuno siempre me daban tapao, porque es que allá en ese tiempo nunca faltaba el pescado
Y con aguita de limoncillo, con buena leche de vaca y al terminar de comer me recostaba en una hamaca.

Daniel Góngora

The time from yesterday and the one from today

We cannot compare the time from yesterday with the one from today
Yesterday we ate with achiote and today we eat with colour
At the side of my house we used to grab the *pianguas*, my mom would put them a good coconut and put them its *chillangua*
Then she would put its achiote, coriander and oregano, and with good firewood of *mangle* she would stir her *fogón*
The achiote was indispensable almost in every meal, now we eat is with Maggi and our life gets shortened
Because Maggi is a chemical that hurts people, that almost everyone eats it and it passes for innocent
The shrimp, the shell, and the crab and also the fish, were the indispensable dishes in that beautiful past
The *pianguas* that we now get are in a freezer, they have been cold for and they already have a bad taste
Also the female cook when she puts it to the pot, she throws a bag of Maggi milk and also onion
The shrimp, the lobster, the *piacuil*, and the *zangara* were the exquisite dishes that we ate in Las Varas
Las Varas is a town in Nariño where I was raised, eating fresh fish and that's how I was fed
The plantain was without chemical, ripe and also *pintón* and it was cooked with firewood because we had a *fogón*
The liquid we drank, I will tell you so you know, it was grinded with a mill and it was cacao beans
Thick and with good flavor and with good cow's milk and some *balas* around separately in a lunch box
Of egg from *gallina criolla* my mom would make me *pericos* and the *balas* she would make me were of *plátano dominico*
Now everything is very different, the *bala* disappeared because the plantain is very hard and has chemical
By the way at breakfast, I was always given *tapao*, because during that time there was never a lack of fish
And with lemongrass water, with good cow's milk and when finishing eating I would lay in a hammock.

Figure 3. Poem by Daniel Góngora

The findings from the research note that when arriving in Bogotá, health problems are exacerbated especially among those groups with strong relationships with their natural environment, sense of collectivity, and use of traditional and cultural practices. Access to other basic needs that are interrelated with health is also challenging; this is exacerbated due to their lack of skills for urban settings and the discrimination they experience. There seems to be a governmental commitment toward the implementation of ethnically-differentiated programs; however, such implementation is slower than ideal. The Program for Psychosocial and Integrated Health Care for Victims (PAPSIVI) is a clear evidence of this issue.

It is my suggestion that for Colombia to move toward an intercultural praxis and to better guarantee the right to health to internally displaced indigenous and Afro-descendants, it is essential to provide the necessary support these communities need to obtain equal treatment and access to socio-cultural relevant services.



Olivia Charicha. Emberá woman who interrupted a Senate meeting on August 2018 to speak on the humanitarian crisis the Emberá are facing in Bogotá.
Photo credit: Esteban Vega/SEMANA