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REBEL GOVERNMENT AND CIVILIAN RESISTANCE: CONSERVATION EXPERIENCES DURING THE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE CAÑÓN DE LAS HERMOSAS IN COLOMBIA

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Abstract

Cañón de las Hermosas is located in a buffer zone of the Páramos Complex of the National Natural Park of the same name, located on the eastern flank of the Cordillera Central, in the Andean Region of Colombia. Several of the most recurrent symptoms in the diagnosis of civil war in the country were concentrated there: poverty and inequality, state precariousness-weakness, social and territorial control by armed groups, disputes over illegal rents derived from the cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs (ECHANDÍA CASTILLA, 1996, 2000; APONTE GONZÁLEZ, 2019; OBSERVATORIO DE PAZ Y DERECHOS HUMANOS, 2020a, 2020b). This extensive zone was catalogued as one of the sanctuaries of the FARC guerrillas, which guaranteed security, collected taxes, administered justice and regulated coexistence efficiently and effectively through punishments, fines and executions. This happened, particularly with the protection of the environment, a phenomenon that comes close to what DÁVALOS calls "conservation at gunpoint" (DÁVALOS, 2001; CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS REGIONALES, 2020b).

After the weakening of the guerrilla by the pacification operations during the 2000s, this conservation work was left in the hands of the civilian population, who denounced the destruction of fragile ecosystems due to the militarization of the territory, and particularly, the construction of a hydroelectric dam in the Amoyá river, in the heart of the Hermosas Canyon. In my work I argue that the Observatorio de Derechos Humanos para la Protección del Medio Ambiente and Mesa de la Transparencia del Cañón de las Hermosas can be characterized as civil resistance mechanisms, conceived with the objective of protecting the population and the environment (TAFUR VILLARREAL, 2021). Community preferences are explained by the degree of social cooperation expressed from the mobilization (protest) and organization capacities, which allowed them to join all the autonomous community spaces of the village of Las Hermosas in a social platform for direct and indirect dialogue with institutional and political actors (among which are included the armed, legal and illegal ones).

At the methodological level, the research design and methods integrated fieldwork and archival review with qualitative analysis, and included field interviews, documentary and archival review.

Keywords: Andean region. Armed groups. Civilian resistance.

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The author declares that he has been solely responsible for every phase of this research.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

The authors disclose that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the study reported in this manuscript.

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