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## PLACES OF MEMORY:

### ARCHITECTURE, TERRITORY, AND ENVIRONMENT.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THE CENTER FOR MEMORY AND COMPREHENSIVE ACTION FOR THE CARE OF THE FOREST OF GALILEA AND THE TERRITORY COMMUNITY SCHOOL (CMAI)- COLOMBIA

## LUGARES DE LA MEMORIA:

### ARQUITECTURA, TERRITORIO Y AMBIENTE.

LA EXPERIENCIA DE LA ESCUELA COMUNITARIA - CENTRO DE MEMORIA Y ACCIÓN INTEGRAL PARA EL CUIDADO DEL BOSQUE DE GALILEA Y EL TERRITORIO (CMAI)- COLOMBIA

## LUGARES DE MEMÓRIA:

### ARQUITETURA, TERRITÓRIO E AMBIENTE.

A EXPERIÊNCIA DA ESCOLA COMUNITÁRIA - CENTRO DE MEMÓRIA E AÇÃO INTEGRAL PARA O CUIDADO DO BOSQUE DE GALILEA E DO TERRITÓRIO (CMAI) - COLÔMBIA



**Figure 0.** Community cooking. Leidy Arévalo, 2020. Source: Galilea Forest Community School and Center for Memory and Integrated Action (CMAI).

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## RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza las complejas relaciones de los lugares de memoria desde un enfoque interdisciplinario, con el objetivo de hacer frente a las amenazas extractivistas del sector minero energético y los intereses de los negocios verdes en el Bosque del Galilea. Para ello, se utilizó la metodología cualitativa de Investigación Acción Participativa, en colaboración con los actores sociales del lugar; con el fin de fortalecer los procesos de autogestión territorial en alianza con la Universidad. Asimismo, se profundizó en la comprensión simbólica de la arquitectura como nodo de memoria y cohesión colectiva. Como resultado, se creó la Escuela Comunitaria "Centro de memoria y acción integral para el cuidado del Bosque de Galilea y el Territorio (CMAI)", que contribuye a las tradiciones sociales y culturales del bosque húmedo premontano de Galilea, en los Andes de Colombia, mediante procesos académicos y científicos en encuentros de saberes. Los resultados del proyecto se reflejan en tres escalas: arquitectónica, territorial y global.

**Palabras clave:** arquitectura, lugar, memoria, territorio, ambiente

## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the complex relationships of places of memory from an interdisciplinary approach, to address the extractivist threats of the energy and mining sector and the interests of green business in the Galilea Forest. For this, the qualitative Participatory Action Research methodology was used, in collaboration with the social actors of the place, to strengthen the processes of territorial self-management in alliance with the University. Likewise, the symbolic understanding of architecture was examined further as a node of memory and collective cohesion. As a result, the "Center of Memory and Integral Action for the Care of the Galilea Forest and the Territory (CMAI)" Community School was created, which contributes to the social and cultural traditions of the Galilea premontane rainforest, in the Colombian Andes, through academic and scientific processes in knowledge encounters. The results of the project are reflected on three scales: architectural, territorial, and global.

**Keywords:** architecture, place, memory, territory, environment.

## RESUMO

Este artigo analisa as complexas relações dos lugares de memória a partir de uma abordagem interdisciplinar, com o objetivo de enfrentar as ameaças extrativistas do setor de mineração de energia e os interesses de empreendimentos verdes no Bosque de Galilea. Para isso, foi utilizada a metodologia qualitativa da Pesquisa-Ação Participativa, em colaboração com atores sociais locais, com o objetivo de fortalecer os processos de autogestão territorial em aliança com a Universidade. Da mesma forma, aprofundamos a compreensão simbólica da arquitetura como um núcleo de memória e coesão coletiva. Como resultado, foi criada a Escola Comunitária "Centro de memória e ação integral para o cuidado do Bosque de Galilea e do Território (CMAI)", que contribui para as tradições sociais e culturais da floresta tropical pré-montana de Galilea, nos Andes da Colômbia, por meio de processos acadêmicos e científicos em encontros de conhecimento. Os resultados do projeto são refletidos em três escalas: arquitetônica, territorial e global.

**Palavras-chave:** arquitetura, lugar, memória, território, território, ambiente.

“There are things forgotten that can be used for certain ends. In other words, uses of the forgotten suggest that forgetting (something) may not be a mere not-remembering (it), that it may be convenient for us to forget (something) or maybe it's convenient for others that we forget (something)...

Eduardo Rabossi.



## INTRODUCTION

**Figure 1.** Galilea Forest Center for Memory and Integrated Action and Community School. Lucas Rodríguez, 2021. Source: Panoramic still (CMAI GALILEA, 2021)

Changes in the narratives about Colombia's past, open possibilities and fields of dispute that give visibility to individuals and collectives in memorial experiences. Recently, the “true social mobilization for memory” has begun to be talked about (Peñaranda, 2018, p. 125). Even historical boundaries have been questioned by Social and Human Sciences, promoting an introspective look at the “historiographic consciousness” (Nora, 2008, p. 7). According to Pierre Nora (2008), memory advances in reflective historiography and has guided this transformative research experience<sup>1</sup> toward dialogs of knowledge between social disciplines, environmental and rural studies, information, communication, law, and architecture, with the peasant population (Rahman & Fals Borda, 1992).

The memory of the Galilea Forest links traumatic and painful events with its history, which provokes tension between its past and present. According to Ricoeur (2010), memory is oriented toward objects through remembering, which is why it seeks, remembers, reflects, and recognizes subjects and places. Thus, the past is understood as alive, in constant construction, and, in turn, full of forgetfulness. History is always the version of the victors, and the memory is the possibility of the “defeated” to process the pain and focus on the possibilities of change and resignification of their territories as a living memory. Similarly, the sense of “righteous memory” (Todorov, 2008) is harbored by care for the territory in a world of acceleration, hyperconsumption, and trivialization of relationships. Memory also contributes to the recovery of landmarks, remains, gestures, archives, museums, circuits, and landscapes (Nora, 2008).

<sup>1</sup> The “Design and Development of a Memory and Integrated Action Center for the Care of the Galilee Forest and the Territory (Villarrica- Tolima)” project, within the framework of the San Francisco Javier Call, makes academic activity available to social groups facing conditions of social and environmental vulnerability. The Rectory of the Pontifical Javeriana University supported the process.

In the forest of Galilea, memories are updated, they bleed and are made sacred. With that, "the past becomes a principle of action for the present" (Todorov, 2008, p. 51), because it is from memories of the past that the socio-environmental management of the inhabited territory grows. This is seen in the modes of territoriality that have been transformed according to the social, political, and ecological conditions that have directly affected them, following what can be seen in Figure 1.

In everyday life, memory actions contribute to environmental justice on different scales: architectural, territorial, and global. From this perspective and with an interdisciplinary approach, the objective of this article is to analyze the complex relationships of memory sites from an interdisciplinary approach to face the threats posed by extractive activities of the energy and mining sectors and the interests of green businesses that are becoming evident in the Galilea Forest.

Within the framework of caring for the common home, "a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach that must integrate justice into discussions about the environment, to listen to both the cries of the earth and the poor" (Pope Francis, 2015). That is why, between history and memory and in the midst of tensions and disputes, the *Galilea Forest Center for Memory and Integrated Action – CMAI and Community School*, emerges.

The research is qualitative, because it is based on the experience of the social subjects who inhabit the territory (Hernandez-Sampieri et al., 2014), with a non-experimental design and a descriptive approach. Given that the project focuses on the commitment of the Directors and Professors of the Pontifical Javeriana University to the social and ecological reality of the country, Participatory Action Research - PAR (Fals-Borda, 1988) was the method chosen to carry out the study. From this perspective, research and transformation are assumed as parallel processes where learning is achieved in dialog with others and through experience.

Likewise, the "meeting of knowledge" (De Carvalho & Flórez Flórez, 2014) operates as a source of analysis and understanding of reality to guide actions on a transformation path. This methodological, theoretical, and practical approach is understood as collective inter-learning for the recognition of popular knowledge, because it validates the experiences *in* and *with* the place, and involves the recognition of the historical and social path of the different expressions of life that inhabit the territory (Rahman & Fals Borda, 1992). In this way, on one hand, university researchers contribute with their scientific knowledge and the villagers, with their local peasant knowledge and practices, and on the other, the intercultural and interdisciplinary spaces<sup>2</sup> provoke horizontal dialogs on the different ways of thinking, feeling, and doing (Escobar, 2003).

## METHODOLOGY

**2** The Vereda Galilea Community Action Board (Villarrica – Tolima), the Galilea Forest and Territory Rangers Network, the Science Incubator of Information, Society, and Culture, the Departments of Information Sciences, Public Law, and Architecture of the Pontifical Javerian University, took part.

Based on this, the PAR-based research process is broken down into the following four phases:

**Phase I. Participant observation:** In 2017, the recognition of the socio-environmental vulnerability situation began, when the community warned about the implementation of an oil project in the heart of the Galilea Forest. The first visits were made by mule and on foot. Subsequently, a drone was used to see the site's geographical conditions. The recognition of the environmental characteristics, ways of life, and economic dynamics of its inhabitants helped understand the territory. In this phase to build relationships of trust and mutual support between community leaders and academics, the school was identified as a space of memory, as the architecture of the place, and as the epicenter of the attachment and care for the territory.

**Phase II. Participatory research:** In an assembly, the physical and symbolic recovery of the old school was prioritized. In this phase, archival work on the histories and memories of the territory was led by the "Information and Communication for Change" commission, and the Incubator on Information, Science, Society, and Culture, of the Department of Information Science of the Faculty of Communication and Language of the Pontifical Javeriana University. Document systematization showed the struggle tradition of several generations of local residents and recognized some voices of survivors who still remain in the territory. The intercultural dialogs and the meetings of the local population with researchers activated diverse perspectives of political, ecological, social, and economic assessment of reality.

**Phase III. Participatory actions:** Throughout the process, decision-making in assembly spaces was highlighted. The collective decision to rebuild the school with the support of the University, using the "Minga" (labor paid in food) as a dynamic of popular cooperation, favored trust and reciprocity. Responsible self-management characterized the minga. More than thirty were held in which approximately forty people participated.

Although 2020 was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, the community decided to continue with the process. Among the physical repair actions of the school, a wooden enclosure was built, the roof was renovated, a rainwater collection system was implemented, the classroom walls and floors were rebuilt, doors and windows were refurbished, and the bathrooms and the kitchen were built from scratch. In addition, murals alluding to the location's flora and fauna were painted to promote their memory among the local population.

At the end of the work days, communal living was strengthened by telling stories and sharing the experiences and struggles that activated memories. In December, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary was celebrated and the cooperative ties for the defense and

care of the Galilea Forest were consolidated. The local and academic transformative potential was recharged with the strength and vitality of nature, to overcome adversities and strengthen interconnectedness and complementarity.

**Phase IV. Evaluation:** The effectiveness of the changes derived from the process on the different scales is detailed in the results of this document. On the architectural scale, it resulted in the school's physical and symbolic reconstruction. On the territorial scale, the protection and governance of Galilea Forest was achieved. Finally, on a global scale, the forest's biological connectivity with the Amazon and other strategic ecosystems of the continent was concluded.

It is hoped that, as another result, but this time academic in nature, the process will inspire more researchers and educational institutions to engage in solidarity and exchange actions with communities for the care of the common property.

The university's social responsibility actions built bridges between academia and the communities to care for the Common Home. Better said, it eliminated the boundaries of disciplines to process socio-environmental conflicts with scientists including all the local knowledge, produced key exchanges and transformations in the university environment and social spaces where the project was located. At an intellectual and intercultural level, the ties of the inhabitants defending the territory were strengthened with environmental organizations and with university professors and researchers<sup>3</sup>, which constitutes an important step for the "decolonization of the University" (De Carvalho & Flórez Flórez, 2014, p. 41).

Indeed, the PAR approach as a methodological guide for the project led to assuming the complexity of the Galilea Forest's reality in an interpretative narrative that involved voices, events, manifestations, reflections, and interpretations about its conflictive past, and with it, the shared recognition of tensions, vulnerabilities, violence, and resistance in the architectural, territorial, and global as "*areas of memory*" (Nora, 2008, p. 19).

*On the architectural scale*, the materiality expressed essential qualities of the place with close ties between content and continent. Thus, the physical deterioration of the school is a consequence of its lack of use and upkeep caused by the violent displacement of people in the armed conflict. This is how María Isabel Ramírez tells it (CMAI GALILEA, 2021)

Historically, the Galilea School has been a social venue where many events have taken place, not only conflicts, but also cultural events where unity has been created, where the community has been built, and where communal and also regional thinking has taken place (07:12- 07:26).

## RESULTS

**3** Students from the Master's Degree in Historical Archival and Memory of the Information Science, Library and Archival Science Program, and members of the Research Incubator on Information Science, Society, and Culture from the Pontifical Javeriana University, also took part.

**Figure 2.** Murals – Galilea Forest Community School and Center for Memory and Integrated Action (CMAI), Leidy Arévalo, 2021. Source: Murals - CMAI



**Figure 3.** Work *mingas*. Galilea Forest Community School and Center for Memory and Integrated Action (CMAI). Leidy Arévalo, 2019. Source: Mingas-CMAI



At the CMAI Community School, the sensitivity and common sense of the forest's inhabitants are evident in the construction tradition that takes advantage of the place's materials and techniques. That is why the protagonists are wood and earth. Rammed earth is a solid construction that preserves indoor temperature and insulates from the cold outside. This architecture of local hands that knead, caress the earth, and confine spaces for shelter; is a collective memory of truth, of nature's generosity and human industriousness. The small windows that frame the landscape establish connections with the territory. The outdoor corridors link the indoors with the outdoors, value the context, and immerse themselves in the fog of the forest.

At present, Galilea School is the epicenter of an associative process, the home of memories, and a community and documentation center. Hence, the recovery of architecture, in its physical-spatial dimension, reveals the availability of materials and the strength of the place, since it emerges from the earth giving an account of the fragility and the struggle of the inhabitants. In symbolic terms, this space constitutes a venue for the encounter, activation, and consolidation of memory and history between social actors and shared objectives (Figure 2).

The archival work from conversations with the place's inhabitants and the official historiographical reviews investigate the realities and transformations of the territory of Galilea. At the CMAI community school, the library remembers and honors Aurelio Sánchez (RIP), a peasant, a comrade in the fight for the care and defense of the territory. This documentary base is configured as a compendium of opportunities and solidarity services, as an instrument for the defense of the territory to justify the presence of the forest defender villagers, and as a critical guide in memory processes.

At a territorial scale, it was possible to identify different population groups that have inhabited the Galilea forest. The first were the Yucupí and Cuindes Indians of the Sutagaos tribe. Subsequently, the memory of the inhabitants recalled that, during the thousand days war, liberal and conservative troops passed through the mountains (Ortiz, 2007) in the political confrontation known as *the Violence* (Valencia Gutiérrez, 2012). Ebristelio Godoy testifies to the displacement suffered in the crossfire,

We knew this with Laureano Gómez's war, when we had to leave Villarrica, when they were trying to put an end to the liberals. It was like that at that time. Laureano Gómez that to finish with the liberals. And then, so that they wouldn't kill us, we took refuge in the mountains. Since that time there has been such a guerrilla. These are the remnants of those wars. Because when they weren't guerrillas, they were called the rabble because they took up arms. And the enemies of the liberals were the police and a few people called *chulavitas* (0:49-1:44).

Among local settlers, it is remembered that at the time of the Violence, the National Front succeeded so that liberals and conservatives could alternate presidential terms. "This with the aim, at least in theory, of giving everyone a participation in Colombian society and correcting some of the abuses of power that defined the political development of both the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries"



(La Rosa & Mejía, 2013, p. 206). The State institutions decreed forgive and forget, amnesties, turning over the page and reintegrating those involved into political life (Valencia Gutiérrez, 2012).

To establish responsibilities, resources, and actions for participatory territorial management, environmental and collective rights, inclusion, and gender focus, the Comprehensive Community Action Plan – CAP was formulated. This involved the Communal Action Board, the Observatory of Mining-energy Expansion and Re-stocking, and the University (Figure 3). The CAP promotes local self-management for the preservation of the humid premontane native forest of the eastern cordillera of the Andes.

As it has already been stated, the locals are intimately linked to the forest, with its capacities and vulnerabilities. It is significant that the Galilea forest (Figure 4) is the habitat of more than 5 endemic species of amphibians, carnivorous plants unique in the world, and threatened species such as the spectacled bear, the woolly monkey, and the ochre-breasted antpitta (Podion Corporation, n.d.). As it could be seen, in the midst of these unique biological realities, the memories of peasant values and the traditional knowledge of the families who live taking care of the forest, remain.

The Declaration of the Galilea Forest as a protected area through Agreement 31 of 2019 is one of the most important community and inter-institutional results for its conservation and protection. At the same time, it is a legal remedy whose purpose is to limit the extraction projects intended for the territory. Currently, the generation of the children and grandchildren of the first settlers is the one that has been dedicated to protecting and defending the territory. However, with the progress of the project, the emergence of new actors and conflicts was confirmed.

*On a global scale*, the conflicting reality of the “commons” was identified, shared resources for which there are no better managers than the locals themselves. However, this requires means, incentives, mechanisms, and criteria of justice on the costs and benefits of the forest (Ostrom, 2011). Hence the need for support and protection for local actors and links with different social organizations that work to protect the planet (Figure 5). Protecting the Galilea Forest implies recognizing that the expressions of governance of the place’s inhabitants are a guarantee of equity, control, protection, and care of the ecosystem.

## DISCUSSION

Pierre Nora (2008) raises the need to recognize places of memory that are presented critically to face history. With this, memory feeds history in the most sensitive sense by showing versions of processes and events that have not considered nature in the nation’s historical accounts. The memorializing duty of Galilea’s inhabitants contributes to historiography from memory because it proves the careful and reciprocal survival of ecosystem realities in the territorial scope of the Forest, with the local population that inhabits it.



**Figure 4.** PNR Galilea Forest - Cloud Forest. Lucas Rodríguez, 2021. Source: Panoramic still (CMAI GALILEA, 2021).



**Figure 5.** Community cooking. Leidy Arévalo, 2020. Source: Galilea Forest Community School and Center for Memory and Integrated Action (CMAI).

In the understanding of the territory, the notion of "torn memory" (Nora, 2008, p. 19) integrates threats to the ecosystem with the human and non-human organisms that inhabit it. In other words, the recognition of painful pasts and the activation of counter-powers with governance actions increase the capacity of its inhabitants to take care of the forest and transform realities on different scales. Likewise, in dialog with other communities, shared objectives, experiences, and learnings emerge, social relations are strengthened and the capacity of political agency of those involved is expanded. On this, Bibiana Vizcaya (CMAI GALILEA, 2021) says:

More than sacrifices, creating a network together and more than a network, what has been achieved with it is more than the work that has been done, it is the ties that have been created between us. So, it is the brotherhood we have created or achieved, the love we have, the feeling, the roots we have for our land, for our paradise (05:10- 05:52).

Thus, the architecture for a meeting space is the result of individual and collective experiences that demonstrate awareness of care and sensitivity to the environment. The recovery of the Community School at 1490 meters above sea level was challenging in the past and still is today. In this case, ecosystems were included as subjects of preservation and care for the recognition of memory imprints. The architecture is a "device for the activation of memories" (Torres Carrillo, 2014, p. 125). Material objects, furniture, and tangible records as remnants of the past encourage encounters and conversations of identification with the place, with society, and with the territory.

The human presence in the forest vindicates the leading role of the locals since the logic of place in architecture is linked to the fact of representing places. The recovery of the school and the *Minga* talk about temporalities, a sense of place, and the dominant paradigm that has guided human relations with the environment. According to Muntañola:

The place, as a limit, is more than ever a rhythmic balance between reason and history; since the time deposited in space, that is, the place, always reflects in its very structure the balance there is between an increase in mobility back and forth in time (reason), and a progressive distancing from the original place (Muntañola, 2001, p. 32).

The ecosystem diversity to be conserved is part of a large eco-regional system interconnected with the global reality. In this, local collectives, academia, and governmental and non-governmental organizations agree that the Galilea Forest is an "area of special significance of ecological balance" (Podion Corporation, n.d.). In this vein, forests, like moors, are "water stores". The Galilea Forest supplies five neighboring municipalities and contributes to the preservation and regulation of the water network of the inter-Andean valleys in the Andes.

The territory, in its paths, well-known routes, and natural landmarks, reveals different existences. The spaces unveiling the natural secrets are included as part of the traditions of the inhabitants and the deep roots of the peasants with the Forest. Likewise, the effects of violence are recalled, as Ebristelio Godoy stated (CMAI GALILEA, 2021):



We had to leave the farms in Villarrica and quickly take the mountain up to the foot of the Altamizal hill. Over there we hid, making leaf covers in the mountains to live there. They forced us out. They left us running, and we had to come to Galilea. We spent a little time here. I don't remember how long, but yeah, like a year, maybe. (1:55 - 2: 28).

**Figure 6.** Work mingas. Leidy Arévalo, 2020. Source: Galilea Forest Community School and Center for Memory and Integrated Action (CMAI).

The experience in the territory is exacerbated by new socio-environmental conflicts between different stakeholders (Figure 6). In this sense and as a response and search for solutions, the CMAI Community School is understood as a space of opportunities for the “duty of memory” (Ricoeur, 2010) and for the organization of rights. For now, the place invites putting memories on paper, writing processes that, in a magical landscape, call upon introspection and the expression of one’s traditions and unique reflections of the territory with its inhabitants.

Mining and energy exploitation, by all accounts, is a devastating activity for biodiversity and life in general. Even worse, green businesses, even if they are presented as an offset option through conservation, have become threats to the peasant population, in tension with private interests, causing new conflicts. Faced with this, the declaration of a National Natural Park was achieved, and, from the School, also the definition and implementation of the CAP. The protection of the biogeographic corridor that connects Andean and high

## CONCLUSIONS

Andean moors and forests with the Pacific, Andean and Amazonian eco-region is today the result of the "intercultural *Minga*", because its permanence contains the workforce of local people, social organizations, academics, and environmentalists who, with the aid of the forest, protect human permanence in the territory.

However, the socio-environmental conflicts of green businesses are moving ever forward, increasing the concern of the inhabitants about the future. In this case, the stories about the past have given legitimacy to the struggle, and have contributed to strengthening people's power, but this is not enough. Even if the defeated are silenced and looked at with suspicion, memory is a right and a duty.

Moreover, as a ritual and gestural expression, memory has a place; that is, space, time, and image. In the human soul, in the school, in the forest of Galilea, in the territory, the room and the care are involved. The process of research and transformation in Galilea, in addition to acknowledging the memories of the place's social actors, points to the vindication of a tragic and painful past. But the governance schemes are still not enough to deal with socio-environmental fragilities and removals.

In this perspective, memory and the "duty of memory" are an opportunity to organize the present and future that are opposed to the dominant powers. Making territorial memories visible regarding their vulnerabilities and conflicts produces solidarity synergies between subjects who share emerging knowledge and practices. In urban areas that have not experienced the Galilea forest, it is easy to find environmental activists willing to contribute to caring for water and biodiversity.

The sum of creative works on broad, diverse fronts, committed to structural changes, activates grassroots social organizations from a praxis that guides theory and makes it germinate. In fact, one of the great challenges of the process within the PAR (Fals-Borda, 1986) lies in making efforts from different fields coincide, in transformative and multiple struggles, for the care of life. In this sense, the project saw the beginning of decolonization as a contribution from the University to an ideal of cognitive justice in dialogical relations with nature and the place's social actors.

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