



Colombia at a Crossroads

When peace leads to deforestation

*a photojournalism project by Thomas Cytrynowicz
for the Carmignac Foundation
2019*





Koguis Shaman, by Dwayne Reilan. (wikimedia commons)

Impact of Deforestation

Deforestation is a systemic environmental issue in all parts of the world. The Amazon forest, covering 5,5 million km² in Latin America, is the biggest deforestation front in the world.

The WWF estimates that 27% of the forest will be lost to deforestation by 2030.

Mainly due to human activities linked to the agribusiness, and increasingly so for mining, deforestation is one salient symptom of biodiversity loss, water cycles disturbance and increased climate change .

If these issues are not enough, the Amazon forest is also the scene of violent murders. In 2017 alone, 115 environmental defenders were killed for fighting against deforestation and illegal land grabbing in Latin America

While Brazil accounts for the most deaths, it is followed by Colombia.

Colombia is an interesting case study when it comes to understanding deforestation, which is why my photography project will focus on this country.



It is the second most biodiverse country in the world, and home to a vast rainforest the size of Germany and the United Kingdom combined. Currently, **the country stands at a historical crossroads when it comes to environmental preservation.**

More than 50 years of internal conflict between the government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), which led to the death of 220,000 people, have recently ceded to a peace treaty in November 2016. The latest elections were the country's most peaceful in decades. Amidst the promise of renewed economic and social development, **the Colombian Amazon might be at greater risk than ever.**





Aerial view of the Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, by Lubasi

Environmental Pledges & Rising Toll

In recent years, the Colombian government has made far reaching environmental pledges. It was the first country to ratify the TFA2020, in 2017, an environment plan that aims at a net deforestation rate of 0 by 2020 and at stopping all natural forest loss by 2030.

The government plans to work closely with indigenous groups and NGOs in developing innovation through monitoring technology, climate policy implementation and better land use management and energy efficiency.

Despite such optimistic political decisions, deforestation has been on the rise lately. Up to 44% percent indeed, according to a report by the Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies.

Last April, the country's highest court told the Colombian government it must «take urgent action» because «the Amazon [rainforest] is a subject of rights.»

The landmark case has been taken amidst a recent surge in deforestation and rose concern as to the government's incapacity to take efficient actions in tackling the issue.

The plaintiffs, young men and women pushing for their constitutional right to a healthy environment,

were supported by Dejusticia. The human rights group fights against climate change and land destruction through investigation and the promotion of «an ordering of the territory consistent with economic development, socio-environmental principles and the existence of policies and measures to avoid environmental damage from [...] extracting industries.»

It seems that recent deforestation is taking place as a direct consequence of the peace treaty that led to the FARC demobilisation in November 2016. What we see in former FARC-controlled regions is a power vacuum, pushing

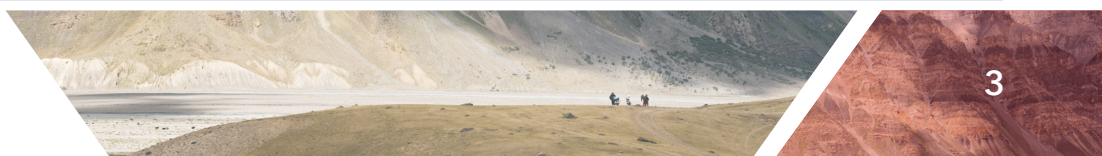
local farmers to clear up the forest to increase the size of their cattle exploitation, as well as various far-right groups to claim land for themselves.

The surge in deforestation has been accompanied by an increase in environment-related killings as well. In 2017 alone, 24 environmental defenders were killed while protesting actively against large-scale agriculture and mining activities, according to the global witness 2018 report.

Sources : End of Colombia conflict may bring new threats to ecosystems, The Earth Institute at Columbia University, September 2018, https://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2018-09/teia-eoc091118.php

TFA2020 report, 2018, <https://www.tfa2020.org/en/activities/brazil-initiative/>

Ideam report, 2018, <http://www.ideam.gov.co/documents/24277/0/Presentaci%C3%B3n+Estrategia+Integral+de+Control+a+la+Deforestaci%C3%B3n/173f79bf-3e68-4cbc-9387-80123d09b5e2>





Aerial view of the Amazon Rainforest, Brazil, by Lubasi

Work Approach

In order to fight against recent deforestation trends, the government promised a closer partnership with local communities and special units to be put in place in all regions. Armed forces, police, special judges and environmental authorities are parts of the new efforts to slow down deforestation of the rainforest in regions where armed conflict used to rage.

Are environmental defenders and indigenous communities benefiting from such actions?

Can Colombia really implement environmental change and safeguard civilians on the very front of environmental loss while it focuses on post-war economic and social developments?

Challenges are massive but the future looks bright for Colombia. On paper, it is one of the most engaged country as a whole to fight against deforestation.

My photography project will dive into the current situation and examine what decisions the country's different "stakeholders" will make and how it will impact peace, sustainable livelihoods and environmental protection.

I envision the project as a tri-part photo essay in colour, looking at:

I. Government pledges and their implementations, the political struggle between government and environmental activists in reaching goals set by TAF2020. authorities put in place by the government. Some reports show that they are currently largely unfunded and under equipped to reach their goals.

II. indigenous communities on the ground (communities of murdered ED): As such, I will:

Nasa and Kokonuoko indigenous groups, Cauca valley (<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2017/oct/28/nasa-colombia-cauca-valley-battle-mother-land>), José Rene Guetio, nasa elder.

III. The newly funded environmental special units, armed forces and environmental **Follow environmental activists' actions before the government,**
Be embedded in villages at the forefront of environmental killings.
And be embedded with local armed groups in defence of areas at risk of illegal deforestation.

Sources : Global Witness 2018 report, <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/defenders-annual-report/>
Colombia steps up the battle against Amazon deforestation, Ministry of Climate and Environment, september 2017, <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/colombia-stanser-veitbygging-og-okker-innsats-mot-ulovlig-hogst-i-amazonas/id2571038/>





Aerial view of the Amazon Rainforest, by CIFOR

Challenges

Some obvious challenges come with the scope of the project.

I. Violence-prone Areas

Mitigation:

- Some areas will be avoided for safety reasons
 - Terrestrial outer borders
 - Nariño, Putumayo
- In-depth research on local geopolitics through embassies and human rights groups (Bogota and region specific)

II. Language barrier

Mitigation:

- Intensive course before starting documentation project in order to be fluent in Spanish.
- Make use of a local fixer.

Expected support from the Carmignac Foundation :

- Safety training
- Help in finding appropriate fixer in Colombia





Points of Contact

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS

- Earth Innovation Institute
- Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 (at the core of Colombia's environmental pledges)
- Fundacion Natural Colombia, institutional environmental strategy
- Gaia program, Costa-Rica based journalism mentorship group for climate related investigation
- IDEAM, Institute of Hydrology, Meteorology and Environmental Studies, government agency
- Naturamazonas, public-private inter-institutional alliance that focuses on deforestation

HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS

- Solidaridad - human rights, ED
- Dejusticia.org - human rights group, help ED
- CCAJAR

INSTITUTIONAL

- Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
- French Embassy in Colombia
- Dutch Embassy in Colombia

LOCAL JOURNALISTS

Environmental issues

- Richard Aguirre Fernandez, el Colombiano
- Juan José Hoyos, El colombiano
- Jamie Vaughan Johnson, Colombia Reports
- Kata Karath, <https://twitter.com/katakarath>
- CLAVES21, online newspaper - environmental issues
- Maria Clara Valencia, environmental specialist

FARC and guerrillas

- Hollman Morris, <https://twitter.com/hollmanmorris?lang=en>
- Juan Pablo Morris, <https://twitter.com/juanpablomorris?lang=en>





Budget

I. Pre-production: 15,000€ (November-January)

Expense	Amount (€)
Equipment purchase	10,000
Equipment insurance	1,000
Spanish Course	300
In-depth research (Nov-Dec)	1,700
Per Diem in Colombia, January research	2,000
Total	13,000

III. Post-production: 20,800€ (May-June + exhibitions)

Expense	Amount
Editing period	3,500
Exhibitions planning	3,500
Conferences and interviews	6,800
Time cost for production phase (salary)	8,000
Total	20,800€

II. Production: 14,200€ (February-April)

Expense	Amount
Flights	1,500
Per diem (food, accommodation)	4,000
Visa	200
Personal Insurance	500
Fixer/driver	2,000
Car + gas	2,000
Plane for up to 4 days (aerial photography)	2,000
Emergency fund, Unplanned Expenses	2,000
Total	14,200€

A research trip to Colombia is planned for the month of January 2019.

Fieldwork will take place for three months between February and April 2019.





ANY QUESTION:

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Camp of Displaced Tibetans, Himachal Pradesh, by Thomas Cytrynowicz

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