

## **Fieldwork Report**

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My Project explores the social and economic dimensions of labour migration and remittances at both ends of the migration network that is, among Colombian migrants in London and their households and communities of origin in Colombia.

In order to examine both ends of the migration network, this research is composed of a multi-sited fieldwork, in London and the Coffee Region of Colombia. The fieldwork in London took place in 2008. It consisted of in depth semi-structured interviews with key actors and 21 Colombian migrants. In addition, participant observation took place through my working full time as a volunteer for three migrant community organizations; periodical visits to the Seven Sisters Market and the Elephant and Castle shopping centre (two of the areas with the highest concentration of Colombians in London) and attending a housing/property fair for Colombian migrants in the UK.

The fieldwork in the Coffee Region of Colombia took place between May and September 2009 and is the subject of this report. This fieldwork was jointly sponsored by the Society for Latin American Studies (SLAS), the Dudley Stamp Memorial Fund (RGS-IBG), the Developing Areas Research Group (RGS-IBG), the New Economic Geography Research Cluster (Newcastle University) and the School of Geography, Politics and Sociology (Newcastle University).

This four-month-trip was a very interesting, enriching and rewarding experience. During this time, I collected information, conducted interviews, engaged with local experts, participated in national and international events on my project's subject and established a research alliance with a local academic group. I spent most of my time in Pereira (the capital city of one of the three states that comprise Colombia's Coffee Region). However, I travelled throughout the region; to Bogotá (Colombia's capital city) and Cali (Colombia's third largest city); to conduct interviews and participate in academic events.

I carried out a total of 33 in depth semi-structured interviews: 21 with family members (parents, siblings and children) of Colombian migrants residing in London and 12 with key local and national actors.

The interviews with family members of Colombian migrants in London were centred on the impact of remittances on the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force in the different stages of the life cycle (from childhood to old age); taking into account issues such as housing, education, health and social security.

The interviews with the key actors were intended to gauge, qualitatively, the impact of migration and remittances at the community and country level. These interviews were crucial to my research because they provided me with analytical tools for a broader understanding of the issues surrounding the current debates on the impacts of migration and remittances in the sending communities in the Global South. I carried out interviews with academics, local leaders, NGOs representatives, government officials and members of private entities involved in the remittances market.

During this time, I also had the opportunity to participate in national and international events on the subject of my research such as an International Labour Organisation workshop on regional migration policy; an academic conference on international and returned migration in the Coffee region; and a talk by Jorge Durant, an academic with expertise in Latin American migration; among others.

I was also invited to be part of the team that carried out fieldwork for the Latin American Migration Project (LAMP) in three communities of the country's Coffee Region. This project consists of ethnosurveys of communities with high rates of emigration and, over the past eleven years, it has produced a wealth of social, economic and demographic information related to international migration and remittances in 10 Latin American countries.

In addition, I established a research alliance with the Human Mobility Group, a multidisciplinary research group at Alma Mater (a network of public universities in the coffee region of Colombia) with significant local, national and international reach.

Finally I gathered extensive literature about the role of coffee in the local and national socioeconomic structure of the country and also collected some quantitative data to construct a socio-economic profile of the migrants' communities of origin with the aim to place the research findings into the national / international context.

Overall, this fieldwork allowed me to grasp a better understanding of the dynamics of international migration from Colombia to London and the socio-economic impact of this

migration (and remittances) in the households and community of origin of the migrants. By doing field research in the migrants' city of destination in the Global North (London) and also in their households and communities of origin in the Global South (Coffee Region of Colombia) and thus, following particular families through the migration networks and examining their embedded social and economic relations; I am confident that I will be able to produce an innovative piece of research that will contribute to the advancement of the field of geography. I am very grateful to the Society for Latin American Studies for making this field research possible.