



Socioecological memories and river infrastructures in the Bogotá River headwaters

Country: Colombia

Host institute: WUR River Commons Project; Bogotá River Headwaters case

The Bogotá River basin forms the ecological, cultural and economic core of Bogotá City and surroundings. The river supplies large part of the water for the capital and its municipalities. The Bogotá River headwaters in the Guacheneque *páramo*, Villapinzón (Cundinamarca), has strict conservation measures, such as forest reserve and the **páramo protection**, due to significant transformation in the second decade of the 20th century. Despite this, once the river crosses the *páramo*-forest transition zone, it begins to receive pesticides and fertilizers from the potato agribusiness, waste from the milk industry, and livestock.

Decades-old collective inhabitants of the high-mountain daily practices and communitarian governance initiatives, such as the local aqueducts have become leading examples for river protection. Simultaneously, over the past decade, various public-private water governance schemes have utilized a distinct sociotechnical memory to establish large-scale river infrastructures at the regional level, aimed at safeguarding the headwaters and restore the high-mountain ecosystems (e.g. PES schemes or Water Funds).

For this case, we focus the tensions between conservation strategies for the *páramo* and the high-mountain and river management in the nearest city, Villapinzón: **Why do we invest significant human and economic efforts in conserving páramos and water sources if their protection significantly diminishes once the river transitions into the urban center?** To address this question, we propose a critical analysis of the (dis)articulation between distinct and divergent socioecological memories associated with collective community conservation practices and public-private alliances in the headwater region, through different territorial and spatial memories representations and analysis (**institutional maps, cartographies, social and counter-cartographies**).



Guacheneque *páramo*; counter-mapping workshop in Villapinzón and socialization.
Photographs by Laura Giraldo

Project details

Group: River Commons-Water Resources Management (WRM)
Project type: MSc Thesis

Begin date: April 2024 (preparatory phase) September 2024 (Fieldwork) // End date: TBD

Used skills: **Fluent in Spanish**; willingness to perform interviews, transcription and translation of interviews; and cartography archival searches.

Contact

PhD researcher: Laura Giraldo-Martínez
Supervisor(s) in WUR: Rutgerd Boelens, Bibiana Duarte

Contact details: laura.giraldomartinez@wur.nl;
bibiana.duarteabadia@wur.nl