'Displacement' before displacement: time, place and the case of rural Urabá

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Author post-print (accepted) deposited in CURVE December 2015*

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*Cover sheet updated June 2016

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Abstract

Addressing the case of a community from rural Urabá, Colombia, this article focuses on the temporality of population displacement and asks: when does the 'clock' of displacement start? Drawing upon an in-depth ethnographic fieldwork, it challenges the state driven narrative that displacement can be understood from the moment one leaves their residence and advances the argument that displacement is more than just physical relocation. By engaging with the broader social, political and economic context in which displacement occurred and bringing local voices to the fore, this article demonstrates how the experience of violence engendered a sense of displacement before residents actually left.

Key words: displacement, sense of place, temporality, IDPs, Urabá, Colombia

When asked to speak about his experience of displacement Don Andrés, a local junta leader and a later member of the left-wing political party Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union, UP), refers back to 1979, when he was imprisoned on suspicion of being a guerrilla commander.[1] He recalls being made to walk under the harsh heat of the sun for nine days with hardly any water and only beans for food. His wife, Doña Olivia, adds that this was when they 'lost everything'. In response to a similar question, Alejandra speaks of the disappearance of her mother at the end of the 1980s. Only one of her mother's shoes was found at the entrance to the house; all other traces were lost. Alejandra, who was nine years old when her mother vanished, was taken in by her mother's friend, who treated her differently to her own four children. Alejandra dreams of going back to the days when her mother was still alive. For both Don Andrés and Alejandra, displacement began as a result of these harrowing episodes, as opposed to 1996 when they, along with other people interviewed for this article left Urabá; their region of origin.

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[1]In order to protect people's anonymity their names have been changed or on some occasions omitted completely. Interviews took place at different points between June 2011 and December 2011 and between June 2012 and September 2012.

This article addresses the question of when the 'clock' of displacement starts. Reflecting on their own experiences, people's narratives challenge the state's definition of displacement understood as the act of leaving one's place of residence. This official focus on the moment of departure as the starting point of displacement hides the complex political, social and economic contexts that have generated displacement processes in which the state is complicit. Terror produced at a local level is often overshadowed in state-led discussions[2] and leaves untouched what can be perceived to be a more nuanced discussion about the loss of place. Is the loss of place necessarily abrupt, a result of flight, or does it unwind gradually? In addressing this 'nuance' I direct attention to a localised history of people's lives before their physical relocation to show how experienced violence reconfigured social, physical and cognitive landscapes. Physical landscapes refer to the natural and built environment, social landscapes to the transformation in people's relationships, and cognitive landscapes refer to the alteration of sensing the place. Adopting an analysis which looks at the way in which violence transforms people's 'senses of place' - the way places are 'known, imagined, yearned for, held, remembered. Voiced, lived, contested, and struggled over'[3] - the aim of this article is not to advance state-driven analysis of displacement. The article instead contributes to the understanding of social aspects of people's experiences which Tatiana, an active UP and labour union member, describes as 'the most deplorable thing that can happen to a human being' and Camilo, now in his early thirties, depicts as a 'wound that never heals'.

A number of scholars working on Colombia and beyond have incorporated localised perspectives and experiences in their analysis and have managed to undermine top-down narratives of conflict, the essentialist representations of the displaced and simplistic representations and generic definitions of displacement. A long-term and localised trajectory explains how armed groups in Colombia were formed, how they arrived to a particular territory and the types of relationships they managed to forge with the local population.[4] Such

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[2] Ulrich Oslender, 'Another History of Violence. The Production of "Geographies of Terror" in Colombia's Pacific Coast Region', *Latin American Perspectives,* 35 (2008), pp. 77-102.

[3] Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, 'Introduction' in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, N. M.: School of American Research Press, 1996), p. 10.

[4] María Clemencia Ramírez, 'Maintaining Democracy in Colombia through Political Exclusion, States of Exception, Counterinsurgency, and Dirty War', in Enrique Desmond Arias and Daniel Goldstein (eds.), *Violent Democracies in Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 84-107. Some other examples of literature which considers long-term approach to studying violence and people's experiences are Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008); Mary Roldán, ''Cambio de Armas' Negotiating Alternatives to Violence in the Oriente Antioqueño' in Virginia Marie Bouvier (ed.), *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), pp.277-294; Oslender, 'Another History of Violence'.

an approach also enables an analysis of what motivated and influenced people to leave or stay. For instance, in the context of El Salvador, Molly Todd traces the history of *campesinos* (peasants) before they became 'refugees'. Her study captured the agency of the campesinos in organising a strategy of resistance and flight.[5] Thinking of those who stay and drawing on ethnographic work from Mozambique, Stephen Lubkemann argues that 'displacement' can occur without displacement - that is without migration - and that one can be 'displaced in place'.[6] In this article I build upon this work and extend Lubkemann's concept of displacement to something which he overlooks, namely the sense of temporality of displacement. The evidence presented in the article points to another kind of agency amongst the displaced in a context different to that of El Salvador. Additionally, beyond the focus on agency, I see the act of people's resistance as part of the displacement process, with consequences for their post-migratory life.

The research underpinning this essay is based on ten months of fieldwork using ethnographic methods. The data collection was undertaken in two hamlets in the department of Cundinamarca, Colombia, where the displaced interviewed for the research have resettled. A total of 57 people were interviewed, 37 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (16 women and 21 men) and 20 non-displaced villagers, long-term inhabitants of Cundinamarca (12 women and eight men). The data considered in this article was collected from those interviewees displaced from rural parts of the sub-region of Urabá (ten men and 12 women).[7] My interviewees all regarded the paramilitaries as the agents responsible for their displacement, therefore the terror discussed in the article is that generated by the paramilitaries rather than the guerrillas.[8] The interviews were both semi-directed and discursive.[9] I invited people to speak freely about the topics they found important as well as following up with questions I considered relevant. The conversations were carried out in informal settings during numerous

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[5] Molly Todd, *Beyond Displacement: Campesinos, Refugees, and Collective Action in the Salvadoran Civil War* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010).

[6] Stephen Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos. An Anthropology of the Social Condition of War* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

[7] I recognise that not everyone has left Urabá and that some people stayed there despite violence. Since I was unable to interview anyone who stayed behind, I decided to retract their perspectives through the lens of those who moved.

[8] The guerrilla groups were also responsible for violence and displacement. However, the focus here is on the experiences and perceptions of my interviewees. Since they were all leftists, none of my interviewees spoke about the violence and displacement generated by the guerrillas.

[9] Zoe Bray, 'Ethnographic Approaches', in Donatella Della Porta and Michael Keating (eds.) *Approaches and Methodologies in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.296-315.

encounters – the majority while we were working in the field, preparing lunch, at the table, at night when we were getting ready to sleep, or on our way to a shop or town.

My focus on temporality of displacement builds upon people's narratives and their changing sense of place. The article briefly examines the literature focusing on experiences of conflict, which takes a longue durée approach and challenges the representations of instant flight.[10] The second part of the article looks at some of the economic, social and political factors that influenced the making and unmaking of Urabá: the context within which people's subjective experiences of place, their biographies and the conflict developed. It also allows the reader to establish the sense of place, or more precisely sense of the region. The article then turns to ethnographic material focusing on different recollections of Urabá – one of nostalgia and one of displacement. These different views about the same place held by the same people demonstrate how violence transformed Urabá beyond recognition. As a result, residents were estranged from place and therefore experienced alienation in feeling or affection; alienation thus became part of the displacement process. The final and substantive section focuses on Urabá as a place of displacement. This section demonstrates how conflict and violence have modified people's social, physical and cognitive landscapes. The argument is that alienation of place as a result of terror experienced launched the process of displacement prior to people's departure from Urabá, and this calls into question 'when' displacement actually begins. The engagement with this question invites scholars as well as those working with the displaced in Colombia and beyond to consider the local social, political and economic contexts of displacement to bring to the fore individuals' experiences of displacement, rather than treating them as a back story. Such an approach not only contributes to a more rounded picture of people's experiences of displacement, but is particularly necessary for a better understanding of the challenges people are experiencing in their attempts at emplacement, when they are turning the location of resettlement into a meaningful place.

Time and place of displacement

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[10] Longue durée is a term predominately found in history. It refers to long-term view and contrasts it to episodic history (Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein, 'History and the Social Sciences: The Longue Durée', *Review*, 32:2 (2009), pp.171-203.) In this article it is used in a similar manner to refer to studies which consider a long-term timeframe in their analyses of conflict and people's experiences.

Studies from different contexts around the world demonstrate that the impact of violence on those it reaches is not homogenous; violence does not always result in instant movement, indeed, it can inhibit people's movement. Just as no two people are the same, their responses to violence will differ. Therefore, a closer look at localised experiences and engagement with the question of 'when' displacement starts is pertinent, since prolonged exposure to violence can have differing spiritual and psychological effects on people.[11] Furthermore, it is important to note that the specificities of each situation will influence an individual's strategy when it comes to staying or going. In some cases, as in the experience of Jews in pre-war Nazi Germany, the process of estrangement happened when Jews lost their political and civil rights through denaturalisation. Whilst some of them were able to consider their options, for others these options were severely curtailed once the Second World War started, making it impossible to resist or to escape the inhumane acts that followed. Yet in some other war-ridden settings, including in Latin America, those 'under fire' managed to organise and retain a degree of control over their movement.

In a number of Latin American contexts scholars have recorded successful acts of collective resistance. For example, in Guatemala people organised into Comunidades de Población en Resistencia (Communities of Population in Resistance) and moved further into the jungle, adapting their lives to the new environment in order to survive. They planted hidden gardens, made makeshift shelters and formed watch patrols. Children were taught to be silent and traces of any footpaths, which could reveal the community's location, were erased.[12] Todd, in her ethnographic account of El Salvadorean campesinos, similarly demonstrates campesinos' resistance and collective organisation. Focusing on people's agency, Todd shows how campesinos were active in thinking through their responses to adversaries; she specifically highlights their pre-flight preparations, organisation and adjustment of security tactics. Campesinos resorted to *quindas*, organised flights from home, which became a planned strategy of survival.[13] Quindas were a result of longer history of campesino organisation and people remained in conflict-affected zones for some time before crossing to Honduras. In Colombia too, there are people who stay. Mary Roldán closely examines the historical trajectories of conflict in Oriente, a subregion of the Department of Antioquia, to

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[11] Liisa Malkki, 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things', *Annual Review of Anthropology,* 24 (1995), pp.495-523.

[12] EPICA and CHRLA, 'The Communities of Population in Resistance in Guatemala', *Social Justice*, 20:3/4 (1993), pp. 143-162.

[13] Todd, *Beyond Displacement*.

help explain why after 1997 its inhabitants embraced a strategy of non-violence, and why they decided to stay rather than leave the region despite on-going threats and violence.[14] Acknowledging that some people stay (indefinitely or temporarily) or indeed are unable to move but their sense of place changes, Stephen Lubkemann and Tobias Kelly proposed to reconceptualise displacement. Their understanding of place is similar to the conceptualisation I adopt here. Place in this article is not conceived as a purely territorialised unit with boundaries, but rather in terms of a relationship between place and people, as a 'meaningful location'.[15] Place is shaped and influenced by the intersection of social, economic, political and historical factors, and the asymmetry of power relations.[16] Place is multidimensional rather than being a stage to act upon. Place is formed and indeed becomes meaningful only through people's activities and engagements.[17]

By including place in his analysis, Kelly in reference to Palestine argues that displacement 'is never simply a physical movement across space but also involves transformations in the political, social and economic practices through which people are related to place'.[18] Experiences of displacement for Palestinians, Kelly holds, arise from the tensions between processes that keep them in place and those that make them mobile, therefore unable to feel secure in any given place. Lubkemann speaks of 'displacement in place' and thus challenges the union between movement and displacement. 'Displacement in place' is 'the process of lifescape reconfiguration'.[19] Lubkemann makes a compelling case for consideration of those who stay rather than only those who move. Those who stay and experience the loss of mobility in highly unfavourable circumstances may be going through the worst form of

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[14]Roldán, 'Cambio de Armas'. For other studies exploring the experiences of peace communities, see Christopher Mitchell and Sara Ramírez, 'Local Peace Communities in Colombia. An Initial Comparison of Three Cases', in Virginia Marie Bouvier (ed.), *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), pp.245-270; and Javier Moncayo, 'Civil Resistance to War in the Middle Magdalena Valley', Virginia Marie Bouvier (ed.), *Colombia: Building Peace in a Time of War* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2009), pp. 271-76.

[15] John Agnew, *Place and Politics: The Geographical Mediation of State and Society* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1987).

[16]Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 1996); David Harvey, 'Class Relations and Social Justice', in Michael Keith and Steve Pile (eds.) *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 41-66.

[17] David Turton, 'The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement: Lessons from Long-Term Field Research in Southern Ethiopia', *Journal of Refugee Studies,* 18: 3 (2005), pp. 258-80; Miriam Khan, 'Your Place and Mine: Sharing Emotional Landscapes in Wamira, Papua New Guinea', in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, N. M.: School of American Research Press, 1996), pp. 167-96.

[18]Tobias Kelly, 'Returning to Palestine: Confinement and Displacement under Israeli Occupation', in Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving (eds.) *Struggles for Home: Violence, Hope, and the Movement of People* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p.26.

[19]Lubkemann, *Culture in Chaos*, p. 192.

displacement, he argues. Therefore, according to Lubkemann, one can be displaced without having migrated. I agree with Lubkemann that it is necessary to examine the ways in which violence affects people's lives and their sense of place while they are still in their place of origin. However, whilst I agree with the idea of 'lifescape reconfiguration' as is shown through the ethnographic evidence in this article, I would argue that movement and a 'migration of the senses' is always a part of displacement. The non-consideration of movement risks downplaying the experiences of leaving a community and making place at an entirely different location, or of making place when one returns to the same location years after both the place and people have changed. I therefore extend Lubkemann's conceptualisation of displacement by drawing attention to the sense of temporality of displacement. I suggest that the clock establishing 'when' displacement begins needs to be rethought in relation to a careful consideration of the specificities of violence on the ground and individual experiences. This also helps our understanding of the challenges people face when turning a new location into a meaningful place.

Urabá: a territory of exclusion, resistance and dispute

As Adrienne Rich rightly stated, 'a place on the map is also a place in history'.[20] Senses of place and displacement, while they are inherently subjective, are influenced by broader socio-economic and political dimensions. If it is people's biographies that influence sense of place, it is ultimately also the place itself that influences these biographies, if only through the possibilities it offers. Therefore, a brief overview of the making and unmaking of Urabá is crucial to a better understanding of my interviewees' biographies; as well as a more conventional narrative history of the region. Ultimately it also gives context to the conflict which brought about the onset of the displacement process.

Urabá is a sub-region of the department of Antioquia in the north-western part of Colombia, bordering the Caribbean ocean. Colombian scholar Carlos Miguel Ortiz Sarmiento described it as a place of adventure, escape, luck and money but also of danger, violence and death.[21] It can be divided into three zones: the north, the south, and the central region or the banana axis,

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[20]Adrienne Rich, 'Notes toward a Politics of Location', in Adrienne Rich (ed.), *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose, 1979-1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), pp. 212.
[21]Carlos Miguel Ortiz Sarmiento, *Urabá: pulsiones de vida y desafíos de muerte* (Medellín: La Carreta Social 2007), p. 44.

which is the focus of this discussion. This is the area which the interviewees came from and it is also the part of Urabá which saw the most violence. It is estimated that 80 per cent of all violent acts committed in Urabá took place in the central region.[22] In the past 20 years there has never been a complete cessation of armed confrontation.[23]

Conflict and resistance have not been foreign to Urabá; during the period known as *La Violencia* local people's resentment towards the government and its neglect of the local population surfaced.[24] La Violencia is usually presented as a conflict between the Conservative and the Liberal party for political hegemony. However as Roldán demonstrates, in Urabá it was difficult to separate the interest of organised labour from the partisan conflict; alongside the political, economic conflicts as well as personal disparities came to the fore. Violence was so widespread that the armed forces considered Urabá the third most violent area in the country in 1951; consequently it was put under military control.[25] The administrative centre of Antioquia, Medellín, wished to 'antioquianise' and homogenise what was seen as the 'uncivil' population of Urabá through increased colonisation of the region.[26] Though the attempts to increase immigration were initially not successful, colonisation of the region was a constant, albeit slow, process. According to the census from 1951, Urabá had 17,000 inhabitants and four municipalities.[27] It was only after the *Carretera al Mar*, the road to the sea connecting Medellín with the coastal town of Necoclí was constructed, and the banana companies arrived in the 1960s, that a noticeable increase in migration took place. The number of inhabitants of the banana axis increased from 40,000 in 1964 to 150,000 in 1993. The population was both ethnically and regionally diverse, which contributed to initial social fragmentation.[28]

The banana industry was inserted into Urabá without the resolution of the existent conflicts; even though it became an important part of the Colombian economy, it initially resembled

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[22] Clara Ínes García de la Torre and Clara Ínes Aramburo Siegert, *Geografías de la guerra, el poder y la resistencia. Oriente y Urabá antioqueños 1990-2008* (Medellín: Universidad de Antioquia, 2011), p.315.
[23]Ibid.
[24] Mary Roldán, *Blood and Fire. La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946–1953* (Durham, NC: Duke University Place, 2002), p.195.
[25] Ibid., p.221.
[26] Claudia Steiner, 'Héroes y banano en el golfo de Urabá: la construcción de una frontera conflictiva', in Silva Renán (ed.), *Territorios, regiones, sociedades* (Bogotá: Universidad del Valle; Cerec, 1994), pp. 137-52; Ortiz Sarmiento, *Urabá: pulsiones de vida*.
[27]Roldán, *Blood and Fire,* p.171.
[28]Andrés Fernando Suárez, *Identidades políticas y exterminio recíproco. Masacres y guerra en Urabá 1991-2001* (Medellín: La Carreta Editores; Instituto de Estudios Políticos Internacionales IEPRI, 2007).

plundering as the process was not regulated by the state.[29] Conditions for the industry were good, since the region had fertile soil and cheap labour which helped Urabá become 'one of the main banana exporting regions in the world' in the 1970s.[30] The colonisers were campesinos with little experience of undertaking business activities; therefore the concentration of capital and power followed ethnic/regional characteristics, with foreign capital and *antioqueños* (inhabitants of Antioquia), who were believed to possess entrepreneurial spirit, assuming the leading roles. The relations and roles established on the *bananeras* (banana plantation) thus reflected a colonising discourse.[31]

The poor working conditions on bananeras, which included long working hours, lack of hygiene, diseases and failure to treat workers properly, all contributed to the establishment of labour unions, to which employers responded with repression and violence.[32] The workers' initial lack of progress in negotiating their rights opened avenues for the guerrillas to form a relationship with the repressed bananera workers.[33] The two main guerrilla groups operating in the area, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, FARC) and Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army, EPL) established their presence in Urabá in the second half of the 1960s.[34] The guerrilla movements initially gained strength from the magnitude of land problems and the arising conflicts between peasants and *latifundistas* (big estate owners), but as a result of the growing problems in the worker-boss relationship on bananeras and the desire to expand their support base, the guerrillas became increasingly involved in labour union movements. As with the agrarian question of unequal land distribution, finding sympathisers was not difficult since the state pursued the interests of the business owners and the government demonised and condemned labour union organisation, likening it to communism.[35]

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[29]Uribe, *Urabá: ¿Región o territorio?*
[30]Marcelo Bucheli, *Bananas and Businesses. The United Fruit Company in Colombia, 1899-2000* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
[31]Steiner, *Héroes y banano.*
[32]Jenny Pearce, *Colombia. Inside the Labyrinth* (London: Latin America Bureau Limited, 1990).
[33]Leah Anne Carroll, *Violent Democratization. Social Movements, Elites, and Politics in Colombia's Rural War Zones, 1984-2008* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 62-65.
[34]The first record of guerrilla presence in Urabá, reaches back to 1950 and the period of *La Violencia*. The governor of Antioquia sent a military official on an expedition to assess the region's 'subversive' presence. The latter reported a lack of authority from Antioquia, lack of civilisation, and the immoral character of the inhabitants. As a response, the governor declared Urabá a militarized zone and handed its management over to the military. Mary Roldan, 'Violencia, colonización y la geografía de la diferencia cultural en Colombia', *Análisis Político* 35 (1998), pp.3-22.
[35]Uribe, *Urabá: ¿Región o territorio?*

The FARC and EPL each stood behind a different labour union; the FARC supported Sintrabanano and EPL supported Sintagro. Even though labour unions were not an ancillary organisation to guerrilla groups, from the mid-1960s onwards the media portrayed them as such to impede labour union action.[36] The two labour unions did not cooperate but were in opposition with one another. The 'labour union war' was a struggle for monopoly over the organised labour movement and aimed at political control of bananeras.[37] It became intertwined with armed confrontations and the conflict between political actors over institutional control. The social actors, members of labour unions and peasant organisations, were politicised and the circumstances, including ever more severe violence, were such that Uribe holds it was almost impossible to remain neutral.[38] This atmosphere helps explain the attacks carried out against the civilian population, including those interviewed for this article.

Successful unionisation took place only after 1984 when the FARC and the EPL entered into peace negotiations under the Belisario Betancur government (1982-1986). Since both guerrilla organisations held a similar view towards the peace process, a certain degree of unity was achieved in 1984 and 1985.[39] As a result of the peace negotiations both guerrilla groups founded new electoral parties. The EPL established Frente Nacional (National Front) and the FARC, a leftist political party Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Unit, UP); members of which include many people interviewed for this article. UP aimed at bringing together everyone interested in economic and social reforms be they communists, socialists, atheists, those of strong religious conviction, liberals, conservatives, the poor, or the rich.[40] It emerged as a third electoral power (alongside the two traditional parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals). After unsuccessful peace talks in 1987, the UP announced a split with the FARC. Nevertheless, in the minds of the people, they have continued to be associated with the guerrilla group.[41] The leftist parties achieved substantial success in Urabá. In Apartadó, the first county executive from the UP was appointed in 1986. In direct elections for county executive in 1988 the left retained its position and, in 1990 the left's electoral strength (UP and Frente Popular combined) even increased, reaching 60 per cent.[42] Alongside stronger

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[36]Ibid.

[37]Suárez, *Identidades políticas y exterminio recíproco.*

[38]Uribe, *Urabá: ¿Región o territorio?*

[39] Carroll, *Violent Democratization*, p. 69.

[40]Yezid Campos Zornosa, *Memoria de los silenciados. El baile rojo: relatos* (Bogotá: Ceicos, 2003).

[41]Fernando Giraldo, *Democracia y discurso político en la Unión Patriótíca* (Bogotá: Centro Editorial Javeriano (CEJA), 2001).

[42] Carroll, *Violent Democratization*, pp. 86-87.

electoral left and public engagements of the guerrillas, labour union movements expanded and advanced substantially. Accompanied by numerous strikes, the workers negotiated eight-hour workdays and greater job security, limited subcontracting, better wages, and improvements in health and education.[43] These achievements in political, work and personal spheres still nourish IDPs' nostalgia and the dream of the place left behind; they were also one of the reasons why it was difficult to leave the region in the face of violence.

Despite the successes in labour movements and in politics, the left was unable to firmly secure its position vis-à-vis the economic elites.[44] One reason for this was the lack of unity of the left. The EPL demobilised in 1991 and the FARC, wanting to get control over the territory previously controlled by EPL, declared the demobilised EPL members and their supporters to be military objectives. Consequently, many former EPL *guerrilleros* and their sympathisers became tolerant towards the paramilitaries who entered from the north and started disputing territory with the FARC.[45] Dissidents of the EPL formed a new political movement, Esperanza Paz y Libertad (Hope, Peace and Freedom), which presented a new electoral left-wing option and was in competition with the UP. Similar to the divide between the FARC and EPL, the UP and Esperanza Paz y Libertad also reflected tensions between the two factions of the left, resulting in increased violence, and 'reciprocal extermination'.[46]

The second reason was the stronger elite, which further militarised the region. Believing that the left could be defeated by repressive violence,[47] the elite turned to the use of its paramilitary apparatus.[48] Two non-mutually exclusive hypotheses exist regarding the paramilitaries' formation. One suggests that the paramilitaries formed as self-defence groups, set up to protect landowners from the guerrillas. The other relates them to drug traffickers with anti-communist sympathies, whose objective was not only to remove guerrilla

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[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

[45] García de la Torre and Aramburo Siegert, *Geografías de la guerra.*

[46] Suárez, *Identidades políticas y exterminio recíproco.*

[47] Carroll, *Violent Democratization*, p.93.

[48] The exact date of paramilitaries' appearance in Urabá is a matter of dispute. Uribe and Melo for instance set the year of the paramilitaries' arrival to 1987. Aviva Chomsky, on the other hand, writes that the first public denunciation of paramilitary activity in Urabá dates back to 1985 and that in 1986 a paramilitary group Muerte a Revolucionarions del Nordeste (Death to Revolutionaries of the Northeast) appeared in northeast Antioquia as well as in Urabá. Jairo Baquero Melo, *Layered Inequalities. Land Grabbing, Collective Land Rights and Afro-Descendant Resistance in Colombia* (Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2014); Aviva Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Colombia, and the Making of a Global Working Class* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), p.195.

supporters, but also to enable the free flow of cocaine.[49] The collaboration of the paramilitaries with the state has since then been widely recognised, as has the banana industry's partial funding of paramilitary activities.[50] The overall goal of the paramilitaries, to reign over the territory, was in part achieved through land appropriation. Since many peasants did not possess land titles and were therefore not protected by the state, Urabá was highly susceptible to paramilitary expansion.[51] Alongside greater land appropriation, the arrival of the paramilitaries marked the time when 'threats and assassinations of UP leaders began in earnest'.[52] The extermination of UP leaders and members through massacres, homicides, disappearances and threats made their political participation impossible. Even when the UP had no political power left, its members were still being killed;[53] overall some 3,000 UP members are thought to have been assassinated in Colombia. In 1997 the UP renounced their electoral participation; this coincided with the time when those interviewed for this research left the region.

In a history as complex as that of Urabá, it would be difficult to determine one single reason why people were forced off their lands. The interviewees or their family members for example were UP members, and/or worked on banana plantations, and/or were labour union members, and/or had a piece of land which was in the way of expansion of the banana industry. While displacement was related among other reasons to 'political cleansing' directed at UP supporters, economic factors were also at work.[54] The reasons were cumulative and undoubtedly interlinked. The focus in this article and the following sections, however, is not so much on the reasons but on the process of how the eventual departure from the region was achieved.

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[49]Uribe, *Urabá: ¿Región o territorio?*
[50]Forrest Hylton, *Evil Hour in Colombia* (London: Verso, 2006); García de la Torre and Aramburo Siegert, *Geografías de la guerra.*
[51]García de la Torre and Aramburo Siegert, *Geografías de la guerra.*
[52] Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories,* p.195.
[53]Steven Dudley, *Walking Ghosts. Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia* (New York, London: Routledge, 2006).
[54]For the analysis of how elections were a proxy for the perceived supporters of insurgents, see Abbey Steele, 'Electing Displacement: Political Cleansing in Apartadó, Colombia', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55 (2011), pp. 423-45.

In their narratives, people constructed two 'kinds' of Urabá. The same interviewees who spoke of violence and the horrors they witnessed and experienced also described Urabá as '*sabrosa*' (an expression often used by *costeños*, inhabitants of the coastal areas of Colombia, which literally translates as 'tasty'). They spoke of food, more favourable economic status, fiestas, and recounted fishing trips and picnics undertaken. This was when the region was still '*sana*' (healthy) as Doña Beatriz describes it. The healthy Urabá remained in people's memories as some sort of a fantasy place where time sits still. During one of our conversations about the time before displacement commenced, Mauricio said he wished he could take me to Urabá so that I too would get to know it. Tatiana, who before displacement 'dreamt with Urabá', joined in and challenged the fantasy place he was describing by asking 'Do you think it's the same? Do you think the school is still there?'[55] The memories of nostalgic Urabá surface and are especially pronounced when people recount the dissatisfaction with their lives at the current location of resettlement.[56] In such reflections, the fantasy Urabá serves as a point of comparison, to emphasise what has been lost and what the new place of resettlement does not offer.

The 'health' of Urabá was particularly affected when the paramilitaries started to exert increased presence and influence. When reflecting back on their displacement, the Urabá of fantasy is absent and becomes the Urabá of displacement. This was the Urabá where Alejandro found it more unusual not to have to get off his bike to pass a corpse on the way to school than to do so. It was a place of which Camilo has no positive memories. He was a small child when the paramilitaries entered the region and he spent most of his childhood in Urabá which was no longer 'healthy', therefore, the memories of violence prevail in his mind. When I ask whether he misses Urabá, he responds with disbelief 'What should I miss? How I had to run *pa'l monte* (uncleared, virgin land) when I was five?' He also resents the fact that his mother sometimes left him, his sisters and his father alone while she engaged in political activities. In his opinion Urabá has not given him anything he would long to go back to. Camilo's narrative speaks of generational differences in which memory operates among

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[55]The school was an important reference point since it was built with communal efforts and it developed over time. Don Andrés described it as being 'progressive' since it got to the stage of having three teachers working there. According to Tatiana the school has been pulled down and replaced by a banana plantation.

[56] Generally speaking, people are not satisfied with the resettlement area. Out of 12 families who were resettled there, six have already left and some others still plan to do so, despite the government's requirement to stay on the land for 12 years in order to claim full rights to it.

people. Possibly because of a troubled childhood and his mother's occasional departures, he was the only interviewee whose memory focused only on the negative aspects of the place left behind. For the rest, the two opposing narratives demonstrate that the once known and dear place was gradually being transformed and lost.

The interviewees in this article considered their options and decided to stay for a substantial number of years after the arrival of the paramilitaries, and aimed to resist the attack on their place. Sometimes this persistence was influenced by external actors, more specifically the guerrillas who did not want their sympathisers to leave the area. They were told not to abandon their *fincas* (farm) but instead to resist and collaborate with each other in order not to lose the land. Such a strategy of non-abandonment is not uncommon with the guerrillas who give people what they perceive as 'the right orientation'.[57] Even after some fincas had been abandoned, the guerrillas sought volunteers who would temporarily settle on the properties of those who had fled. If it had not been for the guerrillas, one of the interviewees comments, she would have left 'a long time ago', at least two years previously. The guerrillas, however, did not want her to leave Urabá as she 'knew a lot', and letting her go could present a risk.

There were also other reasons which contributed to the decision not to leave. For one, people believed the conflict would soon end. Some decided not to leave as they did not want to lose their fincas; agrarian problems and unequal land distribution is, as in many other countries of Latin America, part of the historical trajectory of Colombia.[58] Land was and still is, when its' quality is good, considered invaluable, especially for peasants. Ownership of a plot was possibly the most visible result or fruit of people's work and struggle. The prospects of getting a new finca elsewhere, based on previous experiences, appeared remote. Juan, a bananera worker in his mid-forties, who had hated leaving his finca behind, recalls a bananera administrator saying to him 'you can get new land, but not a new life', in order to try to convince him to leave Urabá. Dispute over territory was not only about the control of the population but was also about appropriation of land. Pedro, an IDP leader, comments that in his case, after two changes of ownership his old finca is now in the hands of a banana

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[57] Carlos Alberto Giraldo, Jesús Abad Colorado, and Diego Pérez G., *Relatos e imágenes: el desplazamiento en Colombia* (Bogotá: Cinep, 1997), p.159.
[58] See for example Catherine LeGrand, *Colonización y protesta campesina* (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1988); Absalón Machado, *La cuestión agraria en Colombia a fines de milenio* (Bogotá: El Ancora Editores, 1998); Ana María Ibáñez and Pablo Querubín, 'Aceceso a tierras y desplazamiento forzado en Colombia. Documento Cede', (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, CEDE, 2004).

company: Grupo 20. For others, it was not only their individual properties at stake, but the broader structural problems of inequality which they, as members of the UP, needed to stave off. This persistence to stay influenced by their political stance can be interpreted as reflecting the region's historical culture of resistance. Leaving the region meant giving in and very possibly giving up their fight as the networks of support and infrastructure would be lost. In the end, support networks were nevertheless lost, or at least greatly curtailed, despite persistence in the region. Indeed, even though people were physically there, the place was undergoing substantial transformation discussed in the continuation of this article.

Urabá of displacement: the changing taste of a place

Violence is an important component of displacement and emplacement processes, yet the role of place is insufficiently addressed in the analysis of violence. It is remarkably often reduced to the 'décor' where the violence "takes place"'.[59] In order to overcome this gap, this section explores how practices of violence affect and alter people's sense of place. I specifically analyse the transformation that occurs in the physical, social and cognitive landscapes. The three are not easily separated; they are rather interconnected. Changes in the physical environment may affect people's social environment. Changes in cognitive landscapes are generated by changes in physical and social landscapes and in turn influence the two. The coalescence of these three notions of landscape within one analytical framework allows for the demonstration of how once familiar places can turn into alien ones which sets off the displacement process. As a result, the temporal component of displacement, alongside the spatial one, becomes apparent.

In contexts of ongoing violence, armed groups succumb to practices which make them memorable through time and space. What is often inhumane treatment of their victims is not only an expression of power over the opposing group(s) and possible rage against the target, but is also used as means of exercising control over the population. People are expected to act in line with the group's expectations; if not, they might be facing the same fate as the victims before them. The paramilitaries who came 'to clear anything related to the guerrillas', as they

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[59]Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving, 'Introduction: Towards an Anthropology of Violence, Hope and the Movement of People', in Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving (eds.), *Struggles for Home. Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp.1-24.

announced upon their arrival, launched their mission through the 'sowing of terror', Mauricio observes. On the one hand, the sowing of terror expressed itself through the number of people killed; as a result of the level and persistence of the violence, the killing of one or two individuals was no longer noteworthy. Felipe, a bananera worker in his late forties, reflects on the situation saying: 'there had to be a massacre of fifteen people' to attract attention. Indeed, he remembers waking up to discover that ten or fifteen people had been killed every day. On the other hand, terror was generated through the manner of killing and the display of victims' bodies.

Killing a 'sufficient' number of victims was not always viable or the intention. The paramilitaries managed to maintain terror through performative acts of violence;[60] through the way in which they carried out the killings. Tatiana describes the practices employed by the paramilitaries as 'sadistic'. Before they killed their victims they often tortured them, pulled their nails and skin off and beat them. In some cases they would cut their bodies with a chain saw or even quarter people alive. This was not always done in secret; the paramilitaries sometimes exhibited the physical results of violence. Physical geographies turned into 'landscapes of fear'.[61] The place saw transformation though the appearance of dead bodies left lying around 'like any old animal. They wouldn't collect them', Doña Isabel recalls. Sometimes corpses were hung on trees, Monica a widow in her early forties remembers. The paramilitaries' were successful in sowing terror; those who were merely shot, or who in their words received a *tiro de gracia* [coup de grace], were considered 'fortunate', according to Doña Flor. Many years after migrating she says that her 'heart still jumps' at the mention of the paramilitaries, which demonstrates the potency of the imprint they left on people's lives.

The fear influenced the perception of the place as well as its use. People were more aware of their position in the physical landscape. Heidegger argued that one becomes aware of places during moments of reflection;[62] that is when lived relationships are most fully felt and experienced. In such moments the physical landscape 'becomes wedded to the landscape of

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[60] Ingo Schröder and Bettina Schmidt, 'Introduction: Violent Imaginaries and Violent Practices', in Bettina Schmidt and Ingo Schröder *(eds.), Anthropology of Violence and Conflict* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 1-24.
[61] Oslender, 'Another History of Violence'.
[62] Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in David Krell (ed.) *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp.319-39.

the mind'.[63] In the presence of violence, the interviewees became over-aware of geographical space; moments of reflection were numerous and not without consequences. Even everyday chores entailed greater thought and planning. People adjusted their behaviour, paying increased attention to the use of physical space. This altered the lived relationships that one previously had had with the place.

Miguel explains that the guerrilla and the paramilitaries each controlled a different portion of geographical territory; those living in these territories were assumed or expected to give support to the respective armed group. Due to the association of people with distinct non-state actor, moving between these territories became challenging and even dangerous. The political division of the territory did not reflect people's engagement with the space in their usual daily tasks. When these were related to economic practices, crossing to what was considered the 'opposing' group's territory was in many instances necessary. Some people for instance worked on a different territory to the one they lived in. To reduce the risk of crossing, one of the women occasionally used a pulley running above the road to get to work. Similarly, entry to the territory controlled by the paramilitaries was needed in order to ship plantains from people's farms. When the situation got 'complicated' as people tend to describe it, they would send a car with the crops to the embarkation point rather than go there themselves.

Practices of the use of space likewise altered when people remained on the 'right' territory. Tatiana remembers that she would not get off the bus or get out of a car near her house but would ask the driver to stop before or after her house and continue on foot. Believing that she might be followed, she did not want to give away where she lived. For the same reason and also to avoid possible ambush, she made sure that she changed the route she took on a regular basis. Due to such alterations, the familiarity, which is in normal circumstances generated through the everyday use of space and repetitive movement through it, was gradually decreasing, and with it people's territorialisation of place. Even when people used the same routes, their perception of them changed as they sensed danger. These are all important experiences of estrangement.

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[63]Keith H. Basso, 'Wisdom Sits in Places: Note on a Western Apache Landscape', in Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (eds.), *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, N. M.: School of American Research Press, 1996), p. 55.

Alterations to physical and social environment were equally expressed through absences. Some of the houses on bananeras were pulled down due to conflicts and killings; workers moved to town and commuted to work. The empty houses and abandoned fincas left behind by those who had relocated, been killed or had simply disappeared additionally changed the landscape. Places saw less activity, with fewer people engaging in work with animals and crops. The area was becoming increasingly desolate. Felipe, a Colombian refugee from the department of Putumayo whom I met in Ecuador, commented that he left Putumayo because more than 80 per cent of his village had already gone. The place had become a ghost town with schools and local businesses closed, and he felt there was 'nothing else to do', but leave. The alternative was to live a lonely life.

Paramilitaries occasionally replace the displaced population.[64] They likewise brought new people to Urabá. Mauricio confirms that the bananeras in collaboration with the paramilitaries wanted to get rid of old workers to replace them with new ones. 'They brought a lot of people to work from the interior of the country and also a lot of foreigners', he explains. While this might stop the process of desolation, it does not stop the increased estrangement of the place. The physical landscapes, the 'landscapes of fear', are interwoven with social landscapes. The visible absence of people means loss of support networks - be it at the family, friendship, ideological or work level. Even if people are replaced, the 'replacees' are strangers. The social and demographic changes made to Urabá, made the people's time in place increasingly different from that in fantasy Urabá. In an atmosphere where suspicion prevails, one is likely to establish only superficial relationships with the new inhabitants. Through the absence of familiar faces and the presence of unfamiliar ones, one becomes estranged from one's own place.

Social landscapes and relationships were not affected only through absences and replacements; violence affected communication among those who stayed. In order to protect themselves people often resorted to complete or partial silence. They followed (and they still do) *ley de silencio* or rule of silence. Silence is a 'powerful mechanism of control enforced through fear'.[65] Certain topics due to 'pain, shame, embarrassment, or fear' fall within the

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[64]Arturo Escobar, 'Displacement, Development, and Modernity in the Colombian Pacific', *International Social Science Journal,* 55:175 (2004), 157-67.
[65] Linda Green, 'Living in a State of Fear', in Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Philippe Bourgois (eds.), *Violence in War and Peace* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 186-95.

category of '*undiscussables*, let alone *unmentionables*.'[66] The presence of multiple actors operating in Colombia is a frequent cause of mistrust. It is not always clear whom one can trust. If one speaks, one might risk being killed or forced to leave. On the one hand, this has to do with the dynamics by which the parties to conflict frequently change in power and thus create confusion in people's lives. On the other, even members of the same family may support different armed groups.[67] Where uncertainty reigns, few people are considered potential friends. The war in Colombia has generated 'a state of ambiguity' where friends and neighbours have lost their usual connotation.[68] Friends are considered hard to find or a false concept. Martín believes there is no such thing as a friend. 'One doesn't talk about things to anyone. One is alone. Those who are supposedly your friends end up killing you' he concludes.

Doña María is equally cautious when it comes to friends. She believes there are only two friends one can trust – one *amigo* and one *amiga*, namely God and one's mother. Anyone else can be a potential risk to one's safety as even *chismes* (gossip) can get you killed. Consequently, phrases like 'see what you like, hear what you like but don't tell anything',[69] 'see someone killed, shut your mouth',[70] 'if you see and speak, you die',[71] 'if you see and speak, you never speak again'[72] are used to describe the prevailing attitudes. With a decreasing number of acquaintances and greater levels of terror, ley de silencio was increasingly applied. Since people are social beings and feeling comfortable somewhere is also achieved through those with whom we feel at home,[73] silence creates the opposite effect. Silence sustained and emphasised social distance, even though people were physically close.

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[66] Eviatar Zerubavel, 'The Social Sound of Silence: Toward a Sociology of Denial', in Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Ruth Ginio and Jay Winter (eds.), *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 32 (emphasis in the original).

[67] Daniel Pécaut, 'From the Banality of Violence to Real Terror: The Case of Colombia', in Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt (eds.), *Societies of Fear: The Legacy of Civil War, Violence and Terror in Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 1999), pp. 141-67.

[68] Alejandro Castillejo Cuéllar, *Poética de lo Otro, para una antropología de la guerra, la soledad y el éxilio interno en Colombia* (Bogotá: ICAN, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2000).

[69] Doña Pílar

[70] Carlos

[71] Marcela

[72] Martín

[73] Sharika Thiranagama, 'A New Morning? Reoccupying Home in the Aftermath of Violence in Sri Lanka', in Stef Jansen and Staffan Löfving (eds.), *Struggles for Home. Violence, Hope and the Movement of People* (Oxford: Berghahn books, 2009), pp.129-48.

While this silence might save lives, it comes at a price. One of the consequences is that many crimes go unreported. The version you are told about what had happened is the one you should accept, explains Martín. If the act affects you directly, you not only question your position in the society where you receive no protection from the dysfunctional mechanisms of justice, but your relationship to those who have possibly witnessed the act and are afraid to speak out, changes. Rather than taking your side and resisting the demands of silence, they give in to the established structure; this has a negative impact on the relationship. Another consequence is that many people get buried as unidentified persons. While some were unidentified simply because they were migratory workers and had no relatives in the region, as was occasionally the case with workers on bananeras, others did not recover their relatives' bodies due to fear. Silence therefore not only led to estrangement with those who were still alive and present, but also with those who had died. By not being able to claim or recover bodies, people were forced to deny their feelings and to demonstrate indifference. The dead, who had names and faces and were part of people's personal histories, became 'unknown' or 'unidentified' strangers.

Certain locations, even if they were not greatly modified physically, underwent cognitive transformation. One such was the bananeras. The change affected both the possibilities for exercising workers' rights as well as the relationship which had been previously formed with the plantations. Working conditions on these bananeras had not been favourable, but as seen above workers actively resisted the established system by organising labour unions and taking strike action. They would stop production even for two months if necessary, comments Tatiana. Activism and the defence of workers' rights formed an important part of what Urabá represented for the interviewees. The strikes and acts of resistance became more dangerous after the arrival of the paramilitaries, which made labour union activism progressively more difficult. Tatiana recalls that not many people organised when 'inquietude' settled in. Place is about what one does there; '[p]ersonal biographies, social identities and a biography of place are intimately connected'.[74] The inability to continue exercising the place-bound activities which formed part of people's biographies affected the way people related to the place. Urabá was no longer experienced as enabling people to voice their concerns through protests or strike actions.

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[74] Christopher Y. Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments* (Oxford: Berg, 1994), p.27.

Despite the necessity to continuously negotiate conditions of work, employment on the bananeras offered relative financial security. The relationship with the plantations thus played an important part in people's lives; it affected their private spaces through the means of provision for the family. Unfortunately, bananeras gradually acquired a different connotation. Due to their importance in the lives of the inhabitants of the banana axis, they were chosen as a suitable location for massacres, partly because of the labour union movement but also because these were populated spaces. Some of the massacres happened in the vicinity of the interviewees' homes, others on the bananeras where they worked. Miguel, a bananera worker, recounts 28 people being assassinated within six months; Tatiana, who started working on the same plantation some time later, remembers 22 deaths. Both Miguel and Tatiana were present on certain occasions when the paramilitaries came and they remember hiding and/or fleeing from them. The paramilitaries usually came in the morning. Thus, Miguel comments, in the afternoon people expected that they were safe for that day, at least while on the bananeras.

The relative frequency of violent acts committed on bananeras, be it on the ones where the interviewees worked or on more remote ones, created the sense that any bananera could be next. Going to work thus generated a degree of uneasiness. Greater attention was paid to the location itself, as well as to anyone present. Although these plantations had previously represented places where one earned a living, they increasingly became places of potential threat. While bananeras were perceived as particularly dangerous in the morning, the situation was quite the opposite when it came to people's houses. The perception of houses – specifically among those politically active - likewise changed; houses came to be seen as unsafe, especially during the night when fear and terror were most felt, remembers Juan. 'As soon as it got dark people were killed. Bang bang bang. [she pauses] We were afraid of darkness', affirms Doña Isabel. Many began sleeping outside their houses. Some, like Juan, would spend the night in town and return in the morning to work. Others remained in the vicinity of the house, just not inside. Tatiana had three *caletas* (a hiding place) outside her house on her *platanera* (plantain farm). She deliberately did not cut the lawn there as it served as a hiding place. She and her five children used these caletas to sleep, while her husband slept at a different location. They slept in the house only two or three nights a week. These nightly relocations, a form of everyday displacement, were not necessarily a short-term practice. Mauricio, for example, slept outside the house for nearly two years.

Even if people continued sleeping in the house they did not feel safe. 'One did not sleep as deeply there as people here [in the village of resettlement] sleep' comments Martín, explaining the high state of alert people were in. They would wake at the slightest noise. Some had their doors blocked, others their beds raised. Beds were placed on bricks so that they allowed for sufficient room for people to use as a hiding place. Alejandra has her bed raised even now in the area of resettlement, when she feels no imminent threat. She similarly says that she learnt to sleep standing up if need be. Displacement was therefore no longer a phenomenon occurring only in Urabá, as a region, but was encroaching upon the home and the bed. It was affecting people's places of intimacy and creating a sense of displacement in their own homes. Bananeras and houses, two important features of the physical and cognitive landscape, were no longer perceived as before. The physical landscape underwent a cognitive change. What had previously represented financial security (banana plantations) and shelter (people's houses), became places of risk, of potential threat.

Finally, perhaps the most telling example of a change in the perception of a place is the modification of one's plans. Sense of place is not only affected by the present but is influenced by past memories and thoughts of the future. Since migration to the banana axis had increased after the arrival of banana companies in the first half of the 1960s, the elderly interviewees had seen and participated in the making of place. The same memories of past lives that might have kept them there when they still believed that the conflict would not last long, were also the memories which served as a point of comparison with what Urabá used to be like, how it had changed and what it was becoming. The plans to pass the land on to their children, as many had hoped, made less and less sense as Urabá was no longer seen as a desirable or indeed possible place to grow old. Tatiana and her political colleagues had 'dreamt of getting old together'. They joked about who would look after whom or help the other with their medicines. Later on, when things started getting 'ugly', when Urabá was increasingly experienced as an unfamiliar place, the conversation about plans for the future changed. Discussions revolved around what one should do if one got caught. How could one provoke tiro de gracia, being shot on the spot, and thus avoid the torture that they were likely to undergo as military targets in order to give out information. The discussions thus no longer referred to a distant future of experiencing old age in Urabá but instead to an imminent future, the prospects of which were not pleasant.

All of these changes, despite the fact that people had not moved physically and might have still been living in their respective houses, transformed their places substantially. The place they had once known, the one they had created in response to often disadvantageous social, economic and political factors, was no longer the same and could not be considered suitable for the future. Their processes of displacement, the substantial change in their ways-of-being, the transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar, therefore started before people actually left the region.

Displacement is both about the loss and the making of place.[75] While this article examined the process of loss of place rather than the making of place, it is worth pointing out that the two processes are intertwined and that people's past experiences affect their current lives. Displacement is something that 'is still going on in one's head' Alejandra asserts. Besides the persistent use of the law of silence and sleeping with their beds raised, displacement has had an impact on people's political and organisational engagements. As a result of past experiences, the sense of community has been lost and even among the displaced there are now disparities and distrust - while some feel they can never again travel back to Urabá, others do, which raises suspicions about their political preferences. Possibilities of political and social organisation are therefore greatly curtailed. Individual political engagement has similarly been affected. Political preferences and conviction might have stayed the same, nevertheless, they have been reduced to a personal level. Don Andrés, who is still highly critical of the government and its lack of preoccupation for the poor, prefers not to discuss politics since he feels his opinions would not be accepted well in the village of resettlement. Mauricio, who was an active member of Unión Patriótica and a labour union member, whose political activism played such an important role that he claimed to have been the last one to leave his village of origin, now similarly maintains a low profile. At the location of resettlement he refuses to get involved in politics and would discuss it only in private with people he trusts. He explains he does not want to go through the same process of losing what he has since 'it's obvious that the same thing can happen again'. He took a temporal and spatial distance from Urabá. He is purposefully limiting what used to be one of the defining characteristics of his identity. The anxiety over what might happen, and the fear of political activity based on what has already happened, inhibits him from living his life fully. This in

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[75] Turton, 'The Meaning of Place in a World of Movement'.

turn prevents him from establishing a closer link to the new place and stands as an obstacle to emplacement – to rendering the place meaningful.

Conclusion

This article set out to question when the 'clock' of displacement starts. The ethnographic accounts of people's lived experiences in this article show it is difficult to specify a precise starting point for displacement. Some events, like imprisonment and disappearance, might play a more prominent role than others and are indeed more memorable and bear greater consequences. They therefore stand out. But alongside these events, the process of displacement can be traced back to a time when negotiation of place became increasingly difficult; when witnessing the unmaking of one's place took on sufficient force, velocity and persistence that any attempts at resistance or other efforts to make the place more similar to what it used to be were perceived as futile.

As demonstrated, the violence and terror substantially affected people's lives and the ways in which people related to places and to others inhabiting them. It was not just acts of resistance that made displacement a reality before physical relocation, but also the reconfiguration of the phenomenological landscape of Urabá had a profound impact on people's association of place. The fight for territorial control between the guerrillas and the paramilitaries reached the micro level of people's own territories. Displacement did not come only to Colombia, Urabá and the village where the interviewees came from, but reached places of intimacy; it came down to people's houses and beds, homes, work and friendships. Being confined to certain spaces, limited in their liberty to move, limited in their ability to be politically or socially active, sharing their space with strangers, and behaving in certain ways, people saw their lives affected in numerous dimensions. Changing perceptions of Urabá as a place that once was 'tasty' soon became sour. Whilst being physically present, people's attitudes toward Urabá changed from it being a desirable place to grow old to one of displacement, where only short-term plans were made. The loss of place was therefore not sudden but unwound gradually. Some of these consequences of living in violence and undergoing gradual displacement are still felt almost two decades later in the area of resettlement; the lack of communal spirit and collective organisation contribute to a sense of solitude. Rather than actively challenging the state, the once political activists are now silent.

Exploring the question of when displacement commences has a number of benefits. It puts people's narratives in centre stage which, as this article demonstrates, captures the complexity of displacement as something more than a process that starts at the moment of departure. It calls for greater attention to be paid to terror and violence which unravel on the ground and can thus compare and contrast it to state-driven analysis of violence and displacement. It highlights the unfavourable conditions people caught in violence experience, whether they relocate or not. Listening to and tracing the trajectory of people's experiences of the changing of place, helps one understand what triggers the processes of alienation and thus displacement. In addition to this, understanding what makes a place meaningful provides a deeper comprehension of the challenges people might face when they resettle as well as providing an insight into why a sense of displacement can last after violence has abated. The question of when displacement starts therefore poses a compelling challenge in determining when and if displacement 'ends'. This brings an additional element of temporality in the process of displacement – one that extends into the aftermath of migration.