

Conference Report  
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**Paper Title:** Fear induced displacement in Colombia<sup>1</sup>

ISA, 53rd Annual Convention, 2012  
San Diego, California

I was awarded a conference grant by SLAS to attend International Studied Association's annual conference, ISA 2012, held in San Diego. My paper was presented as part of a panel on violence in Latin America - *Unpacking the challenges of violence in Latin America: Causation and impact*. Overall the objective of the panel was to answer the following questions (taken from the panel proposal):

- How is violence understood and perceived throughout Latin American countries?
- What are the causes of the various forms of violence? In what ways do they impact development within the region?
- Can we find some differences/similarities between the different geographical areas of the Latin American region?
- In what ways does a dialogue on violence between the Southern Cone and Central America have to offer to the study of violence and its impact on the development of the region?

The panel pointed to different forms of contemporary violence in various countries of Latin America. Papers ranged from discussions on uneven economic development and its relation to crime and violence in El Salvador, on intergroup conflict in Nicaragua, on the politics of risk and participation in Brazil, on crime-conflict nexus in Mexico and Guatemala, and on violence and internal displacement in Colombia. In my paper I was looking at how violence is used instrumentally with the objective to generate fear which in some cases ultimately leads to displacement. I suggested the fear is present before, during and after displacement, however to a different extent and in a different form.

Some common characteristics of these various conflicts were named, like rise of urban gang related violence in El Salvador, Guatemala and Brazil and the growth in drug trafficking in Mexico and Colombia. The impact of violence on economic, social and political spheres and also its emotional impact were examined.

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<sup>1</sup> As a result of primary data collection the focus of my paper changed from its original proposal which was about development projects and displacement in Colombia.

About 5,000 people are believed to have attended the conference throughout the 4 days. However, since there were about 60 -70 panels taking place at the same time, attendance at each individual panel ranged anywhere from 5 to 40 members of the audience. Our panel was with some 25 people relatively well visited.

The conference, besides offering a wide range of panels and topics, also offered itself as a great opportunity to meet other researchers with similar interests and also some established scholars. As a result of conference I managed to put together a group of eight people working on various topics related with Colombia – contacts which will be invaluable in future. I would like to thank SLAS for their support. Without it, my participation at the conference would not have been possible.