

Ituango Dam: an Apology for Necropolitics in the Privatisation of the Cauca River in Colombia

Fallacies of hydroelectric power as clean energy of extractivist capitalism in the Global South

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Introduction

In Colombia, 28 dams have been built with an approximate production of 10,974 MW of electricity. As of 2019, 8 main reservoirs dedicated to drinking water supply and four main reservoirs with irrigation functions had been built. 68% of the energy supply came from hydroelectric power plants with 11.834,57 megawatts (MW). Adding other types of energy generation, it reaches 17.319,59 MW (including thermal and wind energy, as well as auto generators and co-generators), representing an installed energy capacity of 346 W/inhabitant in Colombia.¹ Hence, hydroelectricity supplies about 16% of global electricity demand, surpassing solar and wind power. On the other hand, the World Commission on Dams operated 973 dams of different sizes in Iberian America alone up to the year 2000. Additionally, there were 1.600 in the process of planning or construction and 254 new constructions in the Amazon Basin. Around the world, hydropower is considered 'clean', which is the main argument of international organisations in promoting and financing actions in the countries of the global South. Although clean energy mitigates the climate crisis, the opposite is true, given the great difficulties and conflicts that I expose in this paper under the construction of the Ituango Hydroelectric Project (IHP) in the Cauca River canyon.²



Image by [David Eduardo Giraldo Bernal](#) from [Pixabay](#)

¹ ↪ Freddy Barón. [Inventario de las represas en Colombia](#). Escuela Colombiana de Ingeniería Julio Garavito. Bogotá. 2019.

² ↪ Red por la Justicia Ambiental en Colombia. [“¿Por qué las grandes represas no son fuente de energía limpia?”](#). Diciembre 10 de 2014.

Hydropower is riddled with fallacies, often claimed to be sustainable, cheap, inexhaustible and clean. Hydropower plants do not offer low operating and maintenance costs or the promised long lifetimes. The managers of extractivist capitalism have externalised the huge environmental liabilities of habitat destruction, biodiversity, land dispossession, loss of homes and household goods, crops, and the natural and independent economic options of population sectors excluded by the state. On the other hand, large corporations have monopolised economic control of the market for public electricity services for the population.

Within the framework of European banks and the Clean Development Mechanism of the Carbon Fund in the Central American isthmus and the other countries of the region, they promote the misguided production of clean energy under the rhetoric of green capitalism, which has turned into severe ecological and environmental problems and repeated violations of human rights of the ethnic-afro-peasant peoples when they invade their territories. Hence, since the last century, there has been a long record of denunciations and large community mobilisations accompanied by ecological organisations at the global level against hydroelectric dams or to stop new constructions.

In Colombia, the hydroelectric sector contributes 70% of the national energy mix, represents 2,2% of GDP, holds 5% of the world's water resources, and its water yield is six times the world average and three times that of Iberian America. It treats only 11% of discharges adequately. According to IDEAM, out of 1.122 municipalities, 521 consume untreated water, 70% put health at risk, and 21% do not meet the recommended sanitary standards. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics, the aqueduct service does not reach 3.6 million, and the sewage service barely covers 5.6 million people. In the country, groundwater occupies between 70% and 75% of the country's water resources. It represents a great strategic value for the Andean Region, which concentrates 65% of the population and represents 70% of the GDP. 12% to 13% is considered a water asset devoted to exploitation in this water context. For these reasons, in times of climate emergency, water must be reconverted into common goods of collective interest, significantly when the risk of water shortages is growing under the increasing threat of ecological and environmental disasters without accurate scientific projections.³

Water is a finite resource, incompatible with the unrelenting accumulation of profits for some in a short time. The violation of this principle has once again revealed that planned economic degrowth in reducing GHG emissions is not in line with the expansion of capital which follows its laws of economic growth in direct contradiction to the laws of nature. At COP26 Glasgow, corporations and Northern governments decided to *postpone the commitment to increase climate ambitions to meet the COP21 (Paris, 2015) goal of keeping temperature rise well below 2°C*.⁴ In practice,

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³ ➔ Gonzalo Duque Escobar." [El río Cauca en el desarrollo de la región](#)". 24 de septiembre de 2019. P. 14

⁴ ➔ Daniel Tanuro. "[La COP26: crea el mercado mundial del fuego y se lo ofrece a los pirómanos capitalistas a costa del pueblo](#)". 18 de noviembre de 2021.

corporate discourse remains irresponsible rhetoric. In 2021, the International Energy Agency announced an increase of 36,3 billion tonnes of CO₂ emissions due to fossil fuels

Research by the Bretton Woods Project has indicated that climate change and increasing water variability affect hydropower due to changes in water volume due to the evolution of precipitation. Glaciers that feed hydroelectric power plants may disappear, endangering nations' power generation capacity, given that *glacial retreat has already affected the output of hydroelectric power plants in areas of Bolivia and Peru*. The IPCC (2022) has reported since the 1980s the loss of 30% of the glacier surface in the Andes, rising to more than 50% due to climate change, with negative consequences on ecosystems and water resources. Increasing problems under water scarcity turned into threats, and the long-term viability of energy production projects are added among the obstacles to development.⁵ Corporate media do not hesitate to publicise the Hidroituango Hydroelectric Project (IHP), created by the Government of the Department of Antioquia⁶ with the support of foreign capital,⁷ as the greatest pride of Antioquian engineering, and why not, of the whole of Colombia, as we shall see in this paper. For the most optimistic, it represents Antioquia's inland sea. However, the facts say the opposite. The dam is riddled with engineering blunders and has not been put into operation while writing this essay. It is a colossal monument to fifty million tons of concrete rammed into the Cauca River Canyon, over *Colombia's main tectonic system: the Cauca-Romeral Fault System*, a symbol of arrogant defiance to the power of nature.

The privatisation of the middle segment of the Cauca River canyon destroyed the continuous and natural flows of its channels and depths, upstream and downstream, designed in millions of years in geological and sinuous movements following the order of natural laws that we still do not understand in their true dimension. The movement of the river is perennial, it creates energy, and each of its ecosystemic functions favours the conservation of both human life and a variety of species, as we shall see in this paper. At present, river ecosystems are the most threatened and urgently in need of restoration. Paradoxically, in this biogeographic region, the expropriators of the Cauca River have destroyed the riparian forests, altering the ecological functions with dangerous ruptures in the hydrological regulation and numerous impacts on human populations. In Engels' view, *the whole of nature accessible to us forms a system, a general concatenation of bodies, meaning here by bodies all material existences ... The fact that these bodies appear to be concatenated already implies that they act on one another, and it is precisely in this mutual action that movement consists. This alone indicates that matter alone is incompatible without motion*.⁸

In the times before, now, and in the days to come, in the construction of the reservoir, I profile the archaeological and ecological sanctuary of the territory of the last descendants of the Nutabe ethnic group in the biogeography of the tropical dry forests for their undeniable importance in carbon storage and contribution of ecological functions to the mitigation of climate change. Hence, the validity of referencing the altitudes and climatic areas of the forested zones in the central and western mountain ranges during the dam construction process. Within the framework of the general characteristics of the Ituango Hydrological Project (IHP), I develop some components of the dark side of the *engineering*

⁵ ↪ Bretton Goods Boletín. “La sed del Banco Mundial por la energía hidroeléctrica”. 12 de marzo de 2014.

⁶ ↪ Bajo la gobernación de Uribe Vélez se aprobó la ordenanza de construir una central hidroeléctrica en algún corredor del río Cauca. Responsable: La Sociedad Promotora de la Hidroeléctrica Pescadero Ituango S.A. E.S.P (1988).Objetivos: promover, construir y comercializar la energía generada por el proyecto. Firmaron: los funcionarios del Departamento de Antioquia, el Instituto para el Desarrollo de Antioquia, la Empresa Antioqueña de Energía S.A., ESP. EADE-; ISAGEN S.A., ESP; Integral SA. y la Asociación Colombiana de Ingenieros Constructores –ACIC- Seccional Antioquia. Capital inicial de cuatro mil millones de pesos. El embalse esperaba entrar en operación en 2018.

⁷ ↪ Alemania (KfW IPEX-Bank, Allianz, Muenchner Rueck y Hannover Rueck); Brasil (Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social do Brasil, Camargo Correa); Canadá (Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec); China (Banco Industrial y Comercial de China); España (BBVA, Banco Santander y consorcio Ferrovial Agroman); Francia (BNP Paribas); Japón (Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation); y Suecia (Atlas Copco y Scania); además del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo

⁸ Federico Engels. Dialéctica de la Naturaleza. Editorial Grijalbo S.A. México. D.F. 1961. P. 48.

of desperation⁹ and its lethal consequences in the canyon area and its inhabitants. I then move on to the IHP crisis in 2018. Subsequently, I offer a brief account of the lethal damages of the engineering of despair interested in subtracting quality and adding benefits, dragging behind it the constitutional rights recognised by international human rights organisations to hundreds of families in the region. Finally, we come to the *modus operandi* of the board of directors of Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) and the financial outcome. And, yet, the Hidroituango tragedy continues.

The Cauca River Canyon: an Archaeological and Ecological Sanctuary and the Millenarian Territory of the Last Sons of the Nutabe Ethnicity

For centuries, the Cauca River canyon was home to an ecological sanctuary of tropical dry forests with privileged

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ecosystemic functions in biodiversity conservation and carbon storage. The beginning of the dam's construction led to archaeological explorations and unprecedented discoveries of various lithic materials from the Nutabe culture between the 9th

and 16th centuries. This heritage corresponded to the territory of their last descendants, almost in isolation, among the mountain slopes of the canyon, until the EPM-GEA companies, one of the most powerful in Colombia, decided to build the dam without the prior consent of its inhabitants.¹⁰ In 1837 the indigenous reserve of San Pedro de Sabanalarga in the canyon was dissolved under the distribution of land among its inhabitants. This historical fact was used by EPM to object to their indigenous status. However, being indigenous is at the very core of the cultural heritage of the subjective world. This sphere contains symbols, values and socio-cultural representations objectified in organisational systems, forms of collective work and the very conception of nature. Hence, the current Nutabe have had their legal recognition as an ethnic group returned to them (Resolution 0071 of the Ministry of the Interior of 19 May 2017) during the process of building the dam and thus claiming their rights to the compensation they are demanding from EPM for the loss of the territory and the river.

The preventive archaeology programme of the University of Antioquia (UA), in the framework of the IHP Environmental Management Plan (2006-2011), dated the archaeological sites and the occupation of the Cauca River canyon around the first centuries of the Christian era. The archaeological exploration concentrated on an area of approximately 5,600 hectares located below 700 m above sea level, where 54 archaeological sites and material evidence in the form of ceramic fragments, lithic instruments and stone structures such as walls, roads and dolmens were identified (Botero et al. citing Botero and Muñoz, 2007).¹¹ Based on the identification of some particular elements of the late communities, the archaeology programme has characterised in detail the Inciso con Borde Doblado ceramic assemblage, its dispersion throughout the canyon and the seven-century chronology. In addition, it provided elements of basic activities of the native communities, such as alluvial gold mining and salt mining, both associated with trade.¹²

⁹ ↪ Expression coined by the geological engineer of the University of Antioquia, Medellín campus.

¹⁰ ↪ In 2018, due to the IHP crisis, the *modus operandi* of the private consortiums behind the Empresa Pública de Medellín is leaked to the public. For this reason, I use the names Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) and Grupo Empresarial Antioqueño (GEA).

¹¹ ↪ Posteriormente, en la fase de rescate y monitoreo se realizaron excavaciones estratigráficas, 15 sitios sugerían contener valiosa información: 024 Icura, 039 Palestina, 038 Bosques de Neguerí y 031 Caparrosa ubicados en el municipio de Briceño; 043 Pescadero, 040 Tacui, 041 Cuni y 043 Playa Hermosa en el municipio de Toledo; 043 El Pedrero y 049 Sardinas en el municipio de Ituango; 064 Llano de la Mina, 077 Bocas de Niquia, 098 Bajos del Ciruelar y 106 Boca de la Honda, en Sabanalarga y en el municipio de Buriticá el sitio 095 Angelinas. En Silvia Botero, Diana Muñoz y Alejandro Ortiz (2011). Nuevos datos acerca del patrón funerario en el cañón del río cauca antioqueño. En: Boletín de Antropología. Universidad de Antioquia, Vol. 25 No. 42 pp. 203-230. 15 de octubre de 2011. Pp. 205.

¹² ↪ Ibid. Pp. 206-207.

The chronological data, between the IXth century and the XVIth century A.D. indicates that the bearers of the Incised ceramics with Folded Rim would be in the XVIth century, according to the Spanish chroniclers, the Nutabes, Tahamíes, Catíos, Pequea and Hevéjicos. Among these peoples, the Nutabes and Thamíes probably occupied the canyon region for more than 300 years. The hypothesis of this research: *the pottery tradition of Inciso with Borde Doblado has precise limits. It is circumscribed on both sides of the canyon, but they hardly go beyond the watershed of the Cauca basin in this area of the Antioquian territory. It is possible to think that adopting a common pottery tradition resulted from a shared historical process through the technological and symbolic exchange of culturally related contents, as confirmed by the evidence recovered in this study.*¹³

The distinction between funerary contexts suggests a social differentiation and allows the identification of burial patterns for two different historical periods. For the early period, a funerary pattern composed of secondary burials in niches with stone slab roofs and tombs associated with burials of pots, apparently as offerings, in niches and tombs, which have reported two dates, one of 390 A.D. and the other of 640 A.D. For the Late period, probably after the 10th century A.D., the funerary pattern found corresponds to Dolmen-type structures composed of six large slabs in a vertical position (resembling walls) supporting a large slab in a horizontal position as a roof at Sabanalarga.¹⁴

In geomorphology, the westernmost edge of the study area retreats the escarpment of the Romeral fault, and the uniform advance destroys a 5 km wide strip, extending from the town of Toledo in the north to the Romeral knife-edge, southeast of the town of La Estrella. In the southern part, the erosion goes up along the Arma and Buey rivers and manages to

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penetrate the axis of the mountain range and eliminates a large part of the Abejorral plateau.¹⁵ *These geological faults have been formed since the birth of the rocks, some 400-500 million years ago, and the most recent ones between 2-5 million years ago. In the Hidroituango area, the rock massif is highly fractured with a cover of Non-Lithified Deposits (loose materials) and soils on*

which vegetation grows. It should be noted that the gneissic rocks are weathered in the first 40 m of depth, making them weaker and more susceptible to destabilisation.¹⁶ This geological component has been one of the determining factors in the IHP crises. To date, the discussion continues as to whether complete deforestation is in the best interest of the region, the communities and the country.

The canyon area has different altitudes, bioclimatic areas, a variety of landscapes and crops. In terms of water systems, the river forms the axis of a river system of numerous tributaries that originate in both mountain ranges. In context, the inhabitants located between river level and 1300 m above sea level have founded a nucleus of settlements with a high dependence on the river for fishing and gold mining activities using artisanal techniques. *In the central mountain range, the settlements closest to the river are located in the valleys transversal to the streams from 1300 m above sea level, due to the high slopes, the aridity of the land and the private nature of the large extensions of land.* To the north of the Ituango River, settlements are located between 500 - 1200 m above sea level. Beaches and dry and humid forests are

¹³ ↪ Ibid. pp. 208.

¹⁴ ↪ During the archaeological survey carried out as part of the Environmental Management Plan for the Ituango hydroelectric project. In Botero, Muñoz y Ortiz. Ibid. Pp. 223-224.

¹⁵ ↪ Luis Alberto Arias. [El relieve de la zona tropical de Antioquia: un palimpsesto de eventos tectónicos y climáticos](#). Revista Facultad De Ingeniería Universidad De Antioquia, (10), 9–24. P. 21-22

¹⁶ ↪ Roman, Marín, Insuasty Rodríguez, Alfonso Valencia, José F. Zuluaga, Héctor Alejandro [Proyecto Hidroituango : historia de una tragedia](#). Kavilando. Medellín. 2020. P. 86.

located between river level and 800 m above sea level. These areas have housed warehouses or settlements clustered on ancient terraces of fluvial or colluvial origin near the confluence of the streams.¹⁷ The hamlet of Orobajo and its surroundings, the most isolated area of the town of Sabanalarga, has a transhumant vocation and has depended on fishing and artisanal gold mining, the daily diet of the Nutabe Indians, complemented in some cases with products from the vegetable gardens, the cultivation of bananas, maize, cassava, game and the gathering of fruits from the forest since the very beginning of their existence.¹⁸

Moving to the western cordillera, between 800 and 1300 masl and in the central cordillera from 800 to 1000 masl, the inhabitants have resided in scattered dwellings and in villages around schools. This area combined panning, fishing and gathering of forest fruits with cultivation in small plots of land. The areas of greatest dependence on the river correspond to the *alternohigric and/or subxerophytic zonobiome in the Cauca Strait and the humid valley zonobiome in the Cauca Canyon*.¹⁹ The areas with medium dependence include part of these Territorial Analysis Units (TAU)²⁰ and the orobiome with an eastern sub-Andean forest of the western cordillera. Between 1300-and 2500 masl, the dependence on the river is low. Its inhabitants are known as mountaineers or cold landers. These areas are located in four UAT: *orobioma with Andean and high Andean forest in the Cauca Strait of the Western Cordillera, orobioma with eastern sub-Andean forest*

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*in the Western Cordillera, orobioma with sub-Andean forest in the Quindío - Antioquia Cauca Strait, and orobioma with Andean and high Andean forest in the Cauca Strait.*²¹ The destruction of the tropical dry forest has devastated the habitat of the endemic lemon toucan (*Rhampastos vitellinus citreolameus*), the endemic toche (*Ramphocelus flamigerus*) and the green macaw (*Ara militaris*). For her part, Isabel Zuleta, leader of the MRVA, affirms:²² *the green macaw is in a critical state... For these birds, the river's speed is essential because of*

the wind it produces. Now, because of the river's stillness, they have not come back... Also of concern are the poison dart frogs, the three-toed sloth bear, the axe-billed bird, various types of snakes, the Grey-bellied night monkey, among others... Particularly vulnerable is the raccoon bird of the genus Ortalis.

In mitigating climate change, riparian forests are essential natural treasures in hydrological regulation, as they act as containment brakes under flood onslaughts. They contribute to the stabilisation of river banks, preventing erosion and the dragging of materials, and by favouring the sedimentation of the river, they help create fertile soils. On the other hand, this vegetation type acts as a green filter for polluting substances, such as pesticides and toxic fertilisers from the agricultural and livestock industries. In short, riparian forests perform essential functions in ecosystems: a good vegetation cover *regulates water temperature and the amount of light reaching the surface, factors that directly influence the development of different aquatic organisms and the correct functioning of the ecosystem. In addition, they create refuges for aquatic and terrestrial organisms and promote the diversity of microhabitats and ecological niches with*

¹⁷ ↪ Laura Ardila Arrieta. [Colombia: el territorio indígena que ahogó la poderosa Hidroituango](#).

¹⁸ ↪ Vivian Ochoa, Wilmer Marín, Alejandra Osejo. [Valoración de los servicios ecosistémicos del área de influencia del Proyecto Hidroeléctrico Ituango](#) – Antioquia. Instituto de Investigación de Recursos Biológicos Alexander von Humboldt Bogotá, 2017. P. 51. p. 51-52

¹⁹ ↪ Ibid. P. 52

²⁰ ↪ Ibid. Territorial analysis units. This measurement integrates the hydro-biological and biogeographical characteristics of the territory. P. 18.

²¹ ↪ Ibid. Footprint of p. 52

²² ↪ Coordinator of Movimiento Ríos Vivos Antioquia.

*additions to the productivity and carrying capacity of the ecosystem. Riparian vegetation also provides valuable ecological corridors for terrestrial fauna.*²³

Indeed, the replacement of *edaphic plant formations and riparian forests* by constructing the reservoir created a high level of anoxic water (without oxygen) with loss of fish, aquatic habitat and the appearance of aquatic macrophytes. The increase in river flow modified the temperature with important sources of GHG emissions of methane, hydrogen sulphide, sulphates, sources of pollution due to the dragging of particulate material, biomass, soil, accumulation of rocky materials detached from the slopes of the mountains in the canyon. Environmental destruction altered coffee production cycles, the felling of trees in the dry forest expelled snakes from their natural niches (and new invasive species). Noise from the construction work reduced the bee population in the apiaries. Similarly, the Nutabe and peasant communities were stripped of their customary right to remain in their ancestral territories, leaving them in uncertainty and government

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and private violence, fearing threats and the spectre of some untimely forced displacement. The evidence in social practice reaches its maximum expression in the absence of risk management policies and social support networks, which could have mitigated, in

part, the proximity to the sources of danger and the threat of sudden floods due to the recurrence of the impact under the technical engineering errors in the dam. *We have lost our lives* (a testimony in Sabanalarga).

In terms of carbon storage, the identified High Indirect Impact (HIA) natural areas correspond to tropical forest habitats, which sequester and store more carbon than any other terrestrial ecosystem. The ecosystem services (high valuation, Humboldt Institute classification) of the extensive water network associated with small patches of natural cover have contributed to sediment retention due to their location on slopes. *The identification of tropical dry forest areas is vital in providing surface water supply and habitat for pollinators and the supply of sediment retention (especially riparian vegetation). Therefore, the conservation of this ecosystem is of importance both for its direct benefits and the lifetime of the hydropower project.* This ecosystem originally covered more than 9 million hectares across the country. Today only 8% remains. Its biodiversity is exceptional: almost 2600 species of plants (83 are endemic), 230 species of birds (33 are endemic) and 60 species of mammals (3 are endemic).²⁴

This vegetation type controls everything from direct sunlight to organic matter input into the soil. The incalculable benefits of the tropical dry forest cannot be overemphasised, as well as those of the products generated in orchards and banana, maize, cassava, game and the harvesting of fruits from the forest due to its high biodiversity and the provision of ecological services. The environmental component controls flooding and erosion. It removes nutrients from agriculture and reduces polluting effects. From the UAT: *alternohygric and/or subxerophytic zonobiome in the Cauca strait, humid valley zonobiome in the Cauca canyon and orobiome with the eastern sub-Andean forest of the western mountain range* has given life to the Cauca river canyon in the basin strip where the valley is narrower and deeper, differentiated by long and inclined slopes on both flanks. Its micro-watersheds are habitats and natural corridors for diverse species with a predominance of fish. Likewise, the river system crosses gold-bearing lithological formations throughout the basin, allowing the sediments deposited in the river to be rich in gold.²⁵

²³ ↩ GeoInnova. [Ecosistemas fluviales y la importancia de su restauración](#) 26 de octubre de 2016.

²⁴ ↩ Ochoa, Marín, Osejo. Op. Cit. P. 105

²⁵ ↩ Ibid. P. 33-49

General characteristics of the Ituango Hydrological Project

The Cauca River originates in the Colombian Massif, in the southeast of Colombia, and flows 1076 km through the Central and Western mountain ranges of the Andes up to the village of Oroabajo (Municipality of Sabanalarga). The Cauca river basin covers 11% of the continental area. It is home to 25% of the population in 190 municipalities in seven departments and five capital cities until it flows into the Magdalena River, the country's main river artery. It has an area of 65,000 km².

Mega infrastructure: The reservoir and the works for the project are located entirely in the middle segment of the Cauca River canyon, in the section between Liborina, where the tail of the reservoir is located, and Ituango and Briceño, where the dam site, powerhouse and other works will be located. The reservoir is about 80 km long with a depth up to 190 m. The width varies from 500 to 1000 m, generating a volume of 2,750 million m³. It floods approximately 45 km². The wall is 220 m high, 500 m wide and 2 km long. Its approximate weight is 50'000,000 tons. The rock massif (Loma Capitán mountain) comprises highly fractured and highly weathered metamorphic rocks covered by loose materials. The area of direct local influence corresponds to 56 villages and hamlets directly affected by some project works (reservoir, camps, access roads, transmission lines and reservoirs and power lines for construction). In turn, the direct impact areas (DIA) led to [forced] displacement in the population centres of the village of Barbacoas (municipality of Peque), the village of Oroabajo (municipality of Sabanalarga) and the houses scattered along the reservoir area. (pp. 2). Also, the houses located in the construction of the access roads to the project and the rural sectors of the Puerto Valdivia-Presa corridor are affected by the industrial road. Due to their proximity to the main works, the villages of El Valle (municipality of Toledo) and the village of Puerto Valdivia are highly impacted by population displacements. (pp. 3) It circumscribes the urban area of the municipality of San Andrés de Cuerquia and rural sectors of the San Andrés de Cuerquia - El Valle corridor (municipality of Toledo).

Atypical nature of the project: Normally, dams dam rivers that drain micro-watersheds. However, the IHP dams almost the entire watershed of the Cauca river, which originates 1200 kilometres away, in the Laguna El Buey (Páramo de las Papas, Colombian Massif), encompassing the drainage of the eastern slope of the Western Cordillera and those of the western slope of the Eastern Cordillera of the Colombian Andes.

The Dark Side of Desperation Engineering and Lethal Consequences

Prior to constructing the reservoir, EPM-GEA was aware of the adverse geological conditions through the *Woodward-Clyde Consultants* (1980) mapping report. However, these conditions and the high rate of extensive non-lithified sediments in the reservoir area were disregarded. *The geological faults running through the project's area of influence*

The prediction of geoscience experts came true: Due to heavy rains, an earth slope obstructed one of the tunnels, giving way to the second landslide caused by the rising reservoir and flooding of the Pescadero bridge connecting Medellín with Ituango.

correspond to the main tectonic system of Colombia: the Cauca-Romeral Fault System. The Santa Rita West and East faults, which run in a N10- 15E direction on and near the Cauca riverbed, between the Pescadero Bridge and the wall, are regionally associated with this fault system. Furthermore, the Tocayo and Mellizo

faults, oriented in a Northeast-Southwest direction, are transversally associated with the Santa Rita faults, crossing the

rock massif of the right abutment of the wall.²⁶ For Portilla, the only favourable aspect was the geometry of the wall construction site. This is followed by other risks of unknown extent in 17 municipalities located in the Departments of Córdoba, Sucre and Bolívar. These include Briceño, Ituango, Valdivia, Cáceres, Tarazá, Cauca and Nechí. From the wall to Puerto Valdivia, there is a distance of 38 Km, from Puerto Valdivia to "El 12" about 10 Km, from "El 12" to Cáceres about 20 Km, and from Cáceres to Cauca, 60 Km. The average flow of the Cauca river at the Muro is 1,000-1200 m³ /s.²⁷

In a short time, the prediction of geoscience experts came true.²⁸ Due to heavy rains, on 28 April 2018, an earth slope obstructed one of the tunnels, giving way to the second landslide caused by the rising reservoir and flooding of the Pescadero bridge connecting Medellín with Ituango. This was aggravated by the Nutabe displacement of Orobo and Barbacoas. The increased river flow washed away bridges, houses, and hundreds of families' livelihoods in the area. Downstream, the Cauca River put 16 municipalities on alert, and Puerto Valdivia's village was evacuated entirely. In Toledo and Sabanalarga, several families lost their ranches and livelihoods. According to the Comptroller's Office,²⁹ *it caused partial damage to more than 25,000 people in the 14 municipalities affected by the emergency [...] and incalculable damage to natural resources.* For the MRVA, throughout the dam's construction, EPM and its contractors did not offer guarantees and accurate and timely information on an emergency response that would reduce the damage to the inhabitants (Decree 332 of 2004) and, consequently, provide adequate risk management. Thus, the abandonment of the State has turned into mistrust towards EPM's management, which has extended to the officials of the local administrations and the Department of Antioquia.³⁰

Prominent Features of the Physical Components of the Natural Environment

In support of the MRVA, the Technical Report responds to the *general statements and decontextualised categorical assertions of the engineers of EPM and Integral SA. These combined very general elements on geology, neotectonics, seismicity and some elements of seismic engineering.*³¹ Among the most relevant:

(i) The emphasis on voluminous information gathering in problem-solving lacks relevance and quality and is outdated. Photo interpretation is of little relevance and was not built in the design studies phase. In addition, the provision of information with inaccurate, outdated tools, barely valid for the 1950s and 1980s, lacks viability for a project of this magnitude in the 21st century.³²

(ii) Categorical and irresponsible statements have been made about the rock massif. The most important: *the rock massif is of good quality.* This statement cannot be generalised, nor does it apply in a similar way everywhere, especially if one considers that the quality of rock masses decreases at the surface and increases at depth. It is a phenomenon with

²⁶ ↪ Martin Roman, Marín, Alfonso Insuasty, José Valencia, Héctor Zuluaga. [Proyecto Hidroituango : historia de una tragedia](#). Kavilando. Medellín. 2020. P. 86.

²⁷ ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada. Op. Cit. P. 140.

²⁸ ↪ Geomorfología, neotectónica, sismicidad y elementos de ingeniería sísmica.

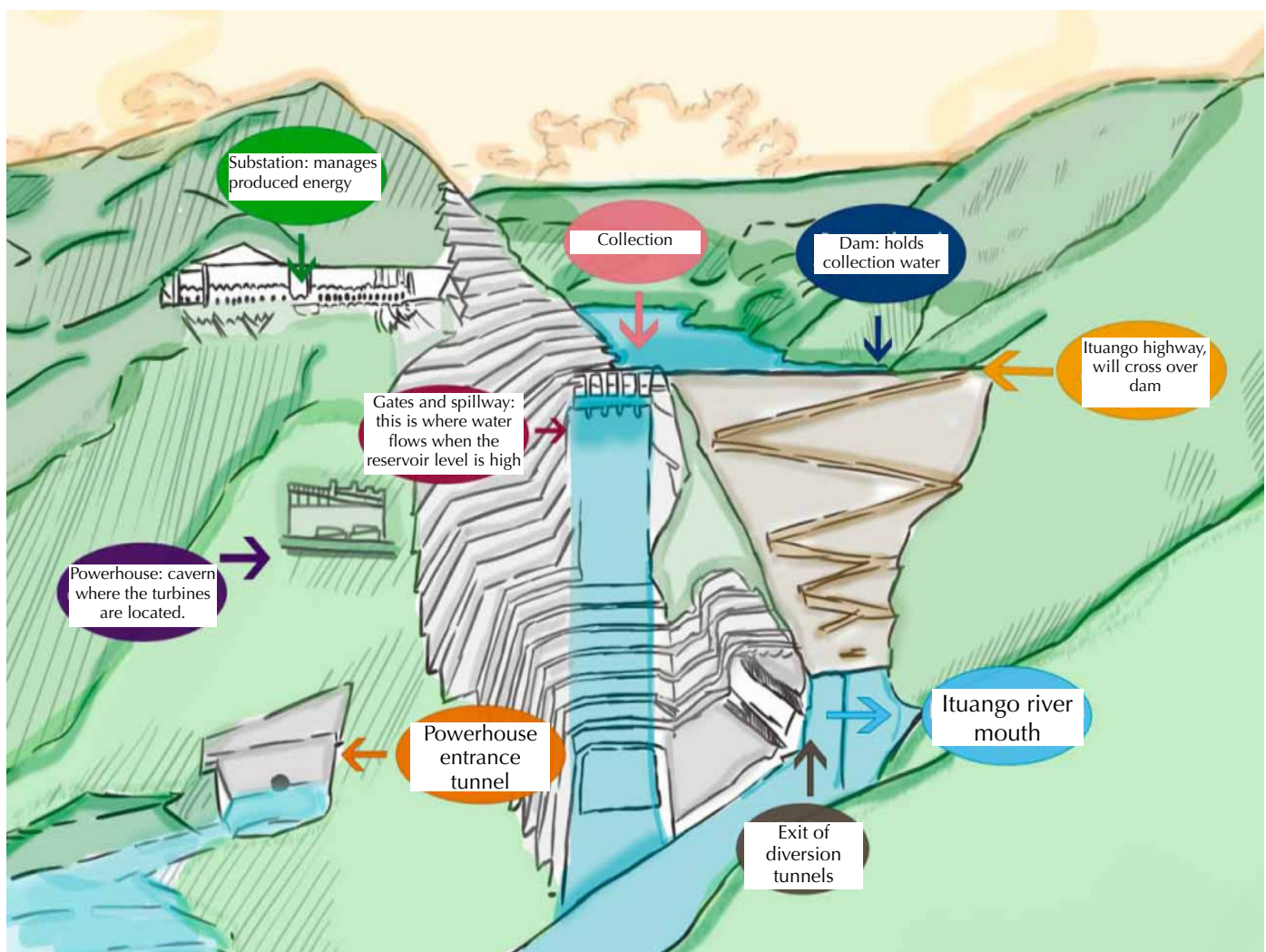
²⁹ ↪ Informe Misión Antioquia. Noviembre 11-15 de 2018. Broederlijk Delen, [Foro de Mujeres y Desarrollo - Fokus, el Movimiento Sueco por la Reconciliación](#) – SweFOR, Pp. 11-12.

³⁰ ↪ Antioquia Mission Report. The Hidroituango project's Daily Executive Report No. 232 (28 December 2018), lists the main actions carried out by EPM and the administration after the emergency and their results. It highlights for example the delivery of 84,344 emergency humanitarian aids, the payment of more than 12,000 economic supports and the installation of 38 shelters, among others. P. 24

³¹ ↪ The pdf document contains the presentation, discussion and argumentation at the Technical Roundtable in August 2019, between academic experts from the National University of Antioquia (UNA) with engineers and officials from EPM and Integral SA regarding the seismicity of the faults in the IHP area. The report Situación actual del proyecto Hidroituango August 28, 2019 has no direct authorship. Therefore, I have deduced it from other highly specialised UNA documents.

³² ↪ [Situación actual del proyecto Hidroituango](#). Agosto 28 de 2019. p. 1-2.

patterns at different scale levels in different morphoclimatic, gradient and even gradient segment regions. The repetition of the same incidents during the construction stages has proven this concept wrong. Thus, the evidence of geological events has reinforced the trend of an eventual massive breach on the right bank of the dam area. Paradoxically, the project owners have ignored its importance, as evidenced by the absence of studies at this stage of the project.³³ In sum, the natural conditions and dynamics between the Liborina and Puerto Valdivia sectors have generated high levels of risk throughout the Cauca river basin. The canyon is narrow [as in no other section in the whole basin] and deep in response to the current configuration's very intense tectonic regime (5-9 Ma) and currently remains active. For the project's current phase (2019), the EPM-GEA consortia do not provide tectonic and seismic information. Despite the overwhelming facts, they have not installed the network of micro-seismographs for rigorous monitoring of the seismic behaviour in the region in the face of the high frequency of active faults.³⁴



Source: / Philip Charry y Daniela Vargas. Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. *Hidroituango: el cañón de agua que le apunta al pueblo*. [Hidroituango: el cañón de agua que le apunta al pueblo | Revista Pesquisa Javeriana](#)

³³ ↪ Ibid. Pp. 2-13-14

³⁴ ↪ Ibid. p. 9-10

(iii) They have overestimated laboratory tests (simple compression and triaxial) but do not mention or do not use in situ tests at the level of the rock mass and the parameters of friction angle and cohesion in blocks of the rock mass. Relevant and rigorous information could originate from adequate sampling with in situ testing in underground excavations at the pre-construction stage.³⁵ According to engineer Portilla, not enough uniaxial compression, triaxial, dynamic triaxial, triaxial with creep and other tests were carried out to analyse the current state of the rock massif accurately. Therefore, what state would it be in the event of an earthquake affecting the project? *He emphasises that the sector called Lleno Prioritario (between elevations 385 and 415) would fail because it is the most vulnerable part of a dam. It was precisely the one that was poorly constructed and apparently will remain so according to the versions of EPM-Hidroituango (the only thing that would be corrected would be the complete dismantling of this sector prior to the release of the dam to normal levels of the Cauca River. The waterproofing of this sector in the upstream part of the wall is nothing more than a simple psychological reinforcement, which will be of absolutely no use in the event of an earthquake or the arrival of an extraordinary current that generates a seiche of considerable magnitude that would impose critical dynamic loads on the wall and the rock massif).*³⁶

(iv) The study of the relief of the area of influence (geomorphology) was carried out based on 1:30,000 aerial photographs, hence the confusing and disorderly description of the denudational reliefs, as evidenced in the last landscape unit, which corresponds to accumulation reliefs where the description is clear and precise as a work of photo-interpretation; namely, identifying and delimiting. Finally, *there was no interest in studying at least one of the landslides located at the dam site. Could it be that identifying the rupture scar of a landslide with photo interpretation means knowing the landslide?*³⁷

Technical Engineering Errors

Among the most consensual damages, the specialised literature focuses on the high degradation of the quality of the rock massif. This is due to technical errors during the underground works: internal erosion due to the flow of water sediments at very high pressure through places and works that were not designed for these conditions (Auxiliary Diversion Gallery, Power House, access tunnels and other errors). This has led to internal collapses and, in general, to the drilling of the mountain's bowels in the right abutment of the wall - Loma El Capitan. Prior to the construction of the works, this borehole was 121 MPa, and as predicted, it decreases by about one third when wet. This decrease in resistance is progressive over time, between 3% and 6% for each MPa, increasing water pressure until the long-term geotechnical failure/breakage is reached).³⁸

One last observation: on 10 January 2019, the owners of EPM informed the public that, for unknown reasons, the discovery of a sinkhole, about 20 m. under the diversion tunnels of the dam, forced them to the accelerated closure of the first gate of the powerhouse. According to experts, the decision to divert the waters of the Cauca River through the tunnels and the powerhouse is a consequence of the crass engineering errors arising from desperation in the construction of hydroelectric plants, albeit it corresponded to the only option of the project, given the impossibility of releasing the waters.

³⁵ ↪ Ibid. P. 21

³⁶ ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. *¿Qué pasó, por qué pasó, ¿qué está pasando y qué podría pasar. Op. Cit. P. 53*

³⁷ ↪ Situación actual del proyecto Hidroituango. Op. Cit. P. 10

³⁸ ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. *Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada Op. Cit. P. 142*

The Hidroituango Project Destroys the Livelihoods of the Communities of the Canyon

The direct dependence between the last Nutabe children and the biophysical scenarios of the canyon created an indissoluble unity between the care of human life and the conservation of nature. The true meaning of good living in direct dependence on nature can be summarised: The canyon population obtained subsistence (food, shelter, independent work). The need for protection came from the biophysical and social environment. The need for participation, still intact, is experienced in human interactions in various solidarity and mutual support activities. The need for identity gains meaning through the satisfiers of belonging, self-esteem and community values in everyday environments. Indeed, daily contact with nature developed a matrix of satisfiers linked to autonomy, determination, equality and the struggle for the respect of rights related to the Cauca River canyon. The canyon created the core of the concept of good living under material and spiritual conditions in the construction and maintenance of a 'harmonious life', which in Quechua is defined as 'alli káusai'.³⁹ It is the central category of the philosophy of life in indigenous societies, a sine qua non condition for managing the local eco-spiritual basis of livelihood and the autonomous resolution of needs.

For the inhabitants of the middle and upper part (Renegado Valle-Peque) and El Junco (Sabanalarga), the most valued asset is the diversity of climates under the latitude of thermal floors that provide ecosystemic services for good living. In order of importance: (i) Water, an essential element for human, animal and plant life. (ii) Soils that support the cultivation of crops, the basis of food and the generation of some income. (iii) Roads and the river for transport. (iv) Forests provide wood, an essential input in constructing houses and firewood for cooking food.⁴⁰ Under Colombian law, panning

The magnitude of the ecological and environmental impacts due to the effects of the IHP is of such a magnitude that emptying the canyon of the tropical dry forests with their vegetation and ecosystems produced an escalation of inconceivable ruptures in the socio-cultural systems with repercussions on the physical and mental health of its inhabitants.

represents a treasure of the intangible cultural heritage of the Antioquian canyon people. It extends to literature, plastic arts, speech, colonial and republican history.⁴¹ Panning has been the driving force behind the rural trades and economies, including shops, rural businesses, food sales, transport and bartering.⁴² The natural economy of the good life, in the words of Abelardo David Chanci, a Nutabe guard: "We did not

need a bank account:⁴³ our cashier was our father [the Cauca River], who gave us everything we needed just by putting his hand in. *The river has always been everything to us.*

Accordingly, the magnitude of the ecological and environmental impacts due to the effects of the IHP is of such a magnitude that emptying the canyon of the tropical dry forests with their vegetation and ecosystems produced an escalation of inconceivable ruptures in the socio-cultural systems with repercussions on the physical and mental health of its inhabitants. According to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA, 2007), these impacts are cumulative, of very high magnitude, permanent, and involve highly vulnerable populations.⁴⁴ The populations excluded from the economy and state social services, on the other hand, have developed a strong sense of belonging, solidarity, mutual support and identity based on kinship and neighbourhood relations with symbolic references, as can be seen in anthropological

³⁹ ↪ Carlos Viteri Gualinga. [Visión indígena del desarrollo en la Amazonía](#). 30 de abril de 2019. Pp. 2-3.

⁴⁰ ↪ Ochoa, Marín, Osejo. 57-58

⁴¹ ↪ El barequeo como patrimonio cultural inmaterial. Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia.

⁴² ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada. Op. Cit.

⁴³ ↪ Laura Ardila Arrieta. [Colombia: el territorio indígena que ahogó la poderosa](#).

⁴⁴ ↪ Ochoa, Marín, Osejo. Op. Cit.

ethnographies. The EPM-GEA Consortium ignored this economic and cultural characterisation despite the warnings of countless IHP investigations.

Returning to the dam's construction, its de facto owners placed the canyon population in high direct impact (HIDA), according to the EIA (2007), and 97% of them are in conditions of monetary poverty lacking or accessing minimum monetary income. *Since there is no direct estimate of these services at the household level, the poverty line approximation allows us to give a value (a price) to these basic food and non-food baskets. In this order of ideas, the value of ecosystem services on which these communities subsist amounts to \$4,7 million U.S. dollars per year. Even covering only the basic food basket (extreme poverty line), the value would be \$2,9 million U.S. dollars.*⁴⁵

The canyon area has had high rates of land concentration. It has been the leading cause of the blood-and-blood armed conflict in Colombia's history. According to Oxfam, for 15 Latin American countries, 1% of the largest farms concentrate

The result is dramatically reflected in the necropolitics led by politicians and landowning business people with private and state armies, a distinctive feature of the big land grabbers in Colombia.

the same amount of land as 99%. In Colombia, the result is even more dramatic: 1% occupies 81% of the land, while 99% occupies only 19%, followed by Peru, Chile and Paraguay.⁴⁶ Moreover, large landholdings (over 500 ha) occupied 5 million ha in 1970, and in 2014 increased to 47 million ha. Their average size increased from 1,000 to 5,000 ha in the same period. The result is dramatically reflected in the

necropolitics led by politicians and landowning business people with private and state armies, a distinctive feature of the big land grabbers in Colombia. On this continent, Haiti, Honduras and Colombia, according to the FAO, are among the most acute food-insecure countries. The Colombian Food Banks (Abaco) ratify the previous report by declaring that the hunger situation is critical. According to the National Nutritional Situation Survey, ENSIN 2015, 54.2% of the Colombian population is food insecure, and 10.8% of children under five years of age suffer from chronic malnutrition, which means that there are more than 500,000 children in the country who suffer from this irreversible disease that prevents them from growing and developing correctly.⁴⁷

Crisis in 2018, the Hydroelectric Power Plant is not Needed in Colombia

The financialisation of the macro-basin of the Cauca River drags behind it unpredictable technical and ontological risks,⁴⁸ driven by greed and the disproportionate plundering of the canyon to turn it into a massive and dangerous dam, still in limbo in the face of an uncertain future since 2018. The anthropic, ecological and socio-environmental impacts have been left unpunished, going beyond the irreparable damage to nature and the socio-economic consequences of the DIA up to the mouth of the Magdalena River in the Department of Bolivar. In Colombia, the necropolitics spread throughout the national territory in the canyon's area, has the sinister x-ray of social tragedies, ecocide and crimes against humanity in response to the demand for ethnic-peasant rights. In contrast, EPM, the visible face of the consortium, from the beginning of the construction of the project, assumes defiant positions toward the vulnerable families and ignores everywhere the application of ecological and environmental regulations under the failed strategy of exalting the supply of electricity for a small sector of the Colombian population.

⁴⁵ ↪ Ibid. P. 106

⁴⁶ ↪ Arantxa Guereña. Oxfam. "Radiografía de la desigualdad". P. 14

⁴⁷ ↪ Infobae. [El hambre en Colombia sí es crítica: Bancos de Alimentos le dan la razón a la FAO.](#)

⁴⁸ ↪ A term used by Modesto Portilla: *human beings, animals, territories, crops, social fabric, traditional and ancestral customs, socio-economic and cultural activities, relations between these entities, etc., especially the canyon communities of the Cauca River and Colombia in general (...)*. In *Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada*. P. 188.

For EPM and the consortiums behind Hidroituango, *these canyon peoples are the enemies of the project who do not want development. They are despicable and despised because they fight for the recognition of their rights.* In compensation for the usurpation of their land and houses, some were paid 5 U.S cents per square metre of land. The rest lost the river they lived on and their houses on the beaches, even though Colombian law regulates them as public patrimony. This is the displaced population of Sabanalarga, Peque, Ituango and Toledo. A "cannoneer" never went hungry; he built his house in the plaza and lived free without explaining himself to anyone. This is how they lived until the IHP, its owners, and its agents arrived and achieved what the Spaniards did not do when they conquered their territory: they took the river from them.⁴⁹

However, for the Unidad de Planeación Minero-Energética (UPME) and UNA experts, IHP is not needed in Colombia. *The peak hourly demand for electricity in this country is estimated to be around 9 MW and the available installed supply is 17 MW. Therefore, there is an oversupply of 6 MW.* Similarly, the peak hourly demand for electricity in this country is estimated to be around 9 MW and the available installed supply is 17 MW. Therefore, there is an oversupply of 6 MW, so what is the reason to build Hidroituango at all costs despite the impacts it has generated and those that will come in the future if the rock massif or the wall fails?⁵⁰ And, even more so, if we take into account that the project's useful life has been reduced from 80 to just 30 years, leaving aside the impact of the climate emergency. According to the IPCC, Colombia is among the countries most affected. In addition, there is the repeated tendency of the owners of IHP to hide the serious errors committed since the issuance of the environmental licence, including the successive modifications and the repeated failures to deliver. However, the real interests of the private consortiums are undeniable: the search for profits through the export of energy to Panama, Central America and the Caribbean, with greater economic expectations due to the growing demand for electricity in EU countries under the rubric of failed green capitalism.

Our Historical Tragedy, a Legacy From Transatlantic Colonisation

Through the bipartisan wars in the different periods of the republic, today, with the illegal wars of drug trafficking and state para-militarism linked to global companies and corporations, intergenerational links have been maintained with the strength and resilience that overcome the obstacles of elitist violence in its relentless struggle to impose its economic benefits over the good life of the communities and the conservation of nature. In the colonial period, Ochoa Vivian et al. have shown how the indigenous subjugation to the encomiendas (large landholdings entrusted to Spaniards), forced escapes and voluntary displacements towards the frontier zones of the settlements—*although they modified the pre-Hispanic social structures, as they took place within the Cauca Canyon— made it possible to maintain long-lasting territoriality, in which the fundamental referents such as the Cauca River and the Central and Western mountain ranges*

⁴⁹ ↪ Neyla Castillo: [quiénes son los cañoneros desplazados por hidroituango](#), Kavilando, 19 de Mayo de 2018.

⁵⁰ ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. *Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada*. Op. Cit. P. 137

remained the same. In the following lines, let us look at some particular cases of violence, and institutional harassment to which the communities included in the Commission's Verification Report were subjected:⁵¹

(i) Before the collapse of the Pescadero Bridge, which connected Ituango with Medellín and other surrounding municipalities, EPM intervened in public spaces by prohibiting, through fear and intimidation, free access and transit along the bridle paths laid out by locals. On the Puerto Valdivia road, the community was forced to walk over the edges of the abyss or alongside heavy machinery, without any precautionary measures, especially for children and women. In Toledo, a leader affirmed that *the river is like the feet of every inhabitant. It cannot be made private*. Currently, Ituango is accessed through the tunnels, the wall or by boat. The routes are controlled and monitored by EPM, resulting in significant risks to the safety and preservation of the lives of threatened environmental leaders and opponents of the project.

(ii) On the Puerto Valdivia road, EPM did not take any action that could mitigate the threats, vulnerabilities and risks that the construction of the reservoir generated on the mountain slopes, the location of the scattered dwellings occupied by families united by ties of kinship, friendship or commitments to the social organisation around fishing and panning. Without warning, as if they were premeditated attacks, the private spaces of the dwellings (roofs, walls) and the community vegetable gardens were destroyed by falling trees uprooted from the forest and mixed with rocks thrown down the slope towards the river.

With the construction of the Presa-Puerto Valdivia road in the village of El Astillero, large rocks fell from the mountain into the river, putting fishers and panners in danger. At the beginning of October 2016, the plank that ran along the beaches was removed and destroyed without informing or consulting the communities. The house of Mr Orlando Gutiérrez was located below the place where Hidroituango was carrying out works. Rocks fell on his house from above, some from the explosions and others from the works themselves. The heavy impacts broke the roof, and large cracks in the walls and dust covered the entire surface. The threats were followed by an illegal raid carried out by the Police Inspectorate, accompanied by 80 armed men from the security forces and a private security employee of Hidroituango. Finally, EPM closed the case through forced displacement and severe psycho-affective and emotional effects. (Extracted from the Verification Report). This case illustrates a ruthless violation of all their constitutional rights carried out by a State company and the criminal mega-corporations installed in EPM.

(iii) The attacks in bloody opposition to human rights range from the violation of the right to truthful information to the falsification of the certificate of attendance signed by the educational community of the school in the village of El Astillero for the free and informed consent to demolish the school when in reality, the community demanded that EPM repair it. On the other hand, parents have denounced the increase in illnesses and imminent health risks, especially for children, due to the blasting, which was carried out without prior agreement on timetables and the implementation of risk prevention programmes.

(iv) EPM bought 30% of the village of El Junco (Sabanalarga, 2016), including a property located in the lower part of the village owned by an absentee and unproductive landowner. Taking possession of the property prevents the community from continuing with the prior agreed benefits, such as access to ecosystem services and the Carquetá Lagoon, an

⁵¹ ↪ At the Peasant Agrarian Summit meeting, Ethnic Popular and Rios Vivos Movements of Antioquia, no representative of the National Government attended. However, the communities made progress in the discussion and other initiatives to demand rights based on the document of the Human Rights Verification Mission in the Municipality of Valdivia, Antioquia. pp. 3-25

emblematic site in the region's history. Inhabitants of the upper parts of the canyon used to access this site for recreation, fruit picking and a route to the river. Following a lease agreement with the former landowner at other sites, the inhabitants carried out practices associated with agriculture and livestock farming.⁵² Neither the territory nor the inhabitants of a path have a price. From the indigenous worldview, a territory without inhabitants is inconceivable.⁵³

In conclusion, in Valdivia, two leaders in defence of nature's ecosystem services were shot in the context of protest mobilisations against forced evictions, the lack of fair compensation, relocation, access to land, and impacts on health

The Department of Antioquia has been a niche for frequent wars under the motto "anything goes", driven by the paramilitary and mafia landowning sector for the control of the territory for their profit-making purposes, under the political-military control of Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

and the environment. On this point, based on the testimonies, some of which are presented in this document, the European Parliament demands the right to work, decent housing, health, and freedom of expression. Among other rights, they denounce how they have been discriminated against for their demands against the Hidroituango project and threatened, prosecuted and persecuted.⁵⁴ Finally, the Nutabe indigenous community forced EPM-GEA to carry out the Prior Consultation, demanded in 2012

and initiated on 11 May 2018, when the ancestral territory was flooded under 2,720 million m³, violating their fundamental rights, today they are displaced from their bio-cultural territory.

Blood and Fire to Impose Misguided Energy Security

The Department of Antioquia⁵⁵ has been a niche for frequent wars under the motto "anything goes", driven by the paramilitary and mafia landowning sector for the control of the territory for their profit-making purposes, under the political-military control of Álvaro Uribe Vélez in all spheres of state institutionality for more than 20 years, with the approval of the US and the European Union. In the DIAs, Ituango, Peque and Sabanalarga, three of the municipalities that have received the most significant impact from the works, have rates of forced displacement ranging from 348.2 to 859.5 per thousand inhabitants (2018) on the rise. The territorial control manoeuvres used to expel populations range from economic compensation (ridiculous amounts) offered by the companies, evictions carried out by the security forces, or threats, intimidation and other forms of violence that are often carried out by illegal armed groups, which have marked the timeline of before, now and after the installation of the works. The impacts on nature and the population are not yet over, not only because of the selection of the construction site but also because of the blatant technical engineering errors under the daily uncertainty of a catastrophe of multiple dimensions in the Cauca River and its surrounding population up to its mouth in the Magdalena River.⁵⁶

According to official figures from the Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation of Victims (UARIV. 2017), it reported 2,897 victims of forced disappearance in the 12 municipalities intervened by the IHP, of which the Centre of Historical

⁵² ↪ Ochoa, Wilmer, Osejo. Op. Cit. P. 72

⁵³ ↪ Ochoa Vivian, Marín Wilmer, Osejo Alejandra. Ibid. P. 72

⁵⁴ ↪ Mongabay/Latam. 14 de Mayo de 2018. <http://sostenibilidad.semana.com/impacto/articulo/hidroituango-asesinato-de-dos-lideres-sociales-que-se-oponian-al-proyecto-energetico/40986>.

⁵⁵ ↪ Place of origin of Álvaro Uribe Vélez, known as Señor Massacre, drug trafficker and founder of the Convivir Cooperatives, paramilitary organisations of high criminality in impunity. Matarife Series. El Señor Massacre. Approximately 12 chapters are still airing with new content. Written by researcher and lawyer Daniel Mendoza, it illustrates the tragedy of the Colombian people. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjSGUJrOl_Q. Link first chapter. It is a masterpiece. It masterfully synthesises the intricate web of paramilitary, drug trafficking, political and mafia relationships that surpasses the limits of the imagination. Today he is in exile.

⁵⁶ ↪ Lina Marín y Marisela Montenegro. *Desterradas del río. Hidroituango y la destrucción del cuerpo-territorio por megaproyectos. Entre el interés general y el sostenimiento de la vida*. Iberoamericana – Nordic Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, 50(1). 2021. p 86.

Memory reported 659 and 621 are direct victims. The Search and Identification Group for Missing Persons of the Directorate of Transitional Justice exhumed 159 bodies in the same 12 municipalities between 2014 and January 2018 and identified 84. On the other hand, the National Register of Disappeared Persons (RND) SIRDEC of the Department of Antioquia registers a total of 12,119 missing persons, 87% of whom are men. Likewise, 6,230 people are foreseen to have been forcibly disappeared. Although there is no precise universe of victims in the 125 municipalities divided into nine sub-regions, it does reveal a serious humanitarian problem. The MRVA has revealed at least 73 massacres in these municipalities, most of them perpetrated by paramilitary groups in the service of the owners of IHP.⁵⁷

The Observation Mission evidenced the destruction of the tropical dry forest in the Puente Pescadero sector of the municipality of Ituango. The ecological debacle put at risk the circulation of the communities in the area and the reference trees, sites of information on the disposition of bodies in the area. The loss of evidence has been the subject of concern and complaints from the communities, the gravediggers, and the relatives of the disappeared. Relatives and local people point to the three bridges visited - Pescadero, between Ituango and Toledo; the Garrucha Bridge between Sabanalarga and Peque; and the Old Bridge in the village of Puerto Valdivia - as places of torture and execution where bodies were thrown into the Cauca River so as not to be found. The Mission visited these three sites and listened to accounts of the massacres and murders that had taken place in these places [before they were flooded].⁵⁸

In the particular case of the victims who long for their relatives buried in flooded cemeteries, they fear a second disappearance through the theft of remains and evidence. Since 2010, in Sabanalarga, Ituango, communities have denounced the existence of graves and bodies buried on the banks of the river. The process of filling the reservoir without alerting the communities prevented the exhumation, identification and delivery of the remains to the families. Thus, EPM made it unfeasible to know the truth about the forced disappearances and to demand justice and reparation,

The IACHR held the Colombian state responsible for these crimes, and the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice declared them crimes against humanity.

another serious prejudice against their rights as victims. The Observatory of Memory and Conflict of the National Centre for Historical Memory (CNMH), between 1958 and 2018, documented 2,345 direct victims of enforced disappearance in the 17 municipalities surrounding the Cauca River in Antioquia.

However, the circulation of unidentified bodies along the river, threats and constant intimidation of the inhabitants who dare to denounce or collaborate to clarify the crimes have been even more shocking. The surveillance of the dam includes espionage activities through photography, filming, and collecting data concerning fishers, panners, and any other person to hand over to the company.

In particular, in two villages in the neighbouring municipality of Ituango, paramilitaries perpetrated the massacres of El Aro (1997)⁵⁹ and La Granja (1996),⁶⁰ both chapters in Colombia's all-time history. The IACHR held the Colombian state

⁵⁷ ↪ Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia. Observation and verification mission report on the conditions of the search for disappeared persons and the preservation of the areas where unidentified bodies are presumed to be buried along the Cauca River Canyon., Antioquia, Colombia. 15-23 enero, 2018. <https://riosvivoscolombia.org/uploads/2019/04PD>. Pp. 6-7 y 8.

⁵⁸ ↪ Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia. Informe Misión de observación y verificación sobre las condiciones de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas y preservación de las zonas (...). P. 10.

⁵⁹ ↪ Andrés Rivera. Informe completo con nuevas evidencias. [MASACRE DEL ARO ASESINATO DE JESUS MARIA VALLE - 📄](https://laverdadnadamasquelaverdad.com/) [【NOTICIAS HOY COLOMBIA】](https://laverdadnadamasquelaverdad.com/) © (23 de agosto de 2020).

⁶⁰ ↪ Masacre de La Granja. <https://verdadabierta.com/masacre-de-la-granja/> 2 de febrero de 1980.

responsible for these crimes, and the Colombian Supreme Court of Justice declared them crimes against humanity. The powerful former president Álvaro Uribe has yet to be brought to justice.⁶¹ In summary, the Mission proposed to the Truth Commission that, firstly, a strategy for the preservation of memory, truth and guarantees of non-repetition, the protection of sites for the disposal of bodies and the reference of burial sites for unidentified persons should be drawn up. Secondly, to make visible adequate attention to the violation of victims' rights in the area of the Cauca River Canyon. Thirdly, EPM should refrain from taking actions *against memory, truth and justice through the recovery, identification and delivery of the bodies buried on the banks of the Cauca River or that may affect the investigation, prosecution and punishment of acts that violate Human Rights or violations of International Humanitarian Law.*⁶²

In contrast, EPM and the government, backed by media oligopolies of information, persist in denying or ignoring the social dialogue with community associations and dodging at all costs compliance with the recommendations and commitments made to human rights and international humanitarian law bodies.⁶³ Since 2018, the MRVA has been denouncing the multiplication of armed actors after signing the Peace Agreement with FARC-EP (2016). Communities

What is happening now is the complete overflow of irresponsibility, improvisation, and arrogance with which these people continue to manage the course of our social imbalance.

and leaders opposed to the IHP have been declared military targets,⁶⁴ reminding them of the dark days of the 1990s and the beginning of the 21st century. Similarly, under the government of Iván Duque, human rights violations have been worsening, with the stamp of brutality and torture with the sole purpose of

controlling and silencing any dissident voice through fear.⁶⁵ The tragedy forged by the owners of EPM is part of the accumulation of unresolved problems:

- the deplorable environmental situation of Medellín
- the manifest links of business people with narco-paramilitarism
- the real estate bubble and the construction of buildings with obsolete materials that crack and fall down

*But what is happening now is the complete overflow of irresponsibility, improvisation, and arrogance with which these people continue to manage the course of our social imbalance. Montoya adds: Did they ask permission from the Cauca River to build their gigantic and gigantic construction project? Did they ask permission from the land to drill into it? Did they ask permission from the native communities to intervene in their territories? All this was overlooked by these frivolous technocrats, these pedantic businessmen, these foolish politicians. Because for them, the main thing is finance (...), political corruption and the repression and assassination of popular leaders.*⁶⁶

⁶¹ ↪ Laura Ardila Arrieta. Colombia: el territorio indígena que ahogó la poderosa Hidroituango. <https://es.mongabay.com/2019/04/colombia-el-territorio-indigena-que-ahogo-la-poderosa-hidroituango/>. 23 de abril 2019.

⁶² ↪ Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia. Informe Misión de observación y verificación sobre las condiciones de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas y preservación de las zonas (...). Op. Cit. Pp. 10-12

⁶³ ↪ The national government failed to comply with the human rights verification mission in the municipality of Valdivia, Antioquia agreed with the Agrarian, Peasant, Ethnic and Popular Summit. MRVA. 20-21 de octubre de 2016. <https://riosvivoscolombia.org/uploads/2018/09/All-local-organisations-linked-to-the-MRVA-attended-the-meeting-while-none-of-the-governmental-institutions-summoned-attended-the-meeting-the-Attorney-General's-Office-the-Ministry-of-the-Interior-Directorate-of-Human-Rights-the-Ministry-of-Defence-the-National-Ombudsman's-Office-OACNUDH-the-Attorney-General's-Office.pdf>

⁶⁴ ↪ The MRVA holds the following responsible: Luis Alfredo Ramos (2008-2011), the main responsible person for the emergency, businessman and majority shareholder of Hidroituango. He "intimidated and threatened environmental defenders with imprisonment and encouraged the violation of human and environmental rights through actions linked to paramilitaries". Sergio Fajardo (2012-2015) for ignoring all the complaints and denunciations of the communities, giving priority to private economic interests over the public good and that of rural communities. Luis Pérez (2016-2018) for making a soap opera out of the environmental catastrophe in the region, stigmatising the defenders and minimising the severe problem in the eyes of public opinion. In Margarita Pacheco. Women and Indigenous Peoples in #Hidroituango. <https://semanarural.com/web/articulo/mujeres-y-pueblos-indigenas-en-hidroituango/544>. Semana Rural. Junio 12 de 2018

⁶⁵ ↪ Movimiento Ríos Vivos de Antioquia. Informe Misión de observación y verificación sobre las condiciones de búsqueda de personas desaparecidas y preservación de las zonas (...). Op. Cit. P. 18

⁶⁶ ↪ Montoya, Pablo. *Hidroituango: La vergüenza de la pujanza empresarial antioqueña*. 5 de Mayo de 2018. <https://www.revistaarcadia.com/agenda/articulo/hidroituango-tragedia-medellin-antioquia-pablo-montoya-critica/69330>.

The Dam Reconfigures the Geographical Space and Ravages the Socio-Economic Relations of the Cauca River Canyon

The IHP bears the imprint of neoliberal purist developmentalism rather than supplying the internal demand for energy.

The governor of Antioquia de facto transferred EPM to the private mega-monopoly GEA instead of administering it as a state possession on behalf of the citizens of Antioquia, its true owner.

They are after private profits through the ecological and environmental undermining of the indissoluble unity of the nation's Cauca River. The governor of Antioquia (2012-2015) de facto transferred EPM to the private mega-monopoly GEA⁶⁷ instead of administering it as a state possession on

behalf of the citizens of Antioquia, its true owner. This political-economic operation favouring the private sector revealed the violation of the most elementary principles of good governance of public affairs. On the other hand, the authoritarian decision gave room for the subsequent carousel of self-contracting under the concept of corporate governance, to the detriment of consultation, an essential guideline of the OECD that should be made to the citizens in an effective and continuous manner. It further adds: *The state should act as an informed and active owner and establish a clear and consistent ownership policy, ensuring that the corporate governance of public enterprises is conducted in a transparent and accountable manner, with the necessary level of professionalism and effectiveness.*⁶⁸

The transfer from the public to the private sector ignored the fact that the IHP is built in the natural geometry of the Cauca River Canyon, the habitat of the endangered tropical dry forest, and the Nutabe territory and peasant settlers. In

Any domestic product that brings any economic benefit to the North leaves the country.

the privatisation of EPM, we find the backdrop of engineering errors in favour of cost savings and increased dividends. Although the focus is on the reservoir, privatisation has transgressed the precautionary principle of constitutional rights over the tropical dry forests, Colombia's unique natural heritage (natural assets),

and the millenary archaeological remains of the Nutabe. This constitutes forced displacement, serious crimes against life, and the expulsion of Nutabe and peasants without any economic compensation.

In Colombia, the neoliberal corporate model over the last 50 years has focused on the extractivism of natural resources, minerals, hydrocarbons, bottling of streams or the construction of dams for electricity exports. Any domestic product that brings any economic benefit to the North leaves the country. Global financial capitalism has required the creation of complex structures of foreign powers in Colombian territory, closed to the national populations, who have been

The transfer of public property has the acquiescence and direct intervention of large local companies through legally constituted institutions, strengthened by militarisation with legal troops and parastatal complements.

alienated from their properties, ways of life, kinship networks, traditions and socio-natural environments. According to Renan Vega, *extractivism has brought back enclave economies insofar as foreign investments of the 'productive type' implanted in the national territory (in the cities and the countryside) operate with an eye, not to the domestic to the global market. In the*

enclaves, capital accumulation processes are not carried out at the local and/or national level - with the productive

⁶⁷ ↪ Suramericana S.A. (filial), Sura Asset Management S.A. (filial), Administradora de Fondos de Pensiones y Cesantías Protección S.A. (asociada), Bancolombia S.A. (asociada) Argos S.A. (asociada), Grupo Nutresa S.A. (asociada), Arus S.A. (filial), Hábitat Adulto Mayor S.A. (filial)).

⁶⁸ ↪ OCDE. Directrices de la OCDE sobre el Gobierno Corporativo de las Empresas Públicas. <https://www.oecd.org/daf/ca/corporategovernanceprinciples/37191543.pdf>
2011. P. 15

*chains that this would generate - but activities are developed in line with the interests of transnational capital, whose functioning is linked to the large markets of the core countries.*⁶⁹

The transfer of public property has the acquiescence and direct intervention of large local companies through legally constituted institutions, strengthened by militarisation with legal troops and parastatal complements. This exogenous corporate joint venture with national and local governments has subordinated the economy and national interests to the reproduction of global capitalism. It has obstructed internal development in the sectors of industrialisation and the productive agrarian structures of the peasantry. The integrated rural development of the Peace Agreement (2016) offers solutions to the social conflict of illicit crops in the sugar cane growing region through the recovery of the countryside with investments, technology, advice and technical assistance, food security with local products and, in turn, the implementation of resilient policies and actions in the face of the climate crisis.

The Particular Modus Operandi of the Ituango Hydrological Project's Board of Directors

The administrative opacity of the IHP board of directors has been a constant from the beginning until today, full of entanglements, denunciations, half-truths, misleading publicity, misinformation and revolving doors between officials of private consortiums and EPM public companies, in endless legal proceedings and discharge of responsibilities to the detriment of the public sector and the populations living on the banks of the Cauca River. The members of four consortiums are playing out the current financial episode (2022) with the governmental control institutions. Due to these circumstances, the information I present here is based on filtered and contrasted data from various sources in the official press and specialised writings on the subject.

In 2018 the flood crisis occurred under the collapse of the Cauca River diversion tunnel, giving rise to the date of entry of these floods to the distinguished list of engineering failures gestated in corruption. All of this was due, according to convenience, to EPM's business interests on the board of directors, where, on some occasions, its members participated as partners or contractors. The fact that this governance and project execution format is registered with the Chamber of Commerce does not translate into a code of good governance. Depending on the circumstances, the project owners have refrained from participating in some decisions in which they are involved.

Secondly, on 3 December 2020, seven years of dubious management and bad decisions, according to the Comptroller's Office, would have caused a \$2.9 billion deterioration of assets due to administrative, construction, execution and control failures, leading to a loss of \$1.1 billion in profits in addition to the major emergency of 2018. The Comptroller's Office divided the fiscal responsibilities of the project into four categories: the members of the board of directors of the Hidroituango Society, the managers of EPM and IHP, the mayors and governors at the time and, finally, the contractors in charge of the main constructions, as well as the auditors who were to oversee the proper execution of the work. In total, four large consortiums.⁷⁰ About the dam's collapse, the National Environmental Licensing Agency (ANLA) ordered the preventive suspension of the works (June 2018). Additionally, it clarified that *the resolution does not involve the suspension of all activities, works, tasks and, in general, all environmental measures that the project manager must execute to prevent and mitigate the risks associated with the contingency presented.*⁷¹

⁶⁹ ↪ Renán Vega Cantor. [Extractivismo, enclaves y destrucción ambiental](#), Agosto 18 de 2014.

⁷⁰ ↪ Redacción Económica. [Hidroituango: siete años de malas decisiones habrían causado deterioro patrimonial de \\$2,9 billones](#), 3 de diciembre de 2020

⁷¹ ↪ Redacción Económica. [El Espectador. ANLA ordena suspender preventivamente obras en Hidroituango](#), 29 de junio de 2018.

Thirdly, the Comptroller General of the Republic confirms the fiscal responsibility ruling in Hidroituango for \$4.3 billion for gross negligence against 26 officials and contractors due to the financial damage caused by Hidroituango, without the possibility of appealing the order by which the initial decision was made. Likewise, the control body declared the insurance company Mapfre Seguros a civilly liable third party, making the policy effective. Under this premise, the destruction of more than \$3.1 billion *occurred due to the unjustified major investments that were made, as a result of having made improvised decisions omitting the principle of planning and compromising the resources of the treasury.* On the other hand, the Superintendency of Public Utilities notified EPM companies of a penalty of \$1,817 million for failing to comply with the date of entry into operation of Hidroituango under the 2018 contingency. The manager reported that the project is more than 85% complete, with a total investment of \$18 billion, including capex and cost overruns.⁷²

The incident of patrimonial damage to the Department of Antioquia and the nation between EPM and GEA summarises a criminal procedure manual, which in the case of IHP *is a mixture of politics, mistrust and a billion-dollar lawsuit.* The mayor of Medellín, Daniel Quintero, had no alternative but to confront the GEA interests enthroned in EPM to replace the board of directors to take back the company. The mayor's strategy was to conceal from the board that he had a \$9.9 billion lawsuit against the consortia behind the hydroelectric plant. He argued that the design errors and the construction of the Cauca River diversion tunnel ignored the recommendations of the panel of experts who were monitoring based on the study by the firm SKAVA, by order of the ANLA. In conclusion, there were no natural causes for the tunnel's collapse due to geological faults or elements such as rocks or logs, but rather design and construction errors due to the inadequate lining of the construction.⁷³

The procedure of covering up errors and evading claims between consortiums under the umbrella of the GEA had long been a *modus operandi* as a business strategy and the preeminence of private interests. The intention was to favour Concreto, Coninsa-Ramón H. and Integral, and by reaching an agreement, they avoided bankruptcy with this manoeuvre. Among other similar precedents to Hidroituango, there are the issues of the Bonyic hydroelectric plant in Panama, given its proximity to the GEA. The Comptroller's Office found an initial value of US\$90 million and ended up with cost overruns of US\$314 million. (February 2018). The criticism of EPM by the watchdog was limited to describing it *as cronyism between contractors.* For Jurídica, the lawsuit could be inconvenient because Concreto (the same builder of Hidroituango) is an ally of EPM (2014). In the auction of irregularities, let us look at other cases: One shareholder of a group of leading companies exercised 'all' his capacities in business relations to favour EPM. Another served as vice-president of SURA and, at the same time, advised on all reinsurance matters for EPM. In other words, he had the gift of ubiquity. It seems that the position of GEA's shareholders has been to avoid lawsuits to avoid crises and to prevent *insurers from becoming an obstacle and that the best way forward was to conciliate.*⁷⁴

Consequently, the lawsuit against the contractors forced the Consorcios Generación Ituango (designers), CCCI Ituango (builders) and Sedic Ingetec (interveners) to take responsibility for the costs, preventing EPM from assuming the economic losses and, consequently, ending the fair of more public resources for the benefit of the private sector. In this sense, they are jointly and severally and extra contractually liable for the damages caused to third parties by the rising Cauca River downstream of the IHP (2018) and the subsequent preventive evacuation order in the Corregimiento de Puerto Valdivia and the municipalities of Cáceres and Tarazá, for the omission of duties in the construction, design,

⁷² ↪ Forbes Staff. [Millonaria sanción a EPM por incumplimiento con Hidroituango](#), 25 de noviembre 2021.

⁷³ ↪ Redacción de investigación. [El Espectador. Caso Hidroituango, la pelea que enfrenta a EPM y al GEA](#), 15 de agosto de 2020.

⁷⁴ ↪ Redacción de investigación. [El Caso Hidroituango, la pelea que enfrenta a EPM y al GEA El Espectador](#), 15 de agosto de 2020. .

execution of works and supervision of the auxiliary gallery of diversion and the deployment in it, a dangerous activity, EPM pointed out.⁷⁵

On the other hand, EPM's legal vice-presidency argued that the companies in charge of the design, construction and supervision were responsible for the non-compliance of the work schedules, which have caused 1,198 days of delay, which contemplated the generation of energy since December 2018 and costs of \$ 993,000 million. Finally, *after the payment of Mafpre and three other insurers; the Comptroller's Office declares the \$4.3 billion in damages in the Hidroituango case to be fully repaired. It immediately ordered the lifting of the precautionary measures on the assets owned by the 26 natural and legal persons declared liable for taxation.*⁷⁶ According to statements by the control body, *this is the largest recovery of public money declared as property damage that the Comptroller's Office has ever achieved in its history.*⁷⁷

Partial Conclusions

Globally, the construction of dams creates two serious problems as an alternative to non-polluting fossil energy. Firstly,

For the owners of the IHP, it means a multiplication of private profits externalised from the commons, leaving a burden of social, ecological and environmental conflicts, solved through the necropolitics of exclusion and macabre forms of the death industry.

hydrological fractures in the dynamics of flows in the distribution, circulation, volume and quality of water, cause unforeseen decreases in riverbeds, undermining fishing due to contamination and toxicity in aquatic life. Likewise, the swamp and river systems are disturbed by patterns of overflowing and flooding under the cascade of negative impacts from agricultural and fishing activities in response to the energy

market. And secondly, dams decrease their lifespan concerning economic costs and their impact on the climate crisis.⁷⁸

For the owners of the IHP, it means a multiplication of private profits externalised from the commons, leaving a burden

Beyond the borders of this world of intimacy, familiar, immediate experience, repetition, calculation, and individual mastery, another world begins, which is the exact opposite of everyday life... If the link with the land is unexpectedly broken, everyday life, one of the greatest capitals of subjectivities of the good life, vanishes.

of social, ecological and environmental conflicts, solved through the necropolitics of exclusion and macabre forms of the death industry. Meanwhile, for the Nutabe and peasant populations, development is synonymous with good living in direct dependence on nature's ecosystem services: the tropical dry forests and the Cauca River. From this biogeographical

context, it is inadmissible to accept as valid one of the worst crimes consummated in the privatisation of the Cauca River.

Accordingly, the resistance of the canyon's inhabitants represents the demands of millions of people throughout the basin up to its mouth at the Magdalena River. The violent banishment of leaders and entire families has eliminated the synergetic satisfiers of subsistence, protection, affection and identity⁷⁹ of ancestral tradition. The collective work of

⁷⁵ ↪ Redacción de investigación. Caso Hidroituango, la pelea que enfrenta a EPM y al GEA. Ibid.

⁷⁶ ↪ Contraloría. Comunicado de Prensa No. 008. [Tras el pago de Mafpre y 3 aseguradoras más: Contraloría declara reparado integralmente el daño patrimonial de \\$4,3 billones en el caso Hidroituango](#). 28 de enero de 2022.

⁷⁷ ↪ [Declaran reparado el detrimento patrimonial en caso Hidroituango](#). Enero 28 de 2022.

⁷⁸ ↪ Duque Escobar.Op. Cit. P. 12-13

⁷⁹ ↪ Mandred Max-Neef, Antonio Elizalde, Martín Hopenhayn. *Desarrollo a escala humana*. <http://habitat.aq.upm.es/frh/> p. 29.

Minga is lived in the daily relationships of friendship, kinship and camaraderie. At the same time, in community organisations, they are axes of articulation around leisure and freedom, affection and identity in the context of the commons. *In everyday life, the individual creates relationships on the basis of his or her own experience, his or her possibilities and activities, and therefore considers this reality as his or her world. Beyond the borders of this world of intimacy, familiar, immediate experience, repetition, calculation, and individual mastery, another world begins, which is the exact opposite of everyday life.*⁸⁰

If the link with the land is unexpectedly broken, everyday life, one of the greatest capitals of subjectivities of the good life, vanishes. Deterritorialisation reifies the person in the name of development: an empty concept without content when people are excluded from the organisation of day-to-day life in the daily distribution of time. *Everyday life is the division of time and the rhythm in which each person's unique history unfolds. Everyday life has its own experience, its wisdom, its horizon, its forecasts, its repetitions and also its exceptions, its common and festive days.*⁸¹ From this sphere, the MRVA encompasses the community organisations of the region, which have resisted and combined different forms of social struggle: mobilisations, debates, communiqués to public opinion, complaints to State control bodies and national and international human rights tribunals. The research, reports and scientific concepts of the UNC's geoscience experts have provided the technical support for the arguments of organisational resistance, to the violence of neo-colonial extractive capitalism, without the expected results so far.

Turning to the reservoir, firstly, the technical concept of the UNC, Medellín headquarters, on the study of the physical components of the natural environment concerning the stability of the rock massif (geology, geotechnics, geomorphology, neotectonics and seismicity), the objectives and scope of the studies do not correspond with the size and scale of the project, with the characteristics of the area where it is intended to build and with the design phase for

The solutions to the IHP crisis proposes the technical and controlled dismantling of the dam in steps or stages, which is more economical and, above all, avoids loss of life and economic losses... Without completely demolishing the wall, reopen the Cauca river to its natural course/level and the ancestral route.

construction. In the current situation (2019), the actual effects of water diversion through Casa de Maquinas are unknown. It is impossible to accept "per se" "solutions" that do not know the current state of what they intend to remedy.⁸² On the other hand, EPM has done what it does best: lie about the facts through the official media, minimising the consequences of

water transit through the underground excavations, one of the many shortcomings exposed in this document.⁸³

Secondly, the solutions to the IHP crisis, the technical report of the UNC, Bogotá office, the engineer Portilla, proposes the technical and controlled dismantling of the dam in steps or stages, which is more economical and, above all, avoids loss of life and economic losses that would be unaffordable for any Colombian company and perhaps for the country itself: From this projection, he proposed: (i) Evaluate the conditions of the wall, the rock massif and the reservoir. (ii) Formulate the water release process; (iii) Dismantle the wall up to elevation 385 (from where the priority fill is). (iv) Reinforce the rock massif by injections of special concrete; (v) Without completely demolishing the wall, reopen the

⁸⁰ ↪ Karel Kosík. *Dialéctica de lo concreto*. Editorial Grijalbo, S.A. México. 1967. P. 93

⁸¹ ↪ Karel Kosík. P. 92

⁸² ↪ Situación actual del proyecto Hidroituango. Op. Cit. Pp. 11-12

⁸³ ↪ Ibid. P. 11

*Cauca River to its natural course/level and the ancestral route; (vi) Create a museum in this area to show people who visit it in the future the things that should not be done and why they should not be done.*⁸⁴

In contrast to the two previous positions, the report of the Chilean consulting firm Pöyry: Leave the same board members, unlike Mayor Daniel Quintero, who proposed to replace it. The report argues for further delays of a minimum of one year, and could reduce traceability in the recovery of the work and *increase the overall cost and responsibility for design and execution would be lost. The final concept is that the project is technically recoverable.* It recognises the increased catastrophic risks in several respects, the most dangerous of which is a significant rise in the reservoir level due

The dam must be dismantled in the context of the recovery of the Cauca river, the Nutabe-campesino territory and the rest of the populations that have lived for centuries on the banks of the Cauca river until it flows into the Magdalena River.

to a major landslide in the canyon region upstream of the project site. It adds another worst-case scenario, referring to progressive damage to the spillway itself, which could lead to the total loss of the IHP with catastrophic consequences. The report acknowledges that *the risk exists and is high due to the continuous operation and*

difficulty of executing major repairs without another element to evacuate torrential floods. The most problematic findings could potentially result in a dam breach, a catastrophic event. Pöyry leaves technical recommendations for the recovery of the IHP.

As can be seen, Pöyry's decision is purely economic, favouring the failed dam in terms of future benefits to the reservoir owners. This report will be the support for ANLA to make a final decision. From the interests of half of the Colombian country, we hope that it will also consider the technical concepts of the experts of the two UNC headquarters on the macro basin of the Cauca river: the dam must be dismantled in the context of the recovery of the Cauca River, the Nutabe-campesino territory and the rest of the populations that have lived for centuries on the banks of the Cauca River until it flows into the Magdalena River.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ ↪ Modesto Portilla Gamboa. *Hidroituango: crónica de una tragedia anunciada*. Op. Cit. Pp. 145-146

⁸⁵ ↪ Juan Diego Ortiz. [Conclusiones del informe clave sobre Hidroituango: es recuperable pero aún persiste alto riesgo](#), 22 de enero de 2022.

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