



Article scientifique

Article

2019

Published version

Open Access

This is the published version of the publication, made available in accordance with the publisher's policy.

---

## Tourism challenges facing peacebuilding in colombia

---

Naef, Patrick James; Guillard, Marie-Laure

### How to cite

NAEF, Patrick James, GUILLAND, Marie-Laure. Tourism challenges facing peacebuilding in colombia.  
In: Via Tourism Review, 2019, vol. 15.

This publication URL: <https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:129730>



**Via**  
Tourism Review

**15 | 2019**  
**Tourisme et paix, une alliance incertaine en Colombie**

---

## Tourism challenges facing peacebuilding in Colombia

Marie-Laure Guillard and Patrick Naef

---



### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/viatourism/4046>  
ISSN: 2259-924X

### Publisher

Association Via@

### Electronic reference

Marie-Laure Guillard and Patrick Naef, « Tourism challenges facing peacebuilding in Colombia », *Via* [Online], 15 | 2019, Online since 22 November 2019, connection on 24 December 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/viatourism/4046>

---

This text was automatically generated on 24 December 2019.



*Via Tourism Review* est mis à disposition selon les termes de la Licence Creative Commons Attribution - Pas d'Utilisation Commerciale - Pas de Modification 4.0 International.

---

# Tourism challenges facing peacebuilding in Colombia

Marie-Laure Guillard and Patrick Naef

---

- 1 On 11 January 2019, at the end of school holidays, the high-speed boat that crossed the Gulf of Urabá was carrying mainly tourists, most of them coming from the department of Antioquia and its capital Medellín, and heading towards the beaches of Capurgana and Sapzurro. Among the tourists dressed in shorts and bright summer clothes, five Haitian migrants continued their journey to the North. The virgin forest of Darien, on the border of Panama a few kilometres away, is nowadays a transit zone for migrants from a growing number of countries. The strategic position of this territory, which had already been an important route for the export of cocaine for several decades, made it an epicentre of Colombian violence since the 90s (Martin 1997). However, thanks to the reinforcement of security policies introduced a few years ago, and the natural attractions offered by this region, *guest houses*, restaurants and diving clubs have been thriving, while more and more fishermen are renting their boats to the tourists. This area, still "formally not recommended" in 2019 (in red on the map) by the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, is however at the heart of the policies of the Colombian Ministry of Tourism, which considers it as one of the four "pilot regions" included in the "tourism, peace and living together" programme. (UNODC, 2014) This gap between the willingness of public authorities to change the local dynamics and perceptions attached to the region on the one hand, and the international recommendations related to this area still inaccessible to the little tourism that exists on the other hand, as well as the heterogeneity of practices in a limited space (tourism, illegal trafficking, internal and external migration, pacification of the territory, etc.), partly reflects the challenges and obstacles faced by the stakeholders in the Colombian tourism sector and the local populations of the target territories for the development of such activities, which are considered to be, sometimes with too much haste, the providential activity for regions such as Urabá.
- 2 Following the security policies promoted by the Uribe (2006-2010) and Santos (2010-2018) governments, after the peace agreements signed between the Farc-Ep and

the State, and under the impetus of laws for the restitution of lands to the victims of the conflicts<sup>1</sup>, a growing number of regions and cities have seen the return and arrival of different types of actors: displaced and traumatised populations, foreign tourists attracted by a previously unknown country, promoters in search of profits, or even demobilised combatants looking for opportunities. These rapid changes in the Colombian social fabric have not passed without tension, and tourism can be revealing in this regard. The rapid and sometimes uncontrolled urbanisation of coastal areas such as those on the Caribbean coast; the issue of access to land and the exploitation of natural resources, tangible and intangible cultural heritage; narco-tourism and prostitution; the mediatisation and the immortalisation of the figures of the conflict such as Pablo Escobar - all these elements, directly or indirectly related to the tourist sector, are sources of controversies, and sometimes of violent conflicts.

- 3 The challenges of tourism development are numerous in a socio-political context, which we prefer to call "post-agreements" rather than "post-conflict". This choice avoids several missteps in understanding the challenges that Colombia faces today in the tourism sector as elsewhere. Since 2016, the idea of a post-conflict Colombia has been at the heart of a media bombardment. C. A. Niño González and D. Palma Álvarez analysed how "the fact of using this term in the singular and in an absolute way, gives the sensation that, after the peace process with the Farc-Ep, all the conflicts of Colombia would disappear" (2018, p.87)<sup>2</sup>. These authors remind us that the national imagination has, for more than half a century, been shaped by a "highly volatile actor [Farc-Ep] which has occupied a large part of the political, economic, security and social agenda, shaping the psychology of the State. In other words, Colombia has been 'farcified'". (2018, p.94)<sup>3</sup> The interpretation of Colombian history, the dynamics of the conflicts, and the institutional responses have largely been guided by this reality. During these years, the Farc-Eps represented the "Other" in the face of which society was built, but also the "Other" embodying the origin of all the evils of the country, therefore the "Other" to fight against, allowing therefore to legitimise all the actions of the State. However, such a narrative construction makes us forget that violence in Colombia did not appear with the formation of the Farc-Eps, but that it preceded this (Pécaut 2001). It also ignores the structural causes of Colombian violence, which only genuine consideration of can guarantee "stable and lasting peace"<sup>4</sup>. Finally, the agreement with the Farc-Ep represents only the "start to a complete peace, so that the problems and the conflicts the country is living through are not reduced to the presence of guerrilla groups on the Colombian territory." (Guilland and Mazars 2012, p.19).
- 4 The development of tourism must accommodate this "imperfect peace"<sup>5</sup>. If it does not enjoy the post-conflict Eldorado, mentioned too often without reserve, tourism nevertheless benefits from a certain rhetorical advantage related to the mediatisation of an alleged peace situation that reassures tourists and potential investors. It also benefits from a tangible advantage relating to the demobilisation of guerrillas who liberated the strategic areas for its deployment. However, this demobilisation was not complete<sup>6</sup> and the territories formerly subject to Farc-Ep control have been in the grip of a reorganisation of power which may prove to be highly problematic. In many regions the presence of other irregular armed groups (ELN<sup>7</sup> and criminal organisations, such as paramilitary militias (Bacrim)<sup>8</sup> and/or drug traffickers) persists or is imposed. These groups exert pressure on the territories and local populations which makes it difficult to exercise the rule of law, and since the signing of the agreements in 2016, the

number of assassinations of social leaders, human rights defenders, and ex-guerrillas has been alarming<sup>9</sup>. The limits to the development of peace are also linked to an economic system whose capitalist and neo-liberal foundations impede social equity, deepen inequalities, and encourage the inclination to appropriate rural, urban, mining, natural, material, as well as tourist resources. The Colombian state encourages this economic model at the risk of producing enclave economies in the regions "where the boundary between the legal and the illegal no longer exists" (Serje 2012), and where unfettered capitalism must not obstruct the commercial exploitation of the regions and their resources. The tourism industry is part of these dynamics and must bend the knee to local territorial organisations in order to develop. It is difficult to apprehend tourism as an indisputable tool for peace, which the government and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) nevertheless promote with conviction.

- 5 Thus, while the resumption of tourism that Colombia has been experiencing since the early 2000s is seen by the public authorities and professionals of the sector, not only as an economic boon, but also as a sign of peace and return of the country on the international scene, the massive influx of more and more foreign tourists, and the opening of the country to a large majority of its population, previously strongly restricted in its mobility, nonetheless raises a certain number of questions. The numerous conferences and public initiatives recently launched to strengthen the tourism sector bear witness to the Colombian authorities' interest in focusing on this industry. While economic profit is the main driver of this process, other dynamics, such as the rehabilitation of veterans or the memory of the conflict, also drive this strong desire to develop tourism. As we will see below, the activity is in full expansion in the country. It is hard not to associate this boom with the benefits of the post-agreement period. Should we believe that tourism and peace go hand in hand? While this activity remains restricted in times of armed conflict, in reconfiguring the social, identity, political and economic dynamics of the territories, tourism reshuffles the deck of the powers that are exercised there. Depending on how it develops, it can lead to new conflicts, new forms of domination, and more insidious denials of recognition. The aim of this article is not to diminish the positive impact of tourism in this post-agreement Colombia, but to recognise that this industry still has many challenges to overcome to be the corollary of peace. Declaring that a tourist Colombia guarantees a post-conflict reconstruction is not a performative act. We must therefore ask ourselves whether perceiving tourism as a tool in the service of peace is more of a myth or a reality. After a brief look at the recovery of Colombian tourism since the beginning of the 2000s, this article aims to observe some of the challenges that have characterised the sector since the signing of peace agreements between the government and the FARC-Ep, such as the rebuilding the country's image, prostitution and narco-tourism, the issue of access to land and resources, the promotion of eco-tourism and "community" tourism, and the role of this industry in the reintegration of demobilised combatants.

## I. The resumption of tourism in Colombia

- 6 The armed conflict in Colombia significantly hampered the development of tourism until 2006, a year that saw a major recovery in this sector. According to the Vice-Ministry of Tourism (Colombia Reports, 2018), just over a million foreign visitors visited Colombia in 2006, whereas 3,104,606 visited the country in 2018, signifying an

increase of more than 300% in twelve years. A large majority of these visitors came from the United States (20.8% in 2018) and the main Latin American countries (Venezuela<sup>10</sup>, Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico). We can nevertheless note a decrease in visitors from Argentina (27% less) and Brazil (15% less) in early 2019, while those from Peru (44% more) and France (26% more) have seen their quotas rising sharply in contrast. The vast majority of these visitors travelled to Colombia for leisure-related reasons (79%) and a significant portion for business reasons (12.8%), pushing the authorities to focus heavily on business tourism. The capital Bogota hosts the largest number of these visitors, followed by Cartagena, Medellin, and Cali. However, while most foreign tourists arrive by air to the capital, it is currently the Caribbean region in the north of the country that is the main focus of tourism, with the major point of attraction, the colonial city of Cartagena, classified as UNESCO heritage. The attractiveness of the Caribbean area can also be illustrated by the exceptional dynamism of Santa Marta and Bucaramanga, in terms of welcoming foreign tourists (Colombia Reports, 2018).

- 7 Between 2007 and 2015, the Colombian government twice hosted the UNWTO World Summit, the first time in Cartagena and the second time in Medellin, a city in full reconstruction of its image blackened by cartels. In 2007, the report on the UNWTO summit described Colombia as a country on the edge of the abyss. The development of tourism was optimised primarily by securing roads, with programmes such as *Vive Colombia. Viaja por ella* (Live Colombia. Travel through Colombia) and *Rutas seguras* (safe roads), which allowed the rediscovery of their country by many inhabitants and the start of the growth of international tourism. Far-right president Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2010) and his iron fist policy played a significant role in this process, among other things through a programme called "*caravanas turísticas*" (tourist caravans), included in his security and defence policy: according to a specific agenda, army contingents secured certain roads leading to tourist spots. In this context of pacification of the territory, the National Development Plan of Colombia for 2014-18 placed tourism as a priority sector in its strategy through the drafting of a specific plan for tourism from 2014 to 2018, entitled: "*Tourism for Peace Building*". Priority development sites have been identified and labelled "post-conflict destinations"; tourism development was seen as a way of "rebuilding the social fabric and culture of territories, while enhancing the value chain and quality of life of host communities through responsible and sustainable practices." (OECD 2018, p.317).
- 8 While security measures have certainly boosted tourism, especially local tourism, it was also essential for the authorities to transform the image of a country, considered for decades as dangerous and inaccessible, and all the more so to attract international tourists. As highlighted in the UNWTO report "*Colombia, back on the map of world tourism*" (UNWTO 2009), the country was well known to the public at the time, and communications efforts had to focus more on correcting a distorted image rather than on the creation of an image. The government initiated an important communication work through its operational branch *ProColombia*, responsible for promoting the country among tourists and foreign investors. International organisations have also supported this communication strategy; UNWTO has significantly promoted the country by celebrating its communication campaigns that would enable it, according to the report quoted above, to convey: "the true reality of the country, free of stereotypes

and prejudices from its traumatic history, which already belonged to the past to a large extent, and was being satisfactorily dealt with in the short term." (OMT 2009, p.3)

## II. Promote a new image of the country: its strength and limits

- 9 ProColombia initiated its first tourism promotion campaign in 2007. It was entitled "*Colombia es pasión*" (Colombia is passion); the objective was to unite the inhabitants behind a common identification. (Guilland 2012) The second campaign launched in 2007, adopting a more daring tone, took the opposite view of the negative image associated with Colombia by mobilising the concept of "risk": "*Colombia, el riesgo es que te quieras quedar*" (Colombia, the only risk is wanting to stay).
- 10 In 2013, the concept of "magical realism" - characteristic among many Colombian and Latin American literary works - was placed at the centre of ProColombia's communication. This time, the intention was to change the perception of visitors "by showing them the charms of Colombian tourist destinations, along with the progress made in terms of security and stability". (ProColombia 2013) While the repertoire of images associated with magical realism produced by ProColombia involved elements such as mysterious jungles, multi-coloured seas and strange animals, the Netflix platform simultaneously broadcast the first season of the series "Narcos", which also took up its own account of magical realism by assimilating it in opposition to drug trafficking and armed conflict. (Naef 2018) Similarly, the guides involved in "narco-tours" or "Pablo tours" (the tourism built around the history of Pablo Escobar and drug traffickers) - strongly criticised by the media and the Colombian authorities, but very popular among international tourists - frequently used the concept of magical realism as part of their talk about the history of drug trafficking. In this context, the television series *Narcos* helped to shape the perceptions of international tourists, most of all the American market which represented one of the main sources. As in the example of the Gulf of Urabá described in the introduction, the perception encouraged on a national scale (by the government and ProColombia) clashed with those disseminated by external actors (such as Netflix in the case of Medellín, or the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the case of Urabá). For its twenty-fifth anniversary, in 2017, ProColombia launched its latest campaign "*Colombia: Tierra de la Sabrosura*", in order to set itself apart once and for all from its image of violence: the local term 'Sabrosura', from the Colombian musical world and lacking translation, expresses a positive attitude, beauty and good taste.
- 11 Promotional campaigns, international media and productions based on popular culture shaped the introduction to potential foreign tourists, impacting their decision to travel to Colombia and their activities once there. In a globalised and hyper-connected world, the challenge was therefore daunting for Colombian tourism promoters, who aimed to spread the image of a country that had turned its back on its violent history. In addition, the perceptions of tourists may not be based on the whole of a country, but can be centred on a particular region. As Vélez Rivas (in this issue) shows, the Amazon and its inhabitants have left strong impressions in the minds of the international public; popular culture and travel guides have helped to portray often romantic and stereotypical images. These are now being revised with tourism development.

- 12 The promotional challenge taken up largely by the State, has been a relative success. The desire to transform the image of the country has worked, witnessed by the increased number of visitors. Positive images promoted by Procolombia, relayed by travel guides and internet platforms, show the tourism potential of the country. Outwardly, the idea that Colombia is a peaceful country is spreading. The mediatisation of the peace agreement and symbolic events, such as the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to President Juan Manuel Santos in 2015, have helped to change the dangerous image of a country at war. Reassured tourists travel to the country in search of its "magic", but also traces of its violent history, its vices and its traumas. Some visitors are still deeply impacted by the stereotypical image of the country, which it is struggling to dispel despite promotional efforts.

### III. Narco-tourism and sex tourism

- 13 Colombia's reputation is changing at two speeds. Conflict fears have diminished rapidly since the agreement signed with Farc-Ep, but the global fiction of a country where drug trafficking reigns is still alive and well. It is embedded in a tourism parallel to that which is promoted and supported by the public authorities. The perpetuation of this contradictory fiction is particularly significant in Medellin, which acquired the unglamorous status of drug capital during the 80s and 90s. The "narco-tours" or "Pablo tours" represent one of the most popular offers for foreign tourists in Colombia's second city. (Naef 2018a) The phenomenon is not new. Until the beginning of 2010, on the hiking trail that leads to the Teyuna Ciudad Perdida archaeological site in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, local peasants were offering tourists paid visits to a cocaine laboratory on request. Once on the archaeological site, these same visitors would take a number of photos with the military in charge of their security and then share many images and stories, countering the official promotional efforts that extolled the site for its natural and cultural heritage (Guilland 2012). Faced with this "touristic degradation" and the bad publicity it encouraged, the government destroyed the laboratory and made sure that visits no longer took place. It also formally prohibited the military from taking pictures with tourists.
- 14 The Colombian challenge to narco-tourism is also a fight against consumption. Many visitors enjoy being "in the country of drugs" to consume these in an uninhibited way. Some places like Taganga, a small village on the Caribbean coast mentioned by Luis Sanchez (in this issue), have become famous places for their wild parties where drugs are easy to obtain. Mentioning of Taganga also leads us to address the problem of sex tourism in the country. In this village, the arrival of more and more visitors has profoundly redefined the social organisation and sources of income of the inhabitants. A significant influx of money linked to a booming tourism economy has created significant imbalances between those who can legally participate in the development of this activity (hotels, restaurants, diving, fishing, etc.) and others. Prostitution, like drug trafficking, finds a place of choice among those who have remained on the margins of the legal tourism development. In 2017, a foreigner (Assi Moosh), who had come to build a hotel in Taganga eight years earlier, was arrested and sent back to his country. The man who was nicknamed "the untouchable" had for several years acted with the complicity on the part of the local authorities and headed a prostitution ring reserved for foreigners (el Heraldo 2017), which extended to the cities of Medellin, Bogota and



Cartagena. Moreover, the city of Cartagena, considered as the jewel of the country for tourism, famous for its colonial architecture, its beaches and its festivals, is also known for its scandals related to prostitution, in particular as part of events organised specifically for foreigners (CNN, 2018). In Santa Marta, the prostitution ring is also alarming, with the first victims being young women from neighbouring Venezuela (Caracol 2019). With the new tourist boom in Colombia, sex tourism is becoming an increasingly difficult issue. The Taganga case is quite indicative of the challenge the country faces in preventing the sexual exploitation of young women and young men. In addition to the need to identify pimping networks, it is also necessary to fight against the impunity and corruption that makes them possible.

#### IV. Guaranteeing peace through community tourism and eco-tourism: an ambition of the state

- 15 In a country where the control of territories and their resources is a challenge for the State, tourism strengthens the illusion of peace thanks to the principles of conservation and development<sup>11</sup>. Although tourism projects have emerged in a neoliberal logic of free market, competitiveness and privatisation, policies have been implemented presenting this activity as a "sustainable" tool, capable of improving the quality of life of the national community and local communities, while guaranteeing the political and social stability of the regions in which it prospers. Anxious to take up and respond to the demands of transnational bodies promoting an ethical version of an activity long criticised for its negative impact on the receiving regions, the Colombian government and tourism promoters have always been able to use positive rhetoric through which the supposed potential to create better living conditions for all is systematically argued. Already in 1996, Law 300 emphasised the importance of tourism as:

An essential industry for the development of the country and especially the different territorial entities, regions and provinces, since it fulfils a social function. The State will pay special attention to it because of its importance for national development.<sup>12</sup>

- 16 Tourism programmes promoted by the State were then included in the 2007-2010 national development plan with the motto "Community state: development for all". Far from being approached as a tool in the service of a neoliberal economy, the association of tourism with this programme reminded us of its social character. The political objectives thus stated were taken up by the Santos government, and more than ever kept up by the promise of prosperity for all. "The successful development of tourism is one of the best indicators of our democratic prosperity" assured the President of the Republic during a tourist trade show (ANATO 2012), thus demonstrating his enthusiasm and optimism for the possibilities offered by tourism of the future. Today, guaranteeing peace has become the major challenge for tourism. Since the negotiations with Farc-Ep opened in 2013, tourism development programmes have been flourishing, and the State has implemented numerous social, community, sustainable and ecological projects. The ethical objectives were ambitious and must be combined, not without contradictions at times, with the competitive development of the regions.
- 17 In 2014, the Ministry of the Environment was already betting on community eco-tourism as a tool for local development and conservation of natural parks<sup>13</sup>. In 2017 the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism decided to strengthen the

competitiveness and tourism entrepreneurship of the varied populations of the country. To this end, it provided for a budget to encourage community tourism<sup>14</sup>. The projects "Tourism, peace and living together" (*Turismo, paz y convivencia*) and "You will certainly love it" (*Seguro te va a encantar*), were the most significant initiatives concerning the association of tourism with building peace. With these two programmes, it was a question of directing and supporting the tourist activity in the regions affected by the conflict, so that the Colombians would reclaim their country in order to open it then to the outside. As mentioned in the introduction of this text, four regions were designated pilot regions within the framework of the "tourism, peace and coexistence" programme: The Serranía de la Macarena in Meta, the Teyuna - Ciudad Perdida trail in the Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, the valley of Sibundoy and Mocoa in Putumayo, and the Urabá Darién between Antioquia and Chocó. If the state programmes were ambitious and their objectives were difficult to criticise, the projects put forward were often too vague to be unambiguously applied. As Sanchez (in this issue) shows, where he analyses the difficulties in reconciling peace objectives and environmental ambitions, government recommendations frequently encountered tangible obstacles in their local implementation. This is also illustrated by Andrade (in this issue), when she reveals the contradictions between the scales of governance in La Mesa (Cundinamarca) and Villavieja (Huila). The author demonstrates the gap between the tourism promises promoted by nationally developed programmes and the reality of their application in the territories.

- 18 If such tourism projects, when not initiated by the public authorities, face significant limitations when applied in the field, initiatives within communities can also be a source of tension due to their rapid development. In the urban context of Medellín, a number of "community" tourism projects have recently appeared in popular neighbourhoods, such as Moravia and San Javier. This last case, located in commune 13 - strongly associated with the armed conflict which traumatised the second city of Colombia - has seen the development of "comuna tours" (Naef, 2016) in less than ten years, aimed at presenting foreign visitors an overview of the history and daily life of working-class neighbourhoods. Whereas in 2014, a still small group of tourism entrepreneurs, mostly residents of the neighbourhood, were offering these tours at most to a dozen tourists daily, the success of the offer has led to a major increase in numbers, estimate at 15,000 tourists a month by 2019. "Comuna 13" topped the list of city attractions in the 2018 edition of *Lonely Planet* (Egerton et al. 2018) and many guides dressed in "comuna 13" t-shirts, are now hanging about outside of the San Janvier metro to offer their services to visitors. The increase of tourism stakeholders, and especially the massive arrival of external guides (from other neighbourhoods, as well as other countries such as Venezuela, Argentina, or even France), seen as disconnected from the traumatic history of this territory, have provoked criticism from guides who consider themselves legitimate because of their links to the neighbourhood, but equally from some residents who nowadays see hundreds of tourists parading in front of their windows. In this context, the community dimension of this tourism practice initiated by the residents of the neighbourhood has been called into question by its success and its reappropriation by external actors, resulting in effects that are considered negative by part of the local population: loss of profits in favour of external agents, recovery and marketing of the memory of the neighbourhood, bias in the representations of the history of the location, and inconvenience in the daily life of the inhabitants.

## V. Tourism and demobilisation

- 19 Programmes for the reintegration into civilian life of demobilised Farc-Ep combatants (Van Broeck et al., in this issue) point to what happened as a result of the Justice and Peace process of 2005. The case of Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta is a typical example. (Guilland 2017, pp.313-323). In the second half of the 2000s, with the Justice and Peace Law, a large number of paramilitaries from northern Sierra Nevada laid down their arms, among them their leader, Hernan Giraldo. At the same time, the peasants in the region, under pressure from anti-narcotic policies, decided to abandon illicit coca cultivation. In order to cushion these changes, many people living on the slopes of the trail that leads to the Teyuna Ciudad Perdida archaeological site saw tourism as an economic alternative. Many have made the choice to become guides, porters, motorcycle taxi drivers and cooks, or to open small boarding houses along the way. Until 2006, only one agency, controlled by Hernan Giraldo, could take tourists to the site. Since the demobilisation of its self-defence group (Resistencia tayrona), other agencies have emerged and are now recruiting their staff from the newly demobilised paramilitaries.
- 20 Tourism to the site is gaining importance and with its integration into the "Tourism, peace and living together" programme, the Teyuna Trail has become a testing ground. Coordination dynamics initiated even before the launch of this programme were encouraged by the new goals of peacebuilding. Local indigenous and peasant communities, municipal authorities, universities, the State through the presence of the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, and the National Park National Unit, in particular, private companies, national foundations and transnational, governmental entities of control and protection/conservation, non-governmental organisations, all these actors are working together to coordinate tourist activities (Vega 2017) which meet the objectives (seen above) of the "Tourism, peace and living together" programme<sup>15</sup>. In terms of reintegration into a social and economic activity, the results are palpable: more than half of the actors today working in the tourist activity are demobilised people.
- 21 At the time of presenting tourism as a tool for peace, the case of "Teyuna Trail" was cited as an example. Yet despite this progress and a strong tourism programme, violence remains in the region. Criminal gangs are still very present in this territory that they control. Heirs of the former group of Hernan Giraldo, they exert strong pressure in the region and demonstrate the limits of the demobilisation process. In 2018, the assassination of an official of the Sierra Nevada Natural Park (El Espectador 2019) illustrated the obstacles to the implementation of a pacified ecological policy. In May 2019, a peasant leader was murdered in a "place in the middle of the trail taken by tourists to go to Ciudad Perdida. According to its inhabitants, it was an area where old practices of extortion and control of the territory reappeared, where the previously extradited paramilitary chief Hernan Giraldo used to control the excursion trade" (Semana 2019)<sup>16</sup>. This example perfectly illustrates how peace in Colombia cannot be reduced to the question of Farc-E, and how tourism could remain in the hands of irregular armed groups if they are not fully or properly demobilised.

## VI. Tourism and access to resources

- 22 Whereas the fight against the Farc-Ep legitimised all State interventions in the past, today the construction of peace becomes the new *leitmotif* of the actions of the State. The tourism proposed as a tool of pacification must answer to a certain deontology. It must guarantee the social, community and economic development of a region while preserving and conserving the natural and heritage resources of the areas in which it develops. Under this "moral economy" (Fassin 2009) of tourism, any appropriation of the resources of a territory can be legitimised. As already stated, State development programmes are numerous. In order for these to be implemented, they rely on local resources that are intended for the sole use of tourism projects. This confiscation of the use of resources is not always consensual, and can produce various forms of violence against the local population.
- 23 Ojeda, in an enlightening article, analyses the case of the Tayrona Natural Park (Ojeda, 2016). She dissects the placing on the market of the conservation of the natural resources of the park and its use in tourism. She explains how the concession of the park to a private company has had deleterious effects on the local population. The term "*despojo*", which is difficult to translate, is at the heart of her analyses. It refers as much to the confiscation of land by former paramilitaries as to a much more insidious and daily form of confiscation of the means of subsistence, resources, and even identities engendered by state and parastatal violence through its development policies and by the capitalistic grabbing of natural resources by the State and the Concession. Ojeda argues that
- The recent implementation of neoliberal conservation policies centred on the development of (eco-)tourism gives rise to dispossessed landscapes [*despojo*] not because of the [land] grabbing associated with paramilitary violence but because of the daily denial of resources<sup>17</sup> [to the park residents]. [...] The growing pressure on the spaces and resources on which tourism in Tayrona is based, is reflected in the criminalisation, relocation and expulsion of peasants and fishermen under the "green pretexts" of conservation, which puts burden on their shoulders<sup>18</sup> (Ojeda 2016, p.25-30).
- 24 Access to resources is not just about the land which is often considered natural heritage. To develop tourism also mobilises the Colombian cultural heritage whose exploitation is always an issue. Regularly inserted into a heritage regime that affects the various levels of governance, the management of cultural resources must respond to the injunctions of international organisations to those of the State without excluding local communities. This heritage challenge is not easy, and the development of tourism catalyses conflicts at the local level. The case of the archaeological heritage is significant. Since the mid-2000s, indigenous peoples who coexisted or lived alongside the country's most important archaeological parks, Teyuna Ciudad Perdida, Tierradentro and San Agustín, have claimed the remains as their ancestral heritage. Since their patrimonialisation, these parks have been managed and administered exclusively by the State, and two of them are classified as World Heritage by Unesco. For the past ten years, "heritage affairs" (Guilland 2017) have pitted leaders of indigenous communities against heritage and tourism stakeholders. These divergences appear as the mirror of a dichotomy between the legal acceptance of patrimonial objects and the new logics of symbolic and political appropriation related to ethnic claims. These moments of tension allow communities to fight for their rights to the

territory and to the recognition of cultural diversity by highlighting their knowledge, their history and their identity. The outcome of these conflicts is palpable when indigenous people acquire a position of partners in a transformed heritage system. There is then a shift from an essentially material approach to heritage towards an approach that encourages its relational value (Gravari Barbas 2014). The question of the meaning given to objects and of the relationship that communities have with them, must become as important in terms of valuation as the strict reference to their materiality. Through a patrimonial alteration effect (Guilland 2017), this process strengthens the ethnic boundaries, and the remains become the supports for new ethnic, ritual and sacred practices.

- 25 This example perfectly illustrates how the development of tourism is at the origin of new identity dynamics. To be recognised and integrated in the heritage and tourism schemes, the communities must respond to the image of "authentic" and "ancestral" Indian. In this way, they legitimise their involvement in the heritage management and enter the tourism market of distinction by creating and becoming their own cultural resources. Velasquez's text (in this issue) is a significant part of this process, and is an excellent example of how Indigenous communities are energising their culture to make it attractive to visitors. It also shows the vital role of researchers engaged with communities to (re)find their "ancestral" identity for tourism purposes. The identity injunction induced by the expectations of tourism concerns not only the indigenous populations. Afro-descendants must also respond to a stereotypical image evoking a "more sensual and festive representation, through the staging of traits associated with Afro-Caribbean culture and bodies" (Cunin, Rinaudo 2008). Farming communities are invited to adopt a "green identity" to match the canon of eco-tourism as Ojeda explains in this work (Ojeda 2012 and Guilland and Ojeda 2013).
- 26 Tourism and heritage contribute to stimulating community identities to better preserve, safeguard, as well as recover, create, and invent their cultural expressions which would not exist or might disappear without these identity injunctions. However, by assigning specific identities, this process can be perceived as a "conduct of conducts" governed by neoliberal rationality<sup>19</sup> which must make communities autonomous in this tourism and heritage market. Led to become cultural commodities, their identities run the risk of self-reification.

## VII. Conclusion

- 27 In this collection of texts, Colombian and international researchers - from disciplines as diverse as geography, anthropology, law and political science - pool their expertise and experience to answer collectively the question of whether tourism can effectively be a tool for peacebuilding in Colombia. As is often the case, the development of tourism in a post-war context is ambivalent, representing, for example, an important source of income and opportunities for integration, while being marked by strong power relations, leading yet again to multiple tensions and sometimes to severe conflicts. The challenges on the ground are still considerable for tourism to be a driving force for equitable and sustainable development. Thus, beyond the positive and sometimes simplistic rhetoric, international organisations and governments of Colombia, who see tourism as a panacea to consolidate peace, the challenge is also significant for the

academic world, which ought to take a critical look at the increasingly rapid development of this sector.

- 28 The contributions of this issue concern various regions of Colombia, addressing the development of tourism through the issues presented above. In his article, Sanchez questions the difficult coordination between environmental and tourism objectives, this challenge, which is far from being new, needs to be updated in the post-peace agreement context. The author returns initially to the role of the Colombian armed conflict which, historically, is at the origin of many environmental conflicts. The analysis then focuses on several clauses contained in the agreements that may have an impact on the implementation of eco-tourism projects. Summarising these elements, Sanchez concludes on the need to adopt environmental justice that takes into account the rights of local communities so that the implementation of tourism projects is positively integrated into the social and environmental context of their development. Velásquez Puerta's text sheds light on the cultural dynamics brought about by tourism. The author presents a research-action-participation project in which she participates. At the request of the *Resguardo Purace community* (indigenous territory), a multidisciplinary team of professionals and academics accompanied a work process relating to traditional knowledge of the community and its development in tourism. This article is particularly interesting in order to understand the interactions between indigenous peoples and external agents. Working together to revitalise ethnic cultures, they are also promoting traditional knowledge within and outside of communities through tourism. This opening, in this dossier, on a research-action-participation makes it possible to think the role and the responsibility of the researchers in developing tourism based on the Indian cultures. The article by Andrade Benítez highlights the gap that may exist between the national recommendations issued by the Ministry of Tourism and their application at the local level. Based on a comparative study of two Colombian communes, La Mesa (Cundinamarca) and Villavieja (Huila), the author analyses territorial public action by comparing the objectives of the decentralisation and tourism planning policies, and their tangible achievements. This study gives an account of local difficulties, obstacles and resistance at a time when the Colombian government was planning to promote tourism in its country from its ministries. Included in the creation of territoriality, this activity implied that its development was considered from the local level.
- 29 Van Broeck, Guasca and Vanneste, through an analysis of documents related to the reintegration territories (ETCR) of former Farc-ep fighters, present the potential of tourism practice in the demobilisation of the actors of the conflict. Making the case that a significant number of former members of Farc-ep are now turning to tourism in order to reintegrate into civilian life, the authors mention the current limitations attached to this environment, such as lack of funding or absence of technical training, which jeopardise the sustainability of these initiatives. Based on these examples, Van Broeck et al. finally question the notion of "post-conflict" in Colombia, where demobilised actors still face significant risks of violence. In the Amazon region, Velez offers the concept of "social imaginary" in a historical perspective, from Spanish colonisation to tourism development, illustrating how the perspectives produced by scientists, adventurers, novelists and lately tourist guides can influence the practices of tourists, as well as those of the host population. According to Velez, Amazonian communities, part of a performative and exotic dynamic, tend to re-appropriate stories

from the tourism sector to adapt to the perspectives - and thus to a certain demand - of tourists. The tourist perspective is also at the centre of Pinero's contribution, which analyses representations of French people in Colombia based on various media such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and the TripAdvisor platform. The author demonstrates that Colombia's image has changed positively since 2014 in the French media.

- 30 Finally, Garavito et al, conclude this issue with the synthesis of a research project entitled "2030: a vision for tourism in Colombia"; a reflection on the need to develop tourism while reducing inequalities and improving the quality of life of the local population. They show that, while tourism growth in Colombia has been steady since 2005, this success is more related to the economic situation than to the effects of current policies. The results of this research project, such as the contributions of this issue on tourism and peace-building in Colombia, recall that in a fragile context of "post-agreements", the development of this sector is a source of many benefits, but also of significant tensions.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ascamcat, CINEP/PPP, Comisión Colombiana de Juristas (CCJ), Confederación Acción Comuna, Coordinación Colombia Estados Unidos, Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales (IEPRI), Movimiento Ríos vivos, Somos defensores, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2018, *¿Cuáles son los patrones? Asesinatos de Líderes Sociales en el Post Acuerdo*, [http://iepri.unal.edu.co/fileadmin/user\\_upload/iepri\\_content/boletin/patrones6.pdf](http://iepri.unal.edu.co/fileadmin/user_upload/iepri_content/boletin/patrones6.pdf). Consulted 02/09/2019

Caracol, 2019, *Alerta en Santa Marta por red de turismo sexual con mujeres venezolanas*, [https://caracol.com.co/emisora/2019/05/09/santa\\_marta/1557419984\\_224054.html](https://caracol.com.co/emisora/2019/05/09/santa_marta/1557419984_224054.html). Consulted 02/09/2019

CNN, 2018, *¿Sexo, drogas y vallenato? Cartagena, en alerta por fiesta privada que promovería "turismo sexual"*, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2018/10/11/sexo-drogas-y-vallenato-cartagena-en-alerta-por-fiesta-privada-que-promoveria-turismo-sexual/>. Consulted 02/09/2019

CNN, 2018, *Proxenas engañaron a venezolanas y colombianas para explotarlas sexualmente en Cartagena, dice Fiscalía*, <https://cnnespanol.cnn.com/2018/08/22/proxenas-enganaron-a-venezolanas-para-explotarlas-sexualmente-las-tenian-en-sotanos-dice-fiscalia-de-colombia/>. Consulted 02/09/2019

Colombia Reports, 2018, "Tourism", 23 July. <https://data.colombiareports.com/colombia-tourism-statistics/>

Cunin E., Rinaudo Ch., 2008, "Visites guidées et marketing de la différence à Cartagena de Indias (Colombie)", *espaces et sociétés*, pp. 137-156

Egerton, A. et al., 2018, *Colombia*. Melbourne: Lonely Planet.



- El Espectador, 2019, Asesinan a funcionario del Parque Nacional Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, <https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/medio-ambiente/asesinan-funcionario-del-parque-nacional-sierra-nevada-de-santa-marta-articulo-834081>. Consulted 02/09/2019
- El Heraldo, 2019, Assi Moosh: la caída del "intocable" by Taganga. <https://www.elheraldo.co/colombia/assi-moosh-la-caida-del-intocable-de-taganga-427940>. Consulted 02/09/2019
- Fassin D., 2009, "Les économies morales revisitées", *Annales, Histoire, sciences sociales*, no.6, pp. 1237-1266
- FONTUR Colombia., 2019, "Estrategia - Poporo: Turismo, Paz y Convivencia en Teyuna", <https://fontur.com.co/showfile/0/10376> (consulted 20/07/2019)
- France 24, 2019, La "preocupación" de la ONU en Colombia es el asesinato de líderes sociales y exguerrilleros, <https://www.france24.com/es/20190714-colombia-onu-asesinato-lideres-exguerrilleros>. Consulted 02/09/2019
- González Niño C A; Álvarez Palma D., 2018, "Colombia en mutación: del concepto de posconflicto al pragmatismo del conflicto", *JANUS.NET e-journal of International Relations*, Vol. 9, No. 2, <https://doi.org/10.26619/1647-7251.9.2.6>, Consulted 20 July 2019
- Gravari Babas M., 2014, PA.TER.MONDI., Workshop of prospective reflection. New challenges for cultural heritage Final report, ANR Project: PA.TER.MONDI: EA EIREST, University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sobonne, 146 p.
- Guilland ML., Patrimonialisation of pre-Hispanic relics and recognition of indigenous peoples. Study of three Colombian cases, University Paris Sorbonne Nouvelle - CREDA-IHEAL, Defended on 15/12/2017.
- Guilland ML; Ojeda D., 2013, "Indígenas 'auténticos' y campesinos 'verdes'. Los imperativos indetitarios del turismo en Colombia", *Cahiers des Amériqueslatines*, no. 71, p.119-144
- Guilland ML; Mazars N., 2012, "Colombia, tierra depelea: conflict (s) at the heart of society", *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, no. 71, pp. 17-32.
- Guilland ML., 2012, "Colombia, the only risk is wanting to stay" - From National Tourism Promotions in Sierra Nevada: uses and refutations of risk." , *Via@ Tourism Review* 1
- Martin G., 1996, "Strategic violence and disorganized violence in the Urabá region of Colombia", *Cultures & Conflits*, 24-25, 195-238.
- Naef, P., 2016, "Touring the 'comuna': memory and transformation in Medellin, Colombia", *Journal of tourism and cultural change*, 16 (2): 173-190. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/14766825.2016.1246555?journalCode=rtcc20>
- Naef P., 2018, "The commodification of narco-violence through popular culture and tourism in Medellin, Colombia" in: C. Lundberg & V. Ziakas (Eds.). *The Routledge Handbook of Popular Culture and Tourism*. (pp. 80-92) London: Routledge.
- Naef P., 2018a, "'Narco-heritage' and the Touristification of the Drug Lord Pablo Escobar in Medellin, Colombia" *Journal of Anthropological Research* 74 (4). Available at: <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/699941>
- Ojeda D., 2016, "Los paisajes del despojo: propuestas para an análisis desde reconfiguraciones socioespaciales", *Revista colombiana de antropología*, vol 52, no. 2, pp.19-43
- Ojeda D., 2012, "Green pretexts: Ecotourism, neoliberal conservation and land grabbing in Tayrona National Natural Park, Colombia", *Journal of Peasant Studies*, no. 39, pp. 357-375.



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2014, "Turismo para la paz en Urabá-Darién"

<https://www.unodc.org/colombia/es/press/2014/septiembre/turismo-para-la-paz-en-urabadarien.html>

ONU, HCDH, 2019, Informe del Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas para los Derechos Humanos sobre la situación de Derechos Humanos en Colombia durante el año 2018, <https://www.hchr.org.co/index.php/informes-y-documentos/informes-anales>. Consulted 02/09/2019

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018, "Tourism Trends and Policies"

<http://www.oecd.org/cfe/tourism/oecd-tourism-trends-and-policies-20767773.htm>

World Tourism Organization, 2009, "Colombia. Back on the Map of World Tourism" <http://www2.unwto.org/agora/colombia-back-map-world-tourism>

Pécaut D., 2001, Orden y Violencia: evolución socio-política de Colombia entre 1930 y 1953, Bogotá, Norma, 648 p.

ProColombia, 2013, "The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and ProColombia presented the new Colombian international tourism campaign abroad", 12 April <http://www.procolombia.co/en/news/colombia-magical-realism>

Semana, 2019 "Quién podrá defenderlos? ", <https://especiales.semana.com/lideres-sociales-asesinados/index.html>. Consulted 02/09/2019

Semana, 2019a, Santa Marta, en alerta tras asesinato de otro líder social, <https://www.semana.com/Item/ArticleAsync/617632?nextId=616098&nextId=617129>. Consulted 02/09/2019

Serje M., 2012, "El mito de la ausencia del Estado: la incorporación económica de las 'zonas de frontera' en Colombia", *Cahiers des Amériques latines*, no.71, pp. 95-117.

Vega F., 2017, "Turismo y posconflicto. A reflexión from the Camino escenario to Teyuna (Ciudad perdida)". *Turismo y Sociedad*, vol 21, pp. 165-192.

## NOTES

1. Law 1448 of 2011, the law of the victims and restitution of the lands and the creation of state bodies such as the land restitution unit (<https://www.restituciondetierras.gov.co>) and the victims unit (<https://www.unidadvictimas.gov.co>).

2. "bombardeo mediático que tiene como centro la palabra 'posconflicto'. El hecho de que se use esta palabra en singular y de forma absoluta, da la sensación de que con el proceso de paz con las Farc-Ep, todos los conflictos en Colombia desaparecerán" (p. 87).

3. "Colombia ha estado definida por un fenómeno y un actor altamente volátil que absorbió buena parte de la agenda política, económica, de seguridad, social e incluso psicológica del Estado, en otras palabras, Colombia estuvo 'farcarizada' y, a partir de esa realidad se leyeron no solo la historia colombiana, sino las dinámicas del conflicto y las respuestas institucionales" (p. 94).

4. Resumption of the slogan for the campaign in favour of Yes during the referendum of 2 October 2016 on the validation or not of the peace agreement established between the State and the Farc-Ep. "Apoya el acuerdo final para terminación del conflicto y construcción de una paz estable y duradera?" "Support the final agreement to end the conflict and build a stable and lasting peace".

5. Term used by President Juan Manuel Santos at the time the agreement was signed: "Better imperfect peace than a perfect war", he said referring to a negotiated justice.
6. Some guerrillas have, since the signing of agreements, refused to demobilise, others took up arms at the end of August 2019 judging inadequate the efforts of the government of Ivan Duque (2018-2022) to implement the measures decided in the agreements. In addition, the fighters of the National Liberation Army (ELN) are still constituted as guerrillas.
7. The National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional) is the second largest group in Colombian guerrilla warfare.
8. The Bacrim are irregular armed groups, often heirs to former paramilitary organisations that were not fully demobilised in 2006.
9. These killings are mentioned in reports from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR 2018 2019), in the Colombian press (Semana, 2019), local publications (Ascamat, Cinep and Al. 2018) and the international press (France 24 2019)
10. This contingent also includes a large number of Venezuelan nationals who left their country following the economic and political crisis.
11. Materials of this sub-section have been taken from a thesis work (Guilland 2017).
12. Article 1 of Law 300 of 1996
13. See the website of the ministry concerned: <http://www.minambiente.gov.co/index.php/sala-de-prensa/2-noticias/566-el-uso-sostenible-de-los-bosques-prioridad-de-minambiente-11>
14. For more information on the programme see: <http://www.mincit.gov.co/getattachment/minturismo/calidad-y-desarrollo-sostenible/programas-de-turismo-comunitario/informe-programa-turismo-comunitario-2018/informe-programa-turismo-comunitario-2018.pdf.aspx>
15. For more details on how to set up the program see: FONTUR Colombia, Estrategia – Poporo: Turismo, Paz y Convivencia en Teyuna: <https://fontur.com.co/showfile/0/10376> (consulted on 20/07/2019)
16. "lugar queda en el centro de los caminos que los turistas recorren para llegar a Ciudad Perdida, una zona en la que, según denuncian sus pobladores, están regresando las viejas prácticas de extorsión y de control territorial de la época del extraditado ex jefe paramilitar Hernán Giraldo, que llegó a controlar el negocio de las excursiones Revue Semana "Santa Marta, en alerta tras asesinato de otro líder social" of 30/05/2019.
17. la implementación reciente de políticas de conservación neoliberal centradas en el desarrollo (eco)turístico resulta en paisajes del despojo, no desde las formas de acaparamiento directamente asociadas a la violencia paramilitar, sino desde las negociaciones cotidianas por los recursos.
18. La creciente presión sobre los espacios y los recursos que sostienen el turismo en el Tayrona se ha traducido en la criminalización, reubicación y expulsión de campesinos y pescadores por los "pretextos verdes" de la conservación, que recaen con todo su peso en ellos.
19. DARDOT Pierre and LAVAL Christian, *"The new reason of the world..."*, *op.cit.*,

## AUTHORS

**MARIE-LAURE GUILLAND**

Anthropologist, PhD

**PATRICK NAEF**

*PhD, Senior Research Associate*

University of Geneva - Geography and Environment