Università degli Studi di Padova

Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Geografiche e dell'Antichità

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in Local Development

Heritage, Conflict, and Resilience: A Case Study of La Ruana Perrileña in Sonsón, Antioquia, Colombia

Supervisor: Prof. Maria Teresa Milicia

Candidate: Adelaida Henao Warren

Registr. number: 2106139

ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26

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Table of Contents

Abstract

This research explores the impact of Colombia's armed conflict on the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, focusing on the case of *La Ruana Perrileña*, a traditional wool craft practiced for generations in the rural community of Perrillo, Sonsón (Antioquia). Once sustained through collective knowledge and communal labor, the practice was deeply affected by the displacement and fragmentation caused by the conflict. Grounded in UNESCO's frameworks on tangible and intangible cultural heritage, this study adopts a critical approach to examine how armed violence disrupts the social networks and cultural practices that give meaning to local identities. Through a qualitative methodology centered on oral testimony, it seeks to document the cultural loss experienced in Perrillo while highlighting community resilience. Finally, the thesis proposes a foundation for a local project aimed at safeguarding and revitalizing this endangered practice within local development strategies in Antioquia.

Keywords: *Intangible Cultural Heritage, Armed Conflict, Living Heritage, Colombia, Ruana Perrileña*

Italian extended summary

Sulle montagne dell'Antioquia orientale, in Colombia, esisteva un tempo un villaggio chiamato Perrillo. I suoi abitanti allevavano pecore sulle brughiere, costruivano telai in legno e tessevano un indumento tradizionale noto come la *Ruana Perrileña*: un'ampia *ruana* di lana fatta a mano, simbolo di identità culturale, economia comunitaria e appartenenza collettiva tramandata di generazione in generazione. Entro il 2007, il villaggio era stato completamente abbandonato a causa del conflitto armato: le FARC erano arrivate nel 1983, seguite dall'ELN, dall'esercito e dai gruppi paramilitari, trasformando il territorio in una zona di guerra. Le famiglie furono costrette a fuggire, lasciando indietro pecore e telai. Oggi, soltanto tre persone sanno ancora tessere la *Ruana Perrileña*.

Questa tesi esamina l'impatto del conflitto armato colombiano sulla salvaguardia del Patrimonio Culturale Immateriale (PCI), con particolare riferimento al caso della *Ruana Perrileña*. Il concetto di PCI, introdotto dall'UNESCO con la Convenzione del 2003, riconosce quella dimensione vivente della cultura: le pratiche, i saperi e le tradizioni che conferiscono alle comunità un senso di identità e continuità. Tuttavia, non esiste ancora uno strumento adeguato per proteggere il PCI in situazioni di conflitto armato. Come dimostrano Blake & Goodarzi (2024), il Diritto Internazionale Umanitario (DIU) può essere interpretato in modo sufficientemente ampio da coprire alcuni elementi del PCI, ma non contiene disposizioni specifiche per i sistemi umani viventi attraverso cui il patrimonio viene creato e trasmesso. Allo stesso modo, il CRESPIAL (2020) identifica lo sfollamento forzato come uno dei principali rischi che il conflitto armato comporta per il PCI, poiché recide il legame tra le persone, il territorio e le risorse che rendono possibile una pratica culturale. Il caso di Perrillo illustra concretamente questa lacuna istituzionale.

La ricerca adotta una metodologia qualitativa basata sulla testimonianza orale, raccogliendo le voci di due protagonisti della resistenza culturale: Yeison Marín, fondatore di Maitamá Tejidos Ancestrales a Sonsón, discendente di una famiglia di Perrillo che ha recuperato un telaio di 150 anni e si è dedicato a tramandare questa tradizione; e Luz Marina Henao, una delle ultime due artigiane nate e cresciute a Perrillo che ancora tessono la *ruana*, la quale portò con sé il suo telaio su un mulo durante la fuga. Le loro

testimonianze costituiscono il fondamento empirico e morale di questa tesi. Il caso di studio si articola partendo dal contesto nazionale del conflitto armato colombiano, passando per il dipartimento dell'Antioquia e il municipio di Sonsón, fino a giungere alla storia specifica di Perrillo.

L'analisi dimostra che ciò che è accaduto a Perrillo non è un caso isolato, bensì un esempio concreto e documentato di un fenomeno molto più ampio e largamente invisibile: la distruzione del Patrimonio Culturale Immateriale attraverso il conflitto armato e lo sfollamento forzato, in assenza di adeguati strumenti legali o istituzionali per la sua protezione. Ricorrendo al concetto di "nuda vita" di Agamben (1998), la tesi argomenta che gli ex abitanti di Perrillo non siano stati semplicemente spostati, ma privati delle occupazioni, delle relazioni e del territorio che rendevano le loro vite pienamente umane. La *Ruana Perrileña* non è scomparsa del tutto grazie alle scelte straordinarie di due individui che hanno rifiutato di lasciarla perdere. Questo paradosso, la sopravvivenza di una tradizione nonostante l'assenza di qualsiasi protezione istituzionale, rivela al contempo la resilienza delle comunità e l'urgenza di colmare la lacuna normativa esistente. La tesi si conclude con una serie di raccomandazioni per futuri progetti e ricerche volti alla salvaguardia e rivitalizzazione di questo patrimonio nell'ambito delle strategie di sviluppo locale dell'Antioquia.

Preface

This thesis was written between September 2025 and March 2026. During this period, two years pass since the entire world witnesses a genocide in Gaza, Palestine. In Sudan, one of the worst humanitarian crises in decades unfolded with the escalation of the internal conflict. On the other hand, an intervention carried out by the United States in Venezuela to remove the country's dictator took place under questionable terms of international law, and its repercussions for that Latin American country remain uncertain. Likewise, war broke out between Iran, the United States, and Israel, exposing the entire Middle East to the risk of an escalated conflict. In all of these conflicts, as well as in the rest that are simultaneously continuing to unfold around the world, the victims are always the same: the civilians who never asked to take part in them.

Writing about how war and armed conflict destroy Intangible Cultural Heritage, strip people of their humanity, break the social and cultural fabric of entire communities, ruin the territories that give life to individuals, and erase from history the knowledge, practices, material elements, and traditions of peoples, felt sometimes purposeless. Even more so when the aim is to make visible the lack of instruments to protect them, and to propose alternatives through which they might be safeguarded even when they stand at the edge of disappearance. These months are proof that wars will continue to happen, that the heritage of peoples and their cultures will continue to disappear, that victims will be displaced from their territories and their ways of life, and that we are all at the mercy of a small group of men who cannot see anything beyond that blinding lens of power.

Paradoxically, the sense of purpose I had lost in writing this thesis came back to me as I advanced in its development and had the opportunity to connect with Luz Marina Henao and Yeison Marín. They are the heart of this thesis, and their testimonies are an example of resilience, even as victims of a bloody conflict, stripped of all trace of humanity, they have not allowed what circumstances have tried to annihilate to die. The *Ruana Perrileña* that Luz Marina and Yeison weave is an example of cultural resistance for a tradition that persists against all odds, a heritage that Yeison works tirelessly to recover, and that Luz Marina preserves even as the wounds of the forced displacement that led her to leave her home are woven into it. This thesis is dedicated to Luz Marina and Yeison, whom I

thank for granting me the space to speak with them and for allowing me to find again the meaning of what I was writing.

More concretely, I also wish to thank my thesis supervisor María Teresa Milicia, who from the moment I arrived at her office with this idea in my head guided me in grounding it; but beyond that, on that very same day she asked me to show her on a map where my country is, the city where I was born and grew up, and showed an interest (one I hold very dear) in who I am and where I come from. Her warmth and humanity as a professor are an important part of this achievement. Thanks also to the friends I found in Padova, who in the most difficult moments of this migratory process have felt like an embrace to the heart, and who in the happiest moments have been there surrounding me to make them exactly that: happy. Lastly, without a doubt, I must thank my parents for making me who I am, for accompanying me in every step I take, making a tireless effort to give me every opportunity so that I may keep moving forward. From a distance I have felt them very close, with their infinite love for me. If it were not for them I would not be completing this thesis at this University and in this country.

Thank you to all these people for showing me their humanity and sharing it with me, because that is precisely what I sought to reflect in this work: the humanity that, despite such disheartening circumstances, endures.

Introduction

In the mountains of eastern Antioquia, at approximately eight hours by mule from the nearest urban center, there was once a village called Perrillo. Its inhabitants raised sheep on the moorland, built their own looms from wood, and wove a traditional garment known as the *Ruana Perrileña*, a thick, handmade wool *ruana* that protected them from the cold while they worked the land and took care of their flocks. Nearly every family in the village participated in this practice. Mothers taught their daughters from a young age. Sisters divided the tasks among themselves. The entire community organized its week around the wool. The *Ruana Perrileña* was not merely a garment; it was a way of life, an economy, a form of collective belonging, and an expression of a cultural identity that had been built and transmitted across generations in that specific territory, with those specific resources, by those specific people.

Perrillo no longer exists. By 2007, the village had been completely abandoned. The FARC's 47th Front had arrived in 1983 and over the following decades, along with the ELN, the army, and paramilitary groups, turned the territory into a war zone. Families sold their sheep for almost nothing or left them behind. Looms were abandoned in houses that slowly collapsed under the weight of vegetation and rain. The people of Perrillo scattered across the departments of Antioquia and Caldas, forced to rebuild their lives in places where there were no moorlands, no flocks, no neighbors who shared their knowledge, and no conditions that would have allowed the *Ruana Perrileña* to survive. Today, only three people still weave it.

This thesis was written because of what happened in Perrillo, and because of what almost no one has noticed.

Colombia has experienced nearly sixty years of armed conflict. The scale of its human consequences is staggering and the civilian population has borne the weight of a war in which they did not choose to participate. Among the many impacts of the conflict, one dimension remains far less visible and has been largely absent from both legal frameworks and academic literature: the cultural dimension of this destruction, the practices, knowledge, traditions and ways of life that have disappeared alongside the people who carried them, silently and without record.

The concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), introduced by UNESCO in its 2003 Convention, was designed precisely to recognize this dimension of human culture: the living, practice-based, community-held knowledge that gives people a sense of identity, continuity and belonging. Yet no adequate instrument exists to protect ICH in situations of armed conflict. The frameworks that do exist, from International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to Colombia's national inventory mechanisms, were not built with places like Perrillo in mind. They protect objects, buildings, and documented practices. They do not protect the living human systems through which heritage is created and transmitted, nor the territories and communities that make those systems possible. The *Ruana Perrileña* falls through every available framework, not because it is unimportant, but because its disappearance was never supposed to count as a loss worth preventing.

This thesis examines that gap through the case of the *Ruana Perrileña* and the territory of Perrillo. It does so by combining a review of the existing theoretical and legal literature on ICH and armed conflict with two testimonies gathered directly from the people who have kept this tradition alive: Yeison Marín, founder of Maitamá Tejidos Ancestrales in Sonsón, whose great-great-grandmother was from Perrillo and who, after recovering a 150-year-old loom from a collapsing house, taught himself to weave and built a business dedicated to rescuing the heritage of the *Ruana Perrileña*; and Luz Marina Henao, one of the only two artisans born and raised in Perrillo who still weaves the *ruana* today, who carried her inherited loom on a mule when she was displaced and has kept it in her house in the village of Sirgua Abajo ever since.

Their voices are the empirical and moral foundation of this work. Everything else, the theoretical framework, the historical context of the Colombian conflict and the department of Antioquia, exists to situate and illuminate what they have lived, what they have preserved, and what their testimony reveals about the scale of what has been lost.

The thesis is organized as follows. The first chapter develops the theoretical framework, moving from UNESCO's foundational mission and the evolution of its approach to cultural heritage, through the legal gap identified by Blake & Goodarzi (2024) and the framework offered by CRESPIAL (2020) for understanding the specific risks that armed conflict represents to ICH, to Agamben's (1998) concept of *nuda vita* as a lens for understanding

what displacement truly does to the people it affects. The second chapter sets out the methodology. The third chapter presents the case study, from the national context of the Colombian armed conflict to the department of Antioquia, the municipality of Sonsón, and finally Perrillo itself, followed by the two interviews in full. The fourth chapter offers the analysis and closes with a draft problem tree as a starting point for future project development.

I write this thesis also from a personal place. I was born and raised in Medellín, Antioquia, a region deeply marked by the armed conflict that has shaped so many territories across Colombia. However, I have witnessed these realities from a position of relative privilege, as I have not been directly affected by the violence that has forced so many communities to abandon their homes and ways of life. When I came to Italy to pursue a Master's degree in Local Development at the University of Padova, I did so with the intention of better understanding the local realities and processes that I had observed while growing up, and of finding ways to contribute to them through research and practice. During a recent trip back to Colombia, I visited a rural area near Sonsón and heard, almost by chance, the story of the *Ruana Perrileña*. The more I learned about Perrillo and its disappearance, the more I understood that this story embodied the very questions that had brought me to study local development in the first place. This thesis is therefore also an attempt to connect what I have learned during my studies with a reality from my own region and to contribute, modestly, to making this heritage visible.

This thesis does not claim to solve the problem it describes. It claims, to make it visible, to place the *Ruana Perrileña*, Perrillo, Yeison, and Luz Marina in the academic record, so that what happened there is no longer entirely silent.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. UNESCO's mission to prevent war and the reality of Colombia's armed conflict

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is constantly at risk of being undermined and even disappearing in the event of armed conflict, leading to severe interruptions in the diffusion of culture and in the acknowledgement of human differences. In order to illustrate this issue, this thesis focuses on the case study of the *Ruana Perrileña*, a traditional woolen garment used for protection against cold in different regions of Colombia. The *ruana* carries a deep history of cultural hybridity and artisanal tradition, with origins dating back to the pre-Hispanic period and the Muisca civilization. In Colombia, there are various types of *ruanas*, whose designs and materials vary from one region to another. The *Ruana Perrileña*, the focus of this study, was traditionally produced in the village of Perrillo, located in the region of Antioquia. Perrillo and its *Ruana Perrileña* serve as a concrete local example through which the multiple challenges involved in protecting ICH in contexts of armed conflict can be examined and illustrated.

The risks inherent to ICH in the context of armed conflict undoubtedly represent an enormous challenge for the Organization that first introduced the concept, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as for the State Parties that have adhered to it, including Colombia. The protection of ICH remains a central concern in accordance with UNESCO’s foundational mission, a commitment that can be traced back to the Organization’s Constitution.

In 1945, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was officially established for the purpose of promoting lasting peace around the world. After the unrest of two world wars, ignorance of human ways and lives was identified as a common cause of mistrust between peoples, through which their differences have often erupted into war (UNESCO, 1945).

The adoption of the UNESCO Constitution in 1945, which led to the creation of the Organization, emerged as an alternative to conventional attempts to prevent war. It sought to foster the diffusion of culture to acknowledge human differences and to promote the education of humanity to appreciate justice and liberty, essential tools for upholding

human dignity. Together, these commitments embodied a renewed effort to achieve peace.

Even though many countries today continue to approach war from archetypal perspectives, in 1945 State Parties ratified the UNESCO Constitution. This text stated that peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be the kind of peace capable of securing the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of all peoples. Peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind (UNESCO, 1945).

The main purpose of the Organization, “to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms” (UNESCO, 1945), was supported by the idea that education, science and culture could increase the means of communication between human beings. This would allow them to freely exchange ideas and knowledge and would also facilitate the mutual understanding of each other’s ways of life.

On paper, this objective appeared as a path to combat ignorance and mistrust, thereby preventing the outbreak of new wars. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the United Nations and the newly created organizations that introduced alternative approaches to achieving peace, wars continued to occur around the world. Knowledge, human expressions and the representations of difference also remained under threat. Many of them having been endangered long before.

This is the case of Perrillo, a village in Colombia whose inhabitants were forcibly displaced, and which remains abandoned to this day. Perrillo, once the place of origin of the *Ruana Perrileña*, now exists only in the memory of the war’s victims. Colombia is a country that has experienced armed conflict for nearly sixty years. Over the decades, acts of violence, forced displacement, states of siege, torture, kidnappings, and massacres have accumulated, flooding both the countryside and the collective consciousness with blood. The impact has not been limited to specific events, but has also affected beliefs and cultural practices, shaping the ways of being and living of large segments of the population (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

Despite consecutive efforts to achieve peace, the voracious dynamics of war spread violence indiscriminately to the farthest corners of the country, disproportionately affecting the rural population. Indeed, more than 90% of the victims have been civilians (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). Behind the more than one thousand massacres, millions of cases of forced displacement and exile, tens of thousands of kidnappings and acts of torture, and more than one hundred thousand enforced disappearances, lie the shattered stories of individuals, families, and communities whose lived experiences are not captured by statistics.

The legal framework through which Colombia has attempted to address the consequences of forced displacement represents both a significant step forward and a stark illustration of the limits of existing protections. Within the framework of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC, a series of mechanisms were established to address the rights of victims of the conflict, including displaced populations. As Pereira Carneiro (2021) explains, the Agreement introduced important provisions for the recognition of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees as rights-bearing subjects, establishing guarantees for return, land restitution, reparations, and the preservation of historical memory. These provisions represented an unprecedented acknowledgement by the Colombian state of its obligations toward those displaced by decades of armed conflict. However, Pereira Carneiro (2021) also notes that the distinction between IDPs and refugees within the Colombian legal framework remains ambiguous, and that the effective implementation of these rights continues to face significant institutional and political obstacles. For the communities and territories most affected by the conflict, including those, like Perrillo, that were left entirely uninhabited, the gap between the legal recognition of rights and their practical realization on the ground remains wide.

The Comisión de la Verdad[1] is an institution established for the clarification of truth, the promotion of coexistence, and the guarantee of non-repetition within the framework of the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace, signed in 2016 between the Government of Colombia and the

[1] Truth Commission.

Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC). According to the Commission, the level of terror experienced during the war was made possible through processes of dehumanization, whereby victims were reduced to objects of contempt. Acts of indiscriminate or selective cruelty and brutality against the civilian population served both an instrumental objective. the elimination of “the other”, and a symbolic one: the disruption of collective activities, culture, and social movements (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

The deliberate targeting of culture as a tool of war makes its protection not merely an institutional concern, but an urgent human one. Accordingly, this thesis focuses on culture as one of UNESCO’s fundamental constitutional pillars, through which the impacts of armed conflict on ICH are analyzed.

1.2. Culture as a tool for peace and the limits of its protection

UNESCO (1982) defines culture as the distinct spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize societies. In line with its Constitution, UNESCO (1982) argues that culture shapes individuals and societies, fostering unity through shared values and traditions. It also maintains that, in the face of global challenges such as conflict, culture must be preserved to uphold respect and human dignity, which, as mentioned before, requires the acceptance of diverse beliefs and identities.

In Colombia, the practices, representations and expressions of culture, along with the various instruments, artifacts and cultural spaces associated with them, have for years witnessed the suffering of communities in the context of war, while also serving as their voice and support in resisting and opposing it. Through dances and festivities, communities reaffirm their strength and alleviate grief. Theater, film, literature, and photography have enabled Colombians to understand the harsh realities faced by others and to cultivate the empathy that connects us as members of a shared community. Culture has allowed us to name the unnamable and make the invisible visible (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

Recognizing the crucial role of culture in promoting unity and considering the ongoing armed conflicts around the world and their impact on its preservation, UNESCO adopted the *Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict* in 1954. The Convention established that cultural property had already suffered grave

damage during recent armed conflicts and that, with advances in warfare techniques, it faced an increasing risk of destruction. More importantly, it emphasized that damage to cultural property belonging to any individual constitutes damage to the cultural heritage of all humankind, since everyone contributes to the culture of the world (UNESCO, 1954).

The 1954 UNESCO Convention represented the Organization's first attempt to protect cultural property from the detrimental effects of armed conflict. The agreement focused explicitly on cultural property understood as movable or immovable items of great importance to cultural heritage, such as monuments, archaeological sites, works of art, groups of buildings, books and libraries (UNESCO, 1954), that is, tangible cultural heritage. The guidelines for protecting material cultural property were established, and UNESCO's mission of promoting peace through respect for cultural diversity remained in place.

Nevertheless, the Organization had left out a fundamental part of culture: human beings as the bearers of knowledge and heritage. As defined by UNESCO, culture is not only tangible but also spiritual, intellectual and emotional. While these components are not material, they are fundamentally carried and expressed by human beings, and they are essential to the development of cultural heritage. Knowledge and expressions of diversity, as noted from the beginning, are central to human dignity, which UNESCO seeks to promote. Humans carry knowledge, embody diversity, and can also be harmed during armed conflicts. While buildings, artworks and monuments represent culture, they exist within broader human ways of life, traditions and practices, that also constitute diversity and culture itself. Material culture should be protected to preserve peace, but so should its human dimension that gives meaning to it.

The story of the *Ruana Perrileña* illustrates precisely this gap, a living cultural practice, carried in the hands and memory of a community, that fell entirely outside the scope of existing protections.

The *Ruana Perrileña*, produced by the weavers of the village of Perrillo, is not tangible heritage; rather, it is a weaving practice that represents the territory in which they lived. The looms and spinning wheels crafted by the inhabitants of the village themselves, the sheep raised and cared for on their own land, and the knowledge of how to work wool

transmitted among women from generation to generation do not correspond to what the UNESCO recognizes as cultural property and therefore cannot be protected as a monument or building under the guidelines proposed by this Organization. Weaving the *Ruana Perrileña* on a loom is a form of craftsmanship that constitutes part of the knowledge that enabled the inhabitants of Perrillo and neighboring villages and towns to protect themselves from the cold of the moorlands while working the land, keeping their hands free to confront the wilderness and work with animals. The *Ruana Perrileña* is ICH and, under the circumstances of the Colombian armed conflict, is on the verge of disappearing.

1.3. The 2003 Convention and the limits of safeguarding ICH in armed conflict

Given the absence of measures to protect cultural heritage beyond the tangible dimension and in view of the conceptual gap that endangered a fundamental component of culture, UNESCO introduced the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2003. UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* defines ICH as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage" (UNESCO, 2003). The concept of ICH represents a significant step toward fulfilling UNESCO's mission to uphold human differences and, through the convention, safeguard them in order to respect human dignity. As stated by UNESCO (2003), ICH, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history. It provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thereby promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

Throughout the Convention, UNESCO (2003) also recognized that the phenomenon of globalization, while creating conditions for opening dialogue among communities, has simultaneously given rise to intolerance and, consequently, to the deterioration and destruction of intangible cultural heritage. This challenge lies at the core of UNESCO's mandate: to prevent intolerance among individuals through culture, science and

education. Yet it was not until the 2003 Convention that the Organization acknowledged a “lack of resources for safeguarding such heritage” (UNESCO, 2003).

The *Ruana Perrileña* used to represent the cultural expression of Perrillo, embodying the knowledge held by its inhabitants and a practice carried out by nearly the entire community. Made of sheep's wool, these traditional and unique *ruanas* were exclusive to the village and its people; both the garments and the artisans who produced them lay at the heart of Perrillo’s social and cultural life. They formed part of the ICH of the eastern subregion of Antioquia, and more broadly, of the country as a whole. The instruments used in their production included the spinning wheel, a wooden device with two wheels, in which the smaller wheel winds the wool while the larger one generates the rotational force necessary for the process. The yarn was then woven on a vertical loom, resembling a wooden box with a central structure similar to a comb, through which the threads were passed crosswise until the desired length of the fabric was achieved (Marín, 2021).

Considering that, until 2003, no binding multilateral instrument existed for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and reflecting on its invaluable role in bringing human beings closer together and promoting mutual understanding (UNESCO, 2003), UNESCO introduced a series of articles dedicated to its safeguarding, including the responsibilities of the States Parties. By safeguarding, UNESCO (2003) refers to measures aimed at ensuring the viability of ICH, including its identification, research, documentation, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.

According to the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage,* each State Party should take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of ICH within its territory. This includes creating inventories to support its identification; adopting policies that integrate ICH into planning programs; designating competent bodies responsible for safeguarding it; adopting legal, technical, administrative and financial measures for strengthening it; and fostering research to recommend effective safeguarding methods, particularly for ICH at risk (UNESCO, 2003). Additionally, each State Party, bound by the Convention, should also ensure recognition, respect and enhancement of ICH through educational and awareness-raising programs, trainings

within communities concerned, capacity-building activities and education on the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is essential for expressing the ICH (UNESCO, 2003).

Additionally, it is essential to highlight the call that the Convention makes for promoting the participation of communities, groups and individuals in the process of safeguarding ICH. UNESCO (2003) recognizes that communities, in particular indigenous communities, groups and individuals, play a central role in producing, maintaining and re-creating ICH. Therefore, they are the ones capable of safeguarding it while enriching cultural diversity and human creativity. In view of this acknowledgement, each State Party should ensure the widest possible participation of the communities, groups and, when appropriate, individuals who create, preserve and transmit ICH (UNESCO, 2003). This approach places human beings at the center of the discussion once again, as they are the ones who provide the sense of identity and continuity that sustains culture and its diversity. Humans are carriers of ICH, which brings us back to UNESCO's foundational purpose: to foster the diffusion of culture, to accept human differences, and to diminish ignorance in order to avoid mistrust between peoples and, consequently, conflict. This is the vital importance of ICH and the people who keep it alive.

Colombia, as one of the States Parties to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH, established the Directorate of Heritage and Memory within its Ministry of Culture. This Directorate is responsible for formulating and implementing policies, plans, programs, and projects aimed at safeguarding the Nation's Cultural Heritage, ensuring that it remains a living testimony for both present and future generations. Within this institutional framework, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Group was created to implement national safeguarding policies in accordance with UNESCO's guidelines. One of the central measures promoted by UNESCO is to ensure the identification of ICH with a view to safeguarding it, including the preparation of one or more inventories of the ICH present within each State Party's territory. These inventories must be regularly updated (UNESCO, 2003).

However, the *Ruana Perrileña* does not appear in the National Inventory of Cultural Heritage. Given the conditions in which the armed conflict has left both the population that once practiced this tradition and the territory where it emerged, the practice itself is now at risk of disappearing. The absence of the *Ruana Perrileña* from Colombia's national inventory is therefore not merely an administrative oversight; rather, it reveals a broader institutional gap that also reflects limitations present at the international level.

Despite UNESCOS's efforts to define and safeguard ICH through the 2003 Convention, no adequate instrument has yet been created to protect and address ICH in the event of armed conflict, unlike the conventions and protocols that already exist for the protection of tangible cultural heritage. ICH itself is not supported in any of the international documents of humanitarian rights mechanisms, and its three main components, humans as owners of heritage, material cultural assets such as instruments and artifacts, and the environments in which the practices and rituals take place, may be damaged in the course of armed conflicts, consequently threatening the overall viability of ICH (Blake & Goodarzi, 2024).

1.4. Between IHL and UNESCO: the unprotected dimension of cultural heritage

In their article on the protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Armed Conflicts through International Humanitarian Law, Blake & Goodarzi (2024) explain that it has been necessary to resort to other legal regimes, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL) to enhance the protection afforded to ICH. They argue that under the regime of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, attacks against and destruction of civilian property belonging to individuals, the State, or other public institutions and cooperative organizations are prohibited. This prohibition is set out in Articles 53, 146, and 147 of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which relates to the protection of civilians in times of war (Blake & Goodarzi, 2024). According to the authors, these articles should be interpreted broadly. The prohibition should therefore encompass the destruction of all forms of property, whether real or personal, including private property of protected persons (owned individually or collectively), State property, and property belonging to public authorities or cooperative organizations (Blake & Goodarzi, 2024).

The argument outlined above may be used to support claims for the protection of artifacts, produced goods, and the traditions of peoples around the world. Blake & Goodarzi (2024) suggest that, by protecting the three components of ICH, namely: material elements like instruments, the human actors who own and transmit ICH, and the environment in which cultural practices take place, IHL could contribute to the protection of ICH in armed conflicts. Nevertheless, the authors also acknowledge that there is no explicit focus on ICH within IHL. Even if IHL can be interpreted broadly to encompass the preservation of ICH, it does not contain specific provisions for its protection during armed conflicts, as this dimension of cultural heritage was not conceived at the time of IHL's development (Blake & Goodarzi, 2024).

The implications of this legal gap become particularly evident in the Colombian case, where displacement and dispossession of territory have represented the destruction of cultures across the country. Both practices have caused profound damage to cultural life, as culture is closely tied to the territory, understood as "the place where culture unfolds" (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). Once the bond that connects communities to their land, to one another, to their cultural practices, their myths, and means of production is broken, individuals are forced into worlds that do not belong to them. Finding meaning and a sense of rootedness in these unfamiliar worlds is not easy, as previously developed skills do not necessarily correspond to the demands of the new context in terms of market participation, social inclusion, or the ability to lead a dignified life. As a result, displaced populations often face exclusion and stigmatization and become particularly vulnerable to recruitment by armed or criminal groups.

Blake & Goodarzi (2024), conclude that the negative effects armed conflicts are likely to have on ICH, the well-being of its bearers, and the central role this heritage plays in supporting community identity and cohesion during armed conflicts, make it necessary for UNESCO and other relevant international institutions to directly address this issue and take proactive measures to protect ICH before, during and after armed conflicts. They also reiterate the fundamental point that ICH is safeguarded through peoples' lives and the vitality of their cultures. All elements that can be identified as ICH exist in the minds

and bodies of human beings. When individuals die, they can no longer practice their culture, and if the ICH they bear is lost, then it ceases to exist (Blake & Goodarzi, 2024).

Given that the Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention emphasize the crucial role that ICH can play in fostering peace, the importance of creating and maintaining conditions that enable the continued practice and protection of ICH during and after armed conflicts should be reinforced by all available means. Indeed, in recent years, UNESCO has begun to produce guidelines aimed at addressing the specific issue of the impacts of armed conflict on the ICH of local populations. As a result, various States Parties have proposed projects and programs to UNESCO for safeguarding ICH in the context of risks caused by armed conflicts or forced displacement of populations that threaten the viability of cultural diversity (CRESPIAL, 2020).

1.5. Armed conflict, displacement, and the fragmentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Despite these emerging institutional efforts, the protection of ICH during armed conflicts continues to represent a significant gap in the academic literature. In line with the lack of legal resources identified by Blake & Goodarzi, the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Latin America (CRESPIAL) addresses the risks that armed conflict entails for ICH. Operating in Latin America under the auspices of UNESCO and within the framework of the 2003 Convention, CRESPIAL (2020) acknowledges that, despite the prevalence of armed conflicts of varying scale in many countries in the region over the past three decades, the protection of ICH in the event of armed conflict remains a relatively underexplored area. The Centre also reaffirms that the existing literature on this topic has predominantly focused on the risks that conflict situations present to cultural assets belonging specifically to the tangible heritage dimension.

In order for State Parties that have adhered to the UNESCO 2003 Convention to be able to propose projects aimed at safeguarding ICH in cases of armed conflict, the existing gap in the literature must be addressed with information that can support the development of relevant and effective proposals. CRESPIAL contributes to this effort by examining the dimension of the risks inherent to armed conflict for ICH. The Center identifies displacement as one of the primary risks to ICH in armed conflict settings, adapting the

approach of UNESCO that focuses on the cultural risks associated with displacement and the perception of ICH as a resource that fosters resilience in response to the impacts of conflict.

Displacement is understood as an expression of conflict and is forced when the movement of individuals from their region or country is involuntary or coerced due to persecution, armed conflict, generalized violence, human rights violations, or the adverse effects of climate change (European Commission, 2025).

Forced displacement represents one of the most extensive wounds of the Colombian armed conflict, with profound social impacts on territorial reconfiguration and changes in ways of life. According to the Colombian National Registry of Victims, as of May 31, 2022, a total of 8,273,562 individuals had been displaced. The collective and social consequences of displacement are immense (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

Behind these numbers lie millions of individuals whose lives were not merely disrupted but stripped of the cultural fabric that made them who they were. The philosopher Giorgio Agamben (1998) captures this dimension through the concept of *nuda vita*[2], which indicates a hypothetical zero degree, or minimal level of life: life as such, simple biological existence. Its opposite would be a life carried out through occupations, the life we know and encounter everywhere. Language, politics, culture and history are what make life truly human, whereas *nuda vita* represents life reduced to its minimal biological condition, stripped of political and symbolic qualification.

It is precisely this stripping of cultural life that UNESCO (2016) identifies as one of the gravest consequences of forced displacement. Many individuals who have been forcibly displaced by conflict suffer from the fragmentation of their cultural references and often experience reduced access to culture, thereby limiting the exercise of their cultural rights. In response to these challenges, displaced persons tend to turn to their ICH as a resource for social and psychological resilience in the face of serious difficulties, although this is not always possible. Their ICH is threatened primarily by the disruption of communities and families. Many of the cultural traditions that constitute the collective identities of local

[2] Bare life.

populations are adversely affected by displacement, as they can no longer find the symbolic and practical resources of their original cultural environments in places of refuge once displacement has occurred.

The experience of Perrillo's community illustrates this dynamic with painful clarity. Years of continued displacement led to the loss of the weaving tradition and prevented descendants from continuing the practice of producing the *ruanas*. The fragmentation of families worsened this situation, as many people dispersed in search of better living conditions after being displaced from their places of residence. This process directly affected how individuals related to themselves and to others, generating profound challenges to cultural and social identity (Marín, 2021). Moreover, the environments to which they were displaced did not provide the space or resources necessary to maintain practices such as sheep herding.

This is why CRESPIAL identifies displacement as one of the primary risks posed by armed conflicts to ICH, as it represents a rupture in people's relationship with their territory of origin and the resources it provides, disrupting the transmission and recreation of ICH. Additional factors, such as changes in the expectations of young people in places of refuge and negative perceptions of these practices among host populations, also threaten ICH in post-displacement contexts (CRESPIAL, 2020). As a consequence, the overall definition of ICH and the main objectives of UNESCO, are directly undermined in such circumstances, as displacement fractures collective belonging and leads to the loss of the different sets of practices, representations and expressions that constitute cultural diversity.

In fact, forced displacement has a direct impact on the foundational elements of ICH. As explained by CRESPIAL (2020) heritage is a resource that allows us to create a narrative of collective belonging and is constantly recreated through people's interaction with nature and their history. This interaction can be understood as a process of selecting what is accepted from our inherited heritage, which implies the creation of a symbolic value that is added to our cultural assets. It is necessary to add that this process of symbolic activation, through which certain inherited elements are acknowledged, is mediated by

culture, that is, by the universe of meanings, information, and beliefs that give meaning to human actions and to which we turn to understand the world.

Displacement disrupts the process of symbolic activation, and consequently the creation of heritage, by hindering the transmission of inherited elements as individuals become scattered across different locations, leaving behind the places that embody their history and relationship with nature. Furthermore, displacement fragments the culture through which information is shared, as community members are no longer present, or together to collectively sustain these processes.

That said, CRESPIAL highlights the distinction between heritage and culture, noting that heritage should be understood as a social process of symbolic activation that is constantly in dispute, whereas culture functions as a repertoire (CRESPIAL, 2020). From this perspective, the risks to ICH in relation to armed conflict should not be understood simply as impacts on culture in its generic sense. Rather, they should be understood, on the one hand, as risks arising from disruptions to the process of transmitting legacies, and, on the other, as impacts on culture in its role as a mediator in the selection process and symbolic activation of heritage.

This distinction was tangible in Perrillo, where the practice of weaving embodied precisely this process of transmission and symbolic activation. The practice of weaving in the village was passed down from generation to generation. Mothers and grandmothers used to teach their daughters since they were little how to manage the wool and weave the *ruanas* in the vertical looms, but this process of inheritance ended with the displacement.

It is therefore clear that the risks to ICH in conflict situations are determined by the damage to transmission systems that constitute the legacies upon which symbolic referents are activated, as well as to the universe of meanings through which they are understood and accepted. Paradoxically, the main characteristics of ICH, namely, its embeddedness in social relations, practices and meanings, make it both highly vulnerable to disruption during conflict and, at the same time, a key resource for resilience. In this sense, CRESPIAL (2020) argues that even when conflict situations harm culture and heritage systems that sustain the collective identity of communities, it is necessary to

consider the reaction and response that the same communities who were affected may generate in terms of resilience and reconstruction of the social fabric.

1.6. Resilience, reconstruction, and the urgent need to protect ICH in armed conflict situations

CRESPIAL (2020), introduces the idea of resilience and the reconstruction of social fabric as a stage for activating a wide range of social practices, including solidarity and social alliances, which contribute to a broader process of community healing. The Center provides a series of examples of community resilience through the vindication of ICH in different Latin American countries that have experienced armed conflict, or where such conflict is still ongoing, as in the case of Colombia. These cases show that, even after ICH has been disrupted by armed conflict, communities continue to draw upon it as a means of reviving their cultural identity.

The different examples show that community resilience is not limited to the revival of threatened cultural practices, but also involves fostering and recreating the underlying universes of meaning and the transmission of legacies in order to rebuild social and cultural fabrics deeply affected by conflict. CRESPIAL (2020) also emphasizes the importance of recognizing that, in these cases, the cultural relevance of such initiatives as restorative settings was undoubtedly determined by the fact that they emerged from the communities themselves, beyond the state support they may have sought.

According to the Comisión de la Verdad (2022), culture has served in Colombia as a tool that strengthens community bonds, fosters a sense of belonging, enhances the capacity for collective defense, and supports resilience in overcoming trauma. The stronger a community's cultural identity, particularly when it is both deeply rooted in its territory and open to others, the greater its capacity for organization and collective protection.

Intangible cultural practices can therefore be understood as responses to conflict situations, which brings the discussion back to UNESCO'S mission of seeking peace through the recognition of diverse human ways of life. This idea of ICH in terms of resilience must be examined in close relation to the specific impacts produced by armed conflict, particularly its effects on the processes and places of transmission and on the recreation of cultural universes. Most importantly, it must be acknowledged that it is the

communities themselves that determine the possible scenarios for rebuilding the social fabric in response to these impacts. In this way, both older and newly emerging traditions, through processes of hybridization or redefinition, provide symbolic resources for rebuilding social ties and a sense of collective belonging within the new realities produced by the war (CRESPIAL, 2020).

External actors should, however, also play a role. As recalled by CRESPIAL (2020), although this remains a relatively under-addressed issue in Latin America, is essential to remember that heritage does not exist per se, and that the impacts produced by conflict are, in fact, incorporated into a new repertoire of meanings that communities themselves can mobilize to respond resiliently to their new realities. This acknowledgement should fundamentally include both State Parties and international institutions.

Beyond moral responsibility, state resources are necessaryto support and sustain community initiatives over time. States should contribute to community strengthening processes by assisting in the implementation of reflective activities aimed at understanding how to protect and recreate ICH, as well as the resilience related activities inherent to it. In addition, territories should be protected, since the preservation of places is directly linked to supporting community work and the ongoing activities carried out within them. In this way, opportunities to reinforce the symbolic activation of the multiple meanings that can be derived from heritage related practices within a protected cultural environment are not overlooked.

In line with the above, external actors should also contribute by addressing the risks inherent to armed conflict situations that undermine ICH, such as forced displacement. This includes encouraging international organizations, such as UNESCO, to develop a clear framework for the protection of ICH in the event of armed conflict, similar to the protocols already established for tangible cultural heritage. As noted before, existing literature falls short in addressing how to protect the mechanisms for the transmission of knowledge associated with the creation and preservation of ICH during armed conflicts, as well as how to protect the territories in which these symbolic practices take place. Given the intimate relationship between environment and ICH, the protection and

recognition of territories constitute powerful mechanisms for addressing the damage caused to the social fabric in a community, but also in a nation (CRESPIAL, 2020).

Among the first steps to be taken, CRESPIAL (2020) highlights the importance of providing content and legitimacy to a range of demands for reparation and justice, interpreted in terms of the cultural visions that local populations deploy in response to the impacts caused by conflict. Whether or not these processes are mediated by a formal declaration of World Heritage for safeguarding purposes, it is essential to recognize that the relationship between ICH and armed conflict leads us beyond a general understanding of conflict as merely damaging the collective social fabric. Rather, it calls for an examination of how violent events affect the universes of meaning that underlie the mobilization of a collective identity.

Furthermore, it is essential to understand the transmission mechanisms that underlie ICH as a means of assessing both the extent of the damage and the process of symbolic activation that has been interrupted (CRESPIAL, 2020). This involves generating exercises that, as far as possible, actively integrate the social agency of affected communities and the interpretations of their various forms of expression, in order to appropriately recreate the activation of meaning produced within the heritage framework.

Overall, the importance of protecting ICH in situations of armed conflict lies in moving beyond the current framework of the UNESCO 2003 Convention. Protection must extend beyond safeguarding practices themselves to include the people who carry these legacies, transmit them, and possess the knowledge and interpretative mechanisms through which they are accepted, inherited and recreated. Forced displacement, as a manifestation of armed conflict, can directly interrupt the process of creation, acceptance, preservation and transmission of ICH, even as ICH can also function as a tool of resilience, enabling communities to rebuild themselves in the aftermath of violence.

In order to situate the *Ruana Perrileña* within the discussion on the protection of ICH in situations of armed conflict, the methodology under which the case study was developed is set out below.

2. Methodology

In order to understand this issue in depth, the case study method allows for the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context. Given the scarcity of documentation on the *Ruana Perrileña* and the history of Perrillo, the most methodologically appropriate scenario was to turn directly to primary sources: the people native to this territory who carry the knowledge of this craft. Because the village was left uninhabited and this practice gradually disappeared following the forced displacement of its inhabitants, the knowledge surrounding the *Ruana Perrileña* and what life in Perrillo once was constitutes what might be called living information: it is not documented, but rather resides in the memory of those who practice or once practiced this art and maintain some connection to the territory.

In this context, the most suitable tool for accessing this living information was the interview, as it allows people to share their testimonies about the history of the *ruana* and of Perrillo directly. Among the available modalities, the open interview proved to be the most appropriate. Guided by a general framework oriented toward the interviewee's life history, their relationship with Perrillo and with the *ruana*, it allows for a conversational atmosphere in which the interlocutor can express themselves freely. Unlike closed questions, which may limit respondents to addressing specific topics and prevent them from conveying their lived experience in their own terms and forms, the open interview grants greater freedom in the interaction and creates the necessary space for testimony to be shared with spontaneity, including deeper opinions and feelings.

The approach adopted for these interviews is the biographical-narrative approach, which allows the interviewee to freely address all aspects of their life that they consider relevant, while the interviewer intervenes occasionally to guide the conversation toward the central themes of the research (Vain, 2020).

However, conducting interviews with former inhabitants of Perrillo, or with anyone connected to the village in any way, entailed a series of challenges that initially called into question the feasibility of this instrument. First, due to budgetary and administrative constraints, it was not possible for me to travel to Colombia from Italy to make contact in

person. Outreach had to be conducted remotely and, if successfully coordinated, the interviews would need to take place virtually. This condition represented a significant methodological limitation, as interviews aimed at exploring life histories tend to be conducted more effectively in face-to-face settings, where the interviewee can more easily establish a relationship of trust that encourages deeper engagement with personal experience.

This was compounded by the difficulty of establishing initial contact, which proved to be a slow and complex process. The search for people from Perrillo, or for anyone with a connection to the village and the art of the *ruana*, was particularly demanding at a distance. I am originally from Medellín, the capital of the department of Antioquia, located nearly three hours by car from the municipality of Sonsón, to which the village belonged and toward which many of its inhabitants relocated after being forcibly displaced. With no direct contacts in Sonsón, and no possibility of traveling there, I first turned to my network of acquaintances in Medellín, hoping to locate some indirect link to the territory. While I managed to communicate with people who had lived in Sonsón, none of them knew anyone from Perrillo or had any connection to the *ruana.*

Given this, the search shifted to online sources, which not only proved to be a process that extended over several months, but also laid bare one of the most silent consequences of armed conflict: the way it erases and diminishes the existence of ICH and the people who keep it alive. The information about Perrillo and the *Ruana Perrileña* available online is scarce and fragmentary. The main sources found were a brief article by Corporación GRUTA, a non-profit organization dedicated to the management, protection, and dissemination of cultural and natural heritage in Colombia, which devotes an article to the *Ruana Perrileña* and includes an interview with the artisan Luz Mary, who currently lives in Sonsón and is the only person in the urban center of the municipality, originally from Perrillo itself, who still weaves the *ruana*.

As a first attempt to make contact, I reached out to Luz Mary through Corporación GRUTA's Instagram profile, as no phone number or email address was publicly available. A representative from the organization responded kindly but explained that the artisan,

due to negative experiences with other individuals and institutions, preferred not to give virtual interviews or share her contact information. I also found on Instagram a post dedicated to the same artisan on the profile of Antioquia es Mágica, the official tourism platform of the department managed by the Government of Antioquia. I attempted to contact this entity both via Instagram and through an email address found on their website, hoping they might facilitate communication with Luz Mary, but received no response.

In parallel with the search for potential interviewees, I was simultaneously gathering information for the contextualization of the village of Perrillo for the case study, which proved equally difficult. For a territory with such an authentic cultural history, so abruptly interrupted by violence that it was left entirely uninhabited, documentation about Perrillo is almost nonexistent. In the repository of the Universidad de Antioquia[3], I found a thesis written by Adriana Marín Franco, a student of Social Communication and Journalism, whose maternal grandparents were originally from Perrillo and left the village as displaced victims along with their children, among them Adriana's mother, María Ismelda. The thesis was an investigation through which Adriana sought to represent the victims of forced displacement from the village of Perrillo in the municipality of Sonsón, to inquire into the events they experienced and the meanings they shared, and to make their testimonies visible through journalism.

In her 2021 research, Adriana conducted a field visit to the territory where the village once stood, accompanied by her mother and a cousin, in order to observe what had become of the land where Perrillo once existed, while her mother narrated what life there had been like. Adriana also conducted an open interview with her mother and with her mother's former friend and neighbor from Perrillo, Luz Marina. The interview reads more as a conversation in which both women engage in dialogue with Adriana, recalling different memories of Perrillo: how they grew up, how life revolved around sheep and weaving, and how, in the end, violence forced them to leave their home. Both women mention having woven the *Ruana Perrileña* throughout the time they lived in the village.

[3] The biggest and most important public University in the department of Antioquia.

Adriana Marín's documentation constitutes the primary source of information about the village for this work. Her field visit provided the basis for developing the territorial context of the case study. With the aim of continuing the search for potential interviewees, I also attempted to find a way to contact Adriana, hoping she might facilitate access to a former inhabitant of Perrillo, but was unable to find any information that would allow me to reach her.

Figure 1 Picture by Adriana Marín during her Field Visit to Perrillo. Source: Montoya, P.

Figure 2 Picture by Adriana Marín during her Field Visit to Perrillo. Source: Montoya, P

The process of establishing contact from Italy with someone connected to Perrillo who practiced the weaving of the *Ruana Perrileña* took approximately two months. The breakthrough came by an unexpected route: on the suggestion of a colleague, I moved away from searching web pages and turned instead directly to Instagram, searching the term "*Ruana Perrileña*." Among the first results appeared a profile by the name of Maitama Tejidos Ancestrales[4], whose biography read: "Somos una empresa dedicada a rescatar el tejido ancestral en telares, dando a conocer piezas únicas" [We are a company dedicated to reviving ancestral loom weaving, showcasing unique pieces]. The profile belonged to a weaving business based in Sonsón, and among its first posts the *Ruana Perrileña* was clearly visible for sale. I immediately sent a message introducing myself and explaining the reason for my inquiry. The response came almost instantly: Yeison Marín, founder and owner of Maitama Tejidos Ancestrales, replied warmly and provided his WhatsApp number to facilitate further communication.

Via WhatsApp, I explained in more detail the purpose of my thesis and my need to find someone with ties to Perrillo who wove the *ruana* and would be willing to share their

[4] The name refers to the ancestral loom weaving of the moorland area where Sonsón is located.

testimony. Yeison expressed his appreciation for my interest in this knowledge, the craft, the *ruana*, and Perrillo, and shared information about himself. He is a young man originally from the village of San José Las Cruces, a rural community in the municipality of Sonsón close to Perrillo, whose great-great-grandmother was from Perrillo and dedicated herself to weaving *ruanas*. He was displaced from his home as a child and has since lived in the urban center of Sonsón, where he founded his business with the aim of recovering the art of weaving the original *Ruana Perrileña*. This enterprise has become not only his livelihood, but also a way of reclaiming his family's memory and processing the wounds left by the forced displacement.

Yeison agreed to be interviewed virtually. He expressed that it is very important to him that this information be shared and that the *ruana* receive the recognition it deserves. The interview took place via video call the following week, once Yeison had concluded his participation in a craft fair. During the conversation, which followed the biographical-narrative approach described above, Yeison spoke about his life history, his craft, his work in preserving his family's memory, and his plans for the future. I intervened occasionally to clarify certain aspects and gently guide the conversation. Yeison Marín represents a remarkable case of resilience and socially oriented entrepreneurship, and plays a fundamental role in the survival of the *Ruana Perrileña*.

In the course of that conversation, Yeison mentioned that, to his knowledge, only two artisans born and raised in Perrillo still weave the *ruana* when circumstances allow: Luz Mary, whose name had already emerged during the initial search through Corporación GRUTA, and Luz Marina, who lives in a village near Sonsón. This second name was familiar, as it matched that of one of the women interviewed in Adriana Marín's thesis, which suggested they might be the same person.

At the end of the conversation, Yeison offered to provide any further support the research might require and, when asked whether he might be able to facilitate contact with Luz Marina, agreed immediately. He provided the WhatsApp number of Damaris, Luz Marina's daughter, who lives in the urban center of Sonsón.

Damaris works as a tourist guide in Sonsón. She was born in Perrillo and was displaced along with her family in the early 2000s. She responded to my message promptly and helpfully, indicating that she would arrange the meeting with her mother. She explained that the most viable way to communicate with Luz Marina, given her age and the conditions of where she lives, would be through a WhatsApp audio call. While a video call would have been preferable, as it is better suited to the kind of connection that a biographical-narrative interview requires,connectivity conditions made this impractical.

Luz Marina Henao is one of the only two artisans born and raised in the village of Perrillo who still weaves the *Ruana Perrileña* today. She currently lives in the village of Sirgua Abajo, near the urban area of Sonsón. Coordinating the conversation with her required approximately two weeks of waiting, until she was able to travel to the urban center of Sonsón to visit her daughter, where the connectivity allowed for a stable call. Her availability was limited, around thirty minutes, a constraint compounded by the time difference between Colombia and Italy. Even so, the conversation proved immensely valuable. Damaris had already explained to her mother the purpose of the call, which meant Luz Marina was receptive from the outset. The call did not follow the format of a structured interview; rather, it took the form of an open conversation in which Luz Marina described, repeatedly and with great clarity, how Perrillo was the territory that gave its people their livelihood, and how, after the displacement, they never again found the conditions that would have allowed them to practice the craft of the *ruana* the way it had been practiced there. At the end of the conversation, Luz Marina also offered to help with any additional information that might be needed.

Both Yeison and Luz Marina are the bearers of living knowledge about the *Ruana Perrileña*: it is they who sustain and ensure that this ICH, despite an armed conflict, does not disappear.

Both conversations were recorded with the informed consent of the two participants, obtained prior to the interviews. The recordings were transcribed and, in passages containing Colombian idioms with no equivalent in English, paraphrasing was used to facilitate comprehension in the translation. The specific words and proper names,

however, were preserved without modification and appear in the text accompanied by footnotes with the corresponding explanations. Once edited, the texts were translated from Spanish into English.

In accordance with the University of Padova Policy Guidelines for the Responsible Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Teaching and Research, AI was used exclusively for reviewing grammar and spelling in this thesis.

The following section presents the case study of the *Ruana Perrileña* and the territory in which it originated. First, a broad overview of the armed conflict at the national level is provided. Subsequently, a brief context of Antioquia, the department in which Perrillo is located, is presented, along with an outline of the areas most affected by violence in this territory. This is followed by a contextualization of Perrillo, drawn primarily from the documentation collected by Adriana Marín. Finally, to complement the case study, the two testimonies obtained through the interviews conducted are presented.

3. Case Study

3.1. Colombia

“In Colombia, there has not been a single generation that has lived in a country at peace. As a society, we have endured the consequences of a persistent armed conflict, which has left a trail of pain and suffering from which we are still striving to emerge, as well as a condition of exclusion and historical violence that must be transformed” (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022)[5].

[5] Author’s translation from Spanish.

Figure 3 Colombia Map. Source: Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi (IGAC)

The country possesses a vast wealth of practices of resistance, including social, peasant, ethnic, and human rights movements, as well as a strong tradition of resilience among its people. Nevertheless, the civilian population has been the primary victim of the war, which has weakened Colombian society's capacity to confront exclusion and intolerance. The impact of this collective wound is part of what must be healed, yet it has also been a source of persistence and endurance. However, despite people's capacity to resist, many families and communities have lived for decades in fear (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

Colombia has undergone the longest armed conflict in Latin America, which began with the emergence of multiple guerrilla movements, each with distinct characteristics. These guerrilla groups arose in the 1960s with the aim of seizing power, grounded in discourses that sought to overcome political exclusion and transform the prevailing conditions of inequality and poverty (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

Then, in the 1980s, in the context of their confrontation with the State and their continued struggle against an exclusionary political regime, guerrilla groups expanded territorially into regions where the State had failed to address longstanding demands and conflicts over land ownership. These dynamics were decisive in the escalation of the armed conflict, which became increasingly evident from the 1990s onward, as guerrilla forces, newly emerged paramilitary groups, and state security forces contributed to the deepening of a humanitarian crisis that the country has endured for more than sixty years (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

It is important to note that different types of insurgent organizations have existed and persisted in Colombia. These include foco-oriented guerrilla groups inspired by the Cuban Revolution, such as the ELN, as well as the FARC-EP, which originated as a peasant and partisan guerrilla movement and over time transformed into a powerful armed organization, becoming the greatest military challenge to the State and the Armed Forces. (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022) There were also Maoist-oriented guerrillas, such as the EPL, which, after several periods of crisis and reorganization, ultimately demobilized in the early 1990s. In addition, urban guerrilla groups of a nationalist orientation emerged, characterized by a democratic vision of revolution and less radical objectives than the former, such as the M-19, which arose in response to the electoral fraud of 1970 and

became one of the most prominent insurgent groups in the 1980s. Both the M-19 and the EPL, following military setbacks and political re-evaluation, demobilized and entered legal political life, participating in the National Constituent Assembly and in the drafting of the 1991 Constitution (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

From the 1990s onward, the scope and indiscriminate nature of the actions carried out by the remaining armed groups expanded, as did the impact on the civilian population. The development of an irregular war against the State affected and victimized different sectors of society in varying ways, depending on the historical moment and the territory (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

The various actors involved fostered a dynamic of violence that derived its power from the dispossession of the civilian population and the control of territories, both of which became central targets of the armed conflict (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). This process led to a reconfiguration of local power across different regions. As the conflict intensified and numerous territories became disputed zones between the insurgent and the counterinsurgent forces, it became increasingly difficult to maintain civil spaces and autonomous projects outside the logic of war. The resulting consequences have disrupted individual and collective life plans for decades.

The rural and impoverished urban population, ethnic groups, women from low-income sectors, and children and youth in rural areas have undoubtedly been the most affected social groups. This armed conflict has, for decades, primarily victimized civilians, because it has unfolded within their communities and because controlling the population became the means of asserting power over both territory and the country itself (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

During the first visits to the territories conducted by the Comisión de la Verdad at the beginning of its mandate, meetings with victims were arranged. While each person sought information about their own case, they also expressed a desire to understand why it had happened, a form of truth that explains why. The logics of violence identified by the Commission are diverse and do not follow a single pattern. In most cases, combatants acted according to a logic of physical and symbolic extermination directed at those considered enemies for political reasons, social movements, or civilian populations

stigmatized by different factions and groups (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). The aim was to win the war by exerting control over the social fabric and the territories upon which it depended.

The main perpetrators identified by the Commission include the Colombian state, paramilitary groups, guerrillas, drug trafficking organizations, post-demobilization groups, and so-called civilian third parties. Meanwhile, expulsion, confinement, and displacement were the most frequent practices that violated fundamental human rights, including the rights to residence, territory, freedom of movement, and property (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). Control over space and resources for purposes related to the armed conflict was facilitated by removing people from their homes or usual workplaces, restricting their mobility, or simply seizing their land.

Forced displacement disrupts the lives of victims, who are compelled to start over and rebuild them under conditions of vulnerability, often in marginalized urban neighborhoods or even in rural areas still affected by armed conflict (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). The loss of traditional ways of life, particularly rural identities, productive opportunities, and cultural dynamics, has constituted a catastrophe that, although recognized within the country, remains largely silent, especially regarding its social consequences.

While forced displacement occurs in contexts that threaten the lives of individuals and families, testimonies collected by the Commission indicate that it was often also accompanied by other human rights violations. At least 37% of the displacement incidents documented by the Commission occurred in conjunction with threats, dispossession, torture, attacks, indiscriminate assaults, sexual violence, and forced recruitment (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022).

The 2013 National Survey of Victims indicates that more than eight million hectares of land were seized or abandoned between 1995 and 2004, an area equivalent to the size of countries like Austria or approximately fifty times the area of Bogotá, Colombia's capital (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022). As a result, most victims have been condemned to survive under conditions of displacement and poverty, as mentioned above, in addition to enduring the loss of social ties, identity and the material foundations of their livelihoods, particularly among rural and ethnic populations.

Considering the national context presented by the Commission and its recognition of the risks that forced displacement, as a component of armed conflict, represents to culture, it is possible to affirm that the Colombian case illustrates the vicious cycle discussed throughout this analysis. UNESCO was established to combat ignorance and mistrust among people through the promotion of diversity and human ways of life. The concept of ICH was adopted because it embodies human difference, encompassing practices, knowledge, territories and objects that contribute to the construction of a community identity. ICH should function as a tool for advancing UNESCO's mission; however, it remains under constant threat due to armed conflict itself. While ICH has also proven to be a vital resource for building community resilience, this potential is undermined by war. Therefore, if ICH is not protected from the effects of armed conflict, it cannot effectively serve either as a means for fostering diversity or as a resource for resilience.

As a consequence of these dynamics, in Colombia, the extent of what has been lost in terms of ICH because of armed conflict, particularly forced displacement, remains largely unknown. Not only has ICH often gone unprotected, but there is also limited awareness of the traditions, practices, knowledge, instruments and ways of life that have already disappeared due to war, as well as of the effects these losses have had on individuals and their universe of meanings. The ways of being and living of many Colombians have been forcibly reshaped by a conflict in which they did not actively participate, and the territories from which they depended, where they were able to express their diversity, no longer belong to them.

Colombia also represents a particularly illustrative case, as it demonstrates the damage that forced displacement, identified by CRESPIAL as one of the biggest risks inherent to armed conflict, can inflict on ICH. As discussed above, the Colombian armed conflict has generated an alarming number of displacement cases, leading to the rupture of social ties and the abrupt interruption of heritage transmission processes, while simultaneously disconnecting communities from the territories in which their cultural identities were constructed. As a result, not only individual identities are placed at risk, but also the collective diversity sustained through the transmission of heritage and enrichment of culture. Displaced individuals are forced to rebuild their lives under markedly different and

often precarious conditions, which prevent them from putting their knowledge into practice, particularly in new environments where the material and symbolic resources required to do so may be absent.

The profound social impacts of territorial reconfiguration resulting from the armed conflict have manifested in different ways across the country, as geography, economy, society and particularly culture vary significantly from one region to another. Colombia is divided into 32 departments, each with its own identity and has been differently affected by war. For this reason, in fulfilling its mandate to clarify the patterns and causes of the conflict and to uphold victims' right to know the truth, the Commission conducted its research by dividing the country into eleven regions, based on shared territorial characteristics. This regional approach enabled a more in-depth exploration of territories with distinct dynamics of armed conflict. Among these is the volume *Antioquia, Sur de Córdoba y Bajo Atrato Chocoano*, which includes research conducted in the department of Antioquia, the region where the village of Perrillo is located.

3.2. Antioquia

"El territorio es el lugar por el que camina la vida […], es igual a la cultura más [el] espacio natural […]. El territorio es el lugar por donde corre el pensamiento detrás de los espíritus buscando el buen vivir"[6]

["Territory is the place where life walks […], it is equal to culture plus natural space […]. Territory is the place where thought runs after spirits in search of wellbeing."]

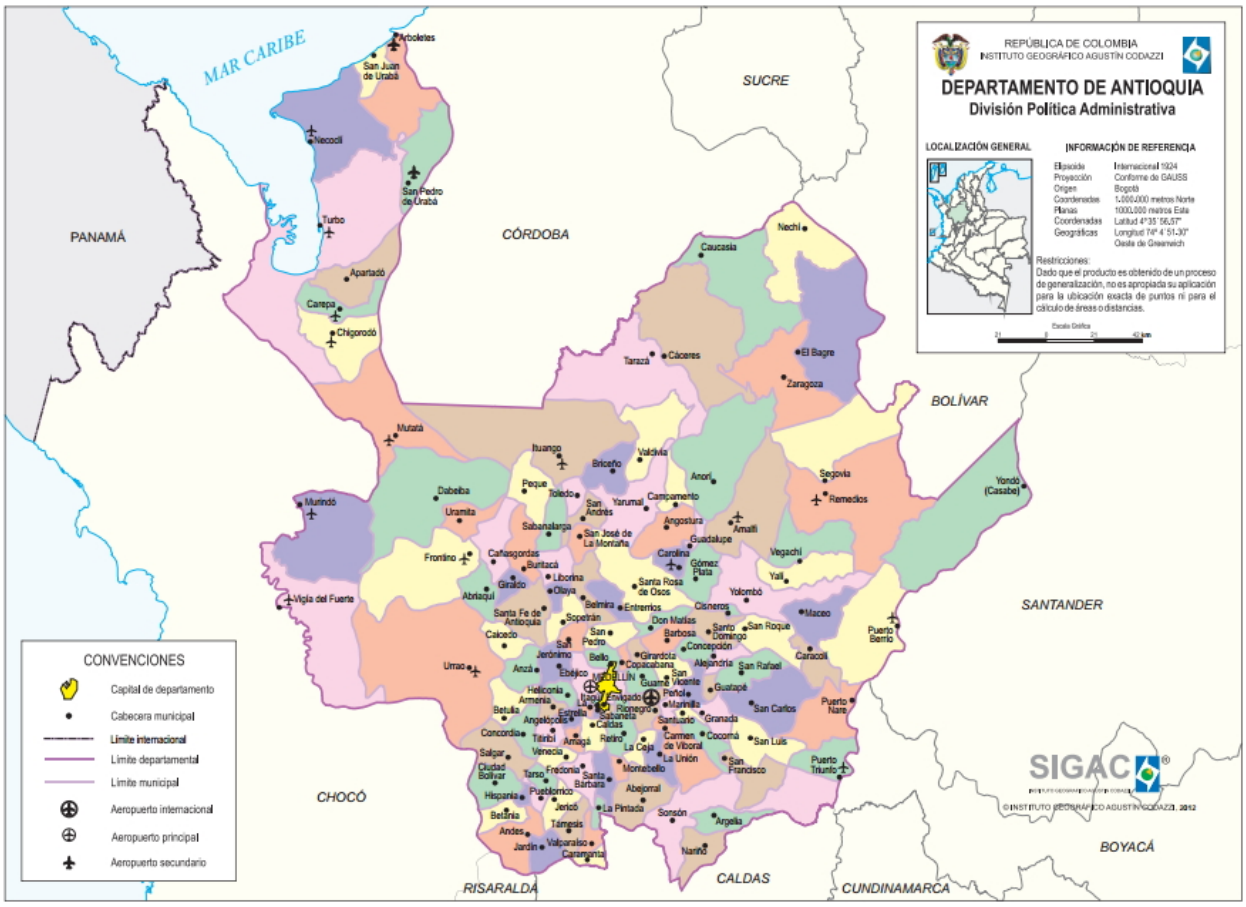

Figure 4 Antioquia Map. Source: IGAC

As expressed by one of the many victims interviewed by the Commission during its research in Antioquia, territory is a place where life unfolds, it is culture intertwined with natural space, the place where thoughts run after spirits in search of well-being. According to the Commission, territory is not merely a delimited physical space that can be reduced

[6] Interview 238-VI-00056. Leader of the Tabaco community, an Afro-descendant community, (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

to its geographical and ecosystemic characteristics; rather, it is the result of a social process through which meaning is constructed in a certain space. For this reason, territories can disappear or transform, even when the physical spaces themselves remain unchanged (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The territorial dynamics of the Colombian armed conflict have rarely aligned with the political-administrative boundaries of departments and municipalities. As mentioned above, these dynamics correspond instead to the heterogeneity of the territory and to the spatial, social, political, economic, and cultural logics that give each region its own identity and that have interacted with the armed conflict in distinct ways (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

In the case of Antioquia, its diverse geography and rugged terrain of jungles and mountains, combined with its strategic location and its role as a crucial corridor for controlling the northwest of the country, providing access to both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and facilitating the movement of all kinds of materials, both legal and illegal, have made the department a setting of intense dispute and violent conflict, as well as a key location in the political and economic development of the nation. The FARC, the ELN, the EPL, and paramilitary groups established presence in, and in some cases even emerged from this territory, seeking to build zones of control to support their subsequent expansion (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

This unique geography is not only a spectacle; inhabiting it has presented extraordinary challenges that have helped shape a dominant image of the people of Antioquia. An unwavering determination to subdue an overwhelming natural environment is frequently associated with those who live in this territory, or with those who have transformed it over at least the past three centuries (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a). Nevertheless, the armed conflict has also been deeply embedded in Antioquia's regional history, marked by persistent disputes over land ownership and use.

Understanding the multiple facets of the armed conflict in Antioquia is essential to gaining a comprehensive view of the conflict throughout Colombia. The department of Antioquia is divided into nine subregions. From the 1980s onward, the FARC, through its 9th and

47th Fronts, and the ELN, through its Carlos Alirio Buitrago Front, maintained a presence in the eastern subregion (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The ELN was the first group to establish political operations, particularly in the Embalses area of the eastern subregion. On the other hand, the FARC, which had a greater capacity for armed confrontation, established central camps in the Páramos area of the eastern subregion and carried out attacks against the military forces, as well as killings of civilians whom the guerrillas accused of having links to paramilitary groups (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The eastern subregion was the scene of the bloodiest conflicts during the 1990s. Due to its economic and strategic importance, eastern Antioquia became a highly contested territory for armed groups. The presence of the ELN and the FARC, along with the arrival of paramilitary blocs (Metro, Cacique Nutibara and Héroes de Granada) and the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of the Magdalena Medio, one of the bordering subregions, left the civilian population vulnerable to the crossfire (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

Furthermore, Eastern Antioquia, in addition to being highly strategic due to its mining and energy projects and its connection to Medellín, the departmental capital and the country's second-largest city, has a long tradition of social mobilization and political struggle. The subregion has been characterized by organized civic movements and community action groups that have been critical of prevailing development models. These conditions led the FARC to view this territory as a favorable space for expanding their operations and advancing their objectives, which is why they decided to deploy commanders from other subregions, such as Urabá and the Magdalena Medio (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The fact that FARC commanders were outsiders, unfamiliar with the region's social, cultural, and political dynamics, made relations between the guerrilla group and the civilian population tense from the outset. Instead of constructing relatively consensual social orders, or forms of control not predominantly based on violence, the group relied on the deployment of both lethal and non-lethal violence to impose control over the civilian population. Alongside this, intense territorial disputes between the FARC and the ELN exacerbated the violence, as did clashes between guerrilla fronts, the army, and the paramilitary blocs operating in the region (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The FARC's military offensive focused on guerrilla takeovers and the sabotage of electoral processes. From 1997 onward, these takeovers intensified in the Embalses area, particularly in the municipalities of San Carlos, San Rafael, San Luis, and Granada, as well as in the Páramos area, including Nariño, Sonsón and Argelia. These actions not only demonstrated the FARC’s military capacity, but also effectively "expelled" the State from these territories and triggered a massive escalation of violence against the civilian population (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a).

The Argentine writer Tomás Eloy Martínez once stated that the war in Colombia has been fought through the bodies of the peasants (Comisión de la Verdad, 2022a). This context of the armed conflict in Antioquia and Colombia as a whole, provides a broader picture of how specific territories, predominantly rural, and the civilian populations attached to them came under attack by different armed actors seeking to controll both land and people. It is within this broader regional context of violence, displacement, and the struggle for territorial control that the story of Perrillo must be understood.

3.3. Perrillo

The village of Perrillo is located within the municipality of Sonsón, in the department of Antioquia, yet it lies approximately eight hours from the municipal urban center. Sonsón is one of the municipalities that make up the Páramos area of the department’s eastern subregion. Perrillo’s population was severely affected by the armed conflict, as the territory functioned as a strategic corridor connecting the municipalities of Nariño and Argelia in Antioquia with Aguadas and Salamina in the bordering department of Caldas. This strategic position enabled the FARC's 47th Front to begin exercising control over the territory. Subsequently, forced displacement began, and by 2007 the village had become completely uninhabited.

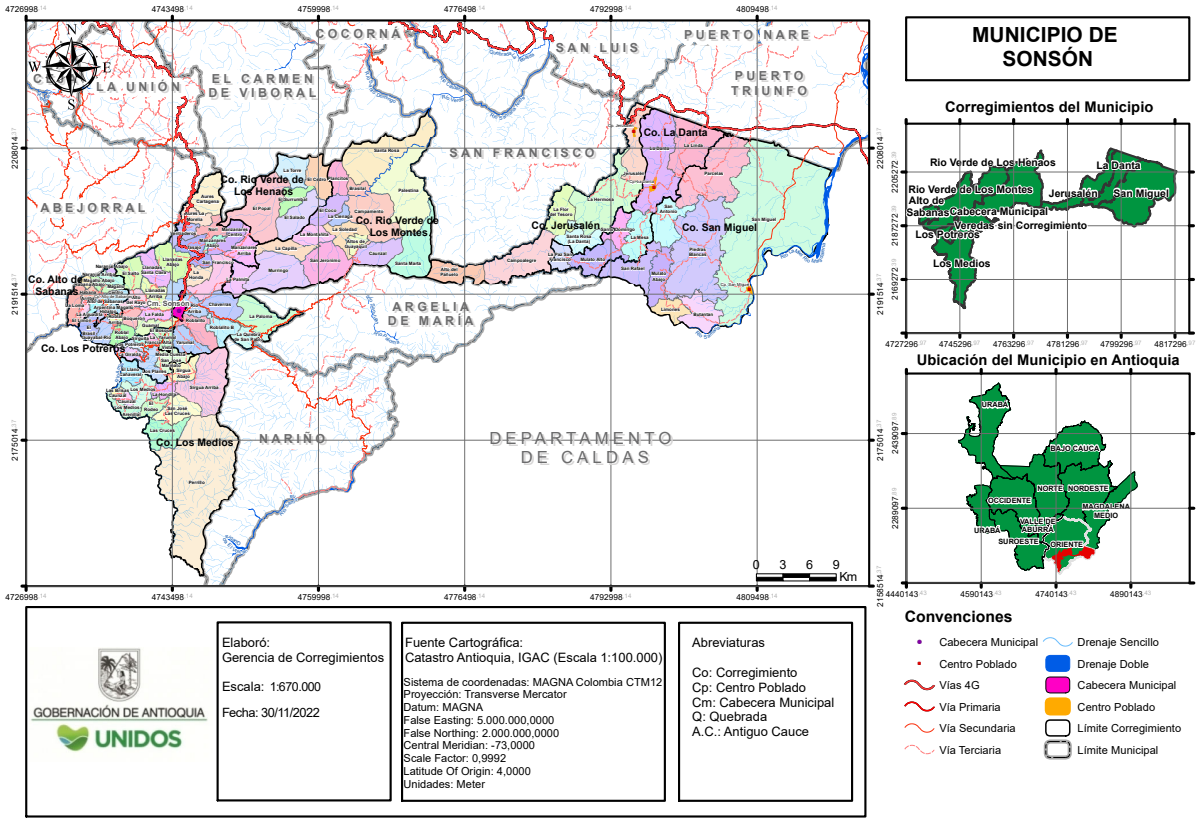

Figure 5 Sonsón Map. Source: Gobernación de Antioquia

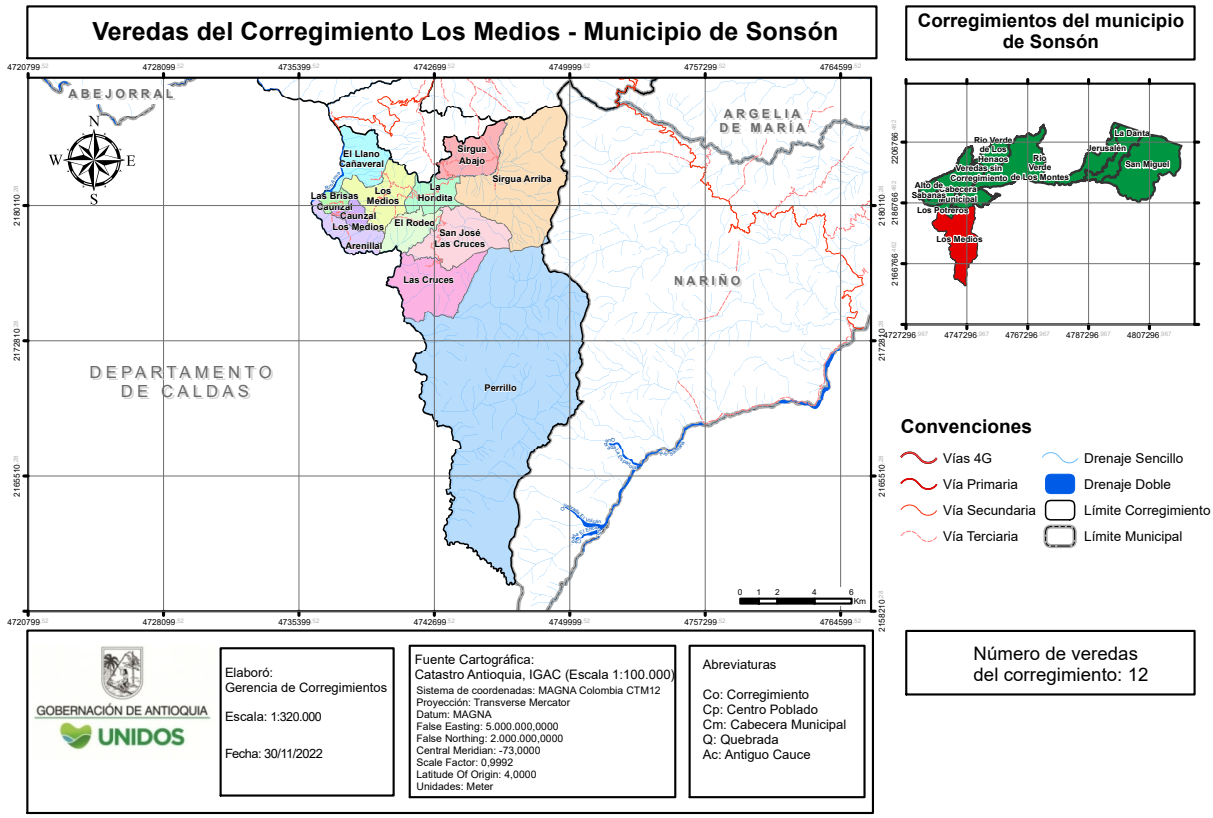

Figure 6 Perrillo Map. Source: Gobernación de Antioquia

The first members of the FARC's 47th Front arrived in 1983 and numbered no more than seven individuals, dressed in civilian clothes. In the years that followed, their ranks continued to grow, and in 2003 the ELN entered the area to contest territorial control, generating increased tension among the inhabitants as a result of repeated clashes. In 2004, the Army and paramilitary groups entered the territory, turning it into a war zone in which both ground and aerial bombardments became commonplace (Marín, 2021).

Perrillo's territory was not only a site of dispute between the FARC's 47th Front and the ELN, but also a space in which these groups carried out extortions, kidnappings, murders, and exercised total control over illegal activities across the surrounding moorland. These dynamics led to the forced displacement of its inhabitants beginning in 1994. Furthermore, following the arrival of the army in 2004, guerrilla groups laid landmines in La Quiebra, an area of Perrillo where the path leading deeper into the jungle began and

where many children used to gather to walk to school together. Landmining was one of the main reasons why the village became uninhabitable (Marín, 2021).

At its peak, Perrillo was home to approximately 48 families before they were displaced by the conflict. Today, it is completely uninhabited, as its 214 residents were forced to flee, some to Sonsón and others to different municipalities in Caldas and Antioquia (Marín, 2021). Perrillo represents one of the countless rural communities that share the same reality: the abandonment of their land, social ties, landscapes, and most cherished possessions, amid the uncertainty of not knowing what the future will hold.

Colombia experiences the phenomenon of displacement on a daily basis, as affected individuals must find ways to cope with being uprooted from their territories and with the transition of arriving in unfamiliar places to start from zero in rebuilding their life projects. As mentioned in the first chapter, displaced persons are not only deprived of their territory and material belongings, but also of their social environment and the world to which they were previously connected. This situation threatens the identities they have built over a lifetime and severely affects individual well-being due to the physical and psychological suffering caused by prolonged uncertainty, disorientation, and the absence of any clear sense of what lies ahead.

However, despite all of the consequences that the phenomenon of displacement entails, in Colombia it has, in many ways, silently become part of our everyday life. As Muñoz (2014) explains, the problem has been normalized, and as a result its impact on the country's development is not fully understood, while the urgency of transforming it is often denied. Even today, forced displacement remains a marginal issue in public debate, despite its complexity and persistence. Half a century of conflict has not been sufficient to generate levels of awareness that would allow society to fully grasp the pain of thousands of peasants who bear the scars of the conflict on their bodies (Marín, 2021).

Many territories across the country are now abandoned because victims have been unable to return to their lands for reasons directly related to the armed conflict they experienced. In the case of Perrillo, returning became impossible due to the presence of landmines and decades of abandonment. It is therefore no coincidence that many victims now live far from their places of origin, on the outskirts of cities or in other rural areas,

where they were forced to rebuild their lives. This situation in rural areas has not only profoundly affected populations dispossessed of their territory, but has also benefited different insurgent and criminal groups that have occupied abandoned areas to continue illicit activities, including illegal mining, the exploitation of natural resources and the production of cocaine or marijuana, thereby generating further social problems (Marín, 2021).

Perrillo was one of the oldest villages in the municipality of Sonsón, home to large families and characterized by unique customs and traditions forged over generations. The cultural richness of this territory was widely recognized, particularly for the weaving of sheep's wool to produce *Ruanas Perrileñas,* a practice unique to this place. This activity, constituted a central element of community life, as it involved most members of the village in its execution. For the women, weaving represented both a connection to their ancestors and a means of achieving economic independence (Marín, 2021). Men also contributed by assisting with the finishing touches of the *ruanas* and sometimes even blankets, tasks in which women likewise participated. Knowledge was widely shared: everyone knew the craft, and anyone could build a spinning wheel or a loom, the essential tools for weaving (Marín, 2021).

The inhabitants of Perrillo were uprooted from a form of community life in which cultural and social representations had converged, been built over time, and acquired deep significance for each individual. Arias and Ceballos (2013, cited in Ojeda, 2013) argue that when victims arrive in new locations after displacement, they begin to question their individual identities, as their customs and ways of life are no longer perceived as relevant in these new contexts, leading to a drastic transformation of their social roles. This phenomenon can also limit and disrupt individuals' efforts to resume their cultural practices in their places of relocation, even when such practices could serve as forms of resilience and recovery, helping them cope with the mourning produced by displacement and the horrors of armed conflict.

One might assume that what occurred in Perrillo, the gradual disappearance of a territory and its community, and the loss of its ICH embodied in the *Ruanas Perrileñas* and in the minds, hearts and hands of its artisans, would be a well-documented case in Colombia.

Instead, as with many other cases across the country, there is little information about the history of this village, about what happened to its inhabitants, or about the fate of the *ruana* production after the armed conflict rendered the place lifeless.

Adriana Marín Franco, a former communication and journalism student at the University of Antioquia, the department's most important public higher-education institution, conducted research on Perrillo and what remains of it. In 2021, she visited the site alongside her mother and a cousin of her father, both former inhabitants of Perrillo, in order to explore the traces of what had once been home to skilled artisans and shepherds, and the birthplace of the unique *Ruanas Perrileñas*. She also conducted a series of interviews that allowed her to collect different testimonies from former residents who shared their memories and reflections on life in their former home.

Marín (2021) describes how, during their visit to the site where Perrillo once stood, they walked back and forth, attempting to imagine what life there had been like. However, no traces remained, only grass and weeds. Fabián, her father's cousin, remarked: "I knew this place when it was at its peak, when people lived well, when the sheep were plentiful… it's a sad contrast to see the abandoned houses and what remains of the war" (Marín, 2021, p. 24). The path they were walking along had once been filled with flocks of sheep, whose wool was used not only to produce the renowned *ruanas*, but also blankets and cushions distinguished by the traditional Perrileño weaving techniques.

At one point during the visit, they stopped in front of what used to be María Ismelda's house, Adriana's mother. It was the place where she was born and raised. "Everything we made with our own hands, the blankets, the *ruanas*, even the looms we used to weave, was gone", she said (Marín, 2021, p.27). At that moment, Marín notes that her mother became the voice of many people displaced from their land, who held their most intimate and precious memories in the mountains, houses, and places where they had been nurtured by their ancestors and to which they never returned. "We didn't go back because of sadness; it wasn't easy to return to the farm where everything was over. There was no school, nor the conditions to return, so we decided to start our lives elsewhere", María Ismelda explained (Marín, 2021, p.27). She also repeatedly mentions that she loved to knit every day and that she did so with great pleasure.

In Perrillo, every family had a flock, flocks that stretched across the immense prairies connected to vast forests and shared streams running between hills and slopes. María Ismelda Franco, with her deep gaze and gentle hands, was one of the many women from Perrillo who wove daily alongside her sisters to achieve economic independence. This independence allowed them to invest their earnings in whatever they wished: clothes, makeup, lotions or trips. They sold their work in the urban center of Sonsón and, at times through private commissions. In Aguadas, Caldas, however, the *ruanas* were not sold in stores but only produced on request for individual buyers (Marín, 2021).

María Ismelda recounts that that they used to do everything themselves: “shearing the sheeps, washing the wool, weaving. Every year we sheared the sheeps, and they yielded up to three pounds of wool each” (Marín, 2021, p.34). Approximately four pounds of wool were needed to make a *ruana* and eight pounds to produce a blanket. In many families, it was also common for men to help with the finishing touches on the *ruanas* and blankets (Marín, 2021).

According to Marín, for the people of Perrillo, weaving was not only part of an independent household economy but also, in a broader sense, a way of weaving themselves. It was a practice through which stories were intertwined with thoughts and hands, stitch by stitch and word by word, shared among family members and friends. While weaving, they planned the week ahead, discussed trips to town, shared outings, and exchanged intimate secrets and love affairs, often while listening to the radio dramas of the time. At certain moments, Marín explains, stories also emerged about guerrilla members who crossed the steep mountains with rifles in hand, some of whom stopped to chat, order a *ruana*, or simply flirt.

When the conflict intensified, families began selling their sheep, thereby abandoning their tradition and ceasing to pass it on to their descendants. This is a tradition that belonged solely to the people of Perrillo and to their territory. The weaving was always distinguished by its handwork, its finishing touches, and the use of a loom, the wooden structure that enabled a specific weave with the wool that could only be achieved in this way. “It’s a weaving that was only known in Perrillo; you don’t see it anywhere else,” said Maria Ismelda (Marín, 2021, p.35).

One of the former inhabitants of Perrillo interviewed by Marín explains that the practice of weaving was passed down from generation to generation. She recounts that her mother taught her and her siblings, but that this process of inheritance ended with the displacement. Marina, the interviewee, reflects: “If we had stayed there, our children would have learned, but since we're not there anymore, that's been lost. You know, my sister knew how to spin threads when she was only 11, and she loved to tease everyone with it” (Marín, 2021, p.36).

Despite being forgotten by a nation that silently overlooks the atrocious consequences of displacement, Perrillo is a story that refuses to be erased, as it continues to live on through the voices of the men and women who still bear the marks of the threads that were tangled in their fingers for so many years (Marín, 2021). It endures through their thoughts and most intimate emotions, which transcend the present and reach back to the moments when their grandparents, great-grandparents and earlier generations imparted a cultural and social tradition unique to their territory, rooted in their knowledge and innermost being.

Unfortunately, it is no more than that, a story of what once was. As Marín states, displacement to other places left the inhabitants of Perrillo feeling alienated from their lives, customs, and traditions. They were once self-sufficient, living freely and peacefully with their families, tending large plots of land, raising flocks of sheep and other animals, and harvesting timber trees to make beds, tables, stools, and kitchen utensils. They had abundant natural resources and a culture that had been nurtured and developed in those mountains for generations.

Marín also explains that the families did not return to their territory for several reasons: a lack of essential conditions, such as a functioning school and the reconstruction of houses partially destroyed by the impact of explosive devices, as well as the presence of landmines that had been placed years earlier. But above all, it was the fear of further suffering, as they knew deep down that the places and the life they once knew had irreversibly changed.

The residents of Perrillo recognize themselves as victims of forced displacement, fully aware of the events that occurred during a critical period, which led to the dispossession of their homes, their territory, and their identity. Forced displacement disrupted the lives

they had built over the years, leaving them feeling like strangers in new places where customs and traditions differed, forcing them to adapt to social and cultural dynamics that were disconnected from their own essence (Marín, 2021).

Although the families began new lives in different places and within different cultural contexts, their life plans were abruptly shattered, radically altering their way of life and relationships accross personal, family, work, and social spheres. This generated a profound sense of nostalgia that is collectively shared and has yet to be overcome. Many victims remain reluctant to speak about what forced displacement meant for them, what it continues to mean, and the consequences of not being able to return to their land (Marín, 2021).

La *Ruana Perrileña* was a practice passed down from generation to generation, deeply rooted in a specific territory where the instruments, artifacts, and resources needed for its production existed. It was knowledge shared by the entire community and imparted to its youngest members from an early age, a skill that allowed the inhabitants of Perrillo to provide for themselves and their families. It was also a representation of unity and creative expression, particularly among women, that made Perrillo unique. La *Ruana Perrileña* is an example of Intangible Cultural Heritage that was lost due to displacement within the framework of Colombia's long and relentless armed conflict. The carriers of this ICH were not protected, nor was the territory directly connected to their heritage. Even if it survives in memory, la *Ruana Perrileña* has become a story, one that cannot be safeguarded because it was never protected from conflict in the first place. The people of Perrillo were deprived not only of their cultural heritage, but also of their essence and the qualities that made them unique as human beings.

Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage as a tool highlighted by UNESCO for combating ignorance, fostering human diversity, and recognizing the uniqueness of individuals and communities is essential. However, this potential is unrealized if ICH is not actively protected from armed conflict. Moreover, ICH serves as a vital mechanism for resilience, allowing communities to mourn, preserve memory, and rebuild after the disruption of their cultural practices. In Colombia, while the armed conflict endures, the *Ruana Perrileña,* like many other intangible cultural expressions, exists only in the

memories of the victims, memories that will slowly fade as they pass away, taking their knowledge with them. Perrillo demonstrates that when ICH and its carriers are left unprotected, both the heritage and the social fabric that sustains it are irreversibly damaged, highlighting the urgent need for protective measures in contexts of conflict.

3.4. Interview with Yeison Marín – Interviewer: Adelaida Henao Warren (04-02-2026)

Yeison Marín: My name is Yeison Marín Martínez, and I am from the municipality of Sonsón, Antioquia. Currently, I am working on rescuing a weaving tradition that was very important for the municipality of Sonsón: the making of the traditional *Ruana Perrileña*, a *ruana* made from sheep's wool.

I have been involved in this process since 2022. It all began with the realization that in the municipality there were only two artisans left who were still weaving the traditional *ruanas*. Among them was Luz Mary, an artisan who was also from the village of Perrillo and who is part of my family. She is my grandmother's cousin on my father's side, although I only discovered that connection in 2023.

However, the people who truly led me into the world of weaving were my grandmother Rubiela and my mother Consuelo. They are part of a sewing collective called Tejedoras por la Memoria de Sonsón[7], a collective that was founded in 2009 and structured around the idea of healing through weaving. This is because both my mother and my grandmother, and myself as well, were displaced by the armed conflict from the village of San José Las Cruces, which borders the village of Perrillo.

I didn't really have a strong connection to weaving the *ruana* from a young age, mainly because this has always been a lineage of women. The person who introduced me to it as an adult was my grandmother, when she took me to a weaving workshop that began at the Casa de la Cultura de Sonsón[8]. It was a program brought by the Government of Antioquia, as part of the Antioquia es Mágica[9] project, in which I participated at that time. They brought a four-frame horizontal loom, and the project was carried out together with

[7] Weavers for the Memory of Sonsón.
[8] Cultural House of Sonsón.
[9] Antioquia is magical project.

the brand Alado Diseño, designers from Medellín who were also seeking to rescue this heritage that was being lost in the municipality and no longer had much prominence.

The process of rescuing this tradition developed gradually, partly because I had previously worked with the Humanitarian Demining Organization. Through that work, I was able to heal some part of what happened during the conflict. I loved my job, but I thought to myself: “I’m going to stay here until I retire or until the organization leaves,” and I wanted something more. Through the organization, I got to know a large part of Colombian culture, including artisanal weaving. I saw it as something very beautiful, but I only thought, “Oh, how nice, that’s very expensive, but everyone has their own art.” I never really gave it importance.

That changed in 2021, when my grandfather passed away. Without us knowing, he had kept a *Ruana Perrileña* in a trunk with his clothes. My family decided to throw it away because it was worn and had some tears. I told them that if they wanted to throw it away, they should give it to me instead, because I wanted to keep it along with a *ruana* that belonged to my uncle Arturo Villa. I ended up storing both of them in another trunk, without knowing that a year later they would become part of my productive project.

Under the program, when the government came together with Alado Diseño, one of the facilitators asked, “Well, who here makes the traditional *Ruana Perrileña* that are always mentioned?” Five artisans were named: Luz Mary, Angélica, Dioselina, Luz Marina, and Aunt Fabiola.

However, of the people mentioned, only Luz Mary and Luz Marina are still active in the process, maybe not as strongly as before, but they are still weaving *ruanas*. The other artisans have either passed away or stopped practicing the craft due to illness. What has been disappearing in Sonsón is that, after everything that happened with the armed conflict in the village of Perrillo, many families lost their looms, they were left abandoned in their old homes. If families moved to the city, they had no space to keep them.

Another issue was economic: Sonsón suffered the near-total disappearance of sheep flocks. As a result, the raw material needed to make these garments was no longer available. They then had to start knocking on doors in nearby places such as Marulanda

or San Félix, municipalities in the department of Caldas, where there are sheep cooperatives. San Félix borders with the village of Perrillo, so wool began to be brought from there. Given this situation, the weavers began to realize that it was no longer very profitable. Additionally, the *ruana* economy itself was no longer strong, owning a *ruana* was no longer something everyone wanted.

That was what I began to analyze. I thought that perhaps what was missing was innovation, new products, and something attractive that could be created directly in the municipality. This is because, for example, no foreigner or visitor is going to go to the village of Perrillo, since it is completely uninhabited.

My grandmother is one of the founders of the Tejedoras por la Memoria de Sonsón collective. I was part of that collective and helped make their weaving and their memory more visible, allowing them to continue growing through events such as artisan fairs. Eventually, I reached a point where I thought, “I want to start my own project, I want to have my own company,” but I didn’t know what it would actually be.

When I entered the project with the government of Antioquia, I didn’t know how the machines worked. That stressed me out, a loom that at one point had to be set up with 1,200 threads, was very overwhelming. I told my grandmother that I really didn’t want that. But she told me, “Look, at 74 years old, I wove a rug, a small rug, using fibers, wool, industrial wool.” So I took on the challenge and thought, “If my grandmother was able to do this standing up, on a loom like this, why can’t I learn?”

I began to carefully observe the instructor and her classes, but she focused heavily on theory. I am a very visual person. She started working on pattern-making, and I bought a notebook and began documenting the patterns, watching how the machine behaved. What fascinated me the most was the movement, the mechanics of it. How each pedal and each stitch of every needle generated a pattern and a design.

My mom also tried to teach me how to crochet, but it felt like it wasn’t the right time to learn, or maybe it just wasn’t her way of explaining it. I tried, but the yarn always got tangled, so I thought it wasn’t for me. However, in 2022, when I began to really take in the whole history of the village of Perrillo, I asked my mom, “Isn’t my grandfather’s *ruana*

still in the house?" I took it out, washed it carefully, and now I have it here in the workshop. That is the only one that's placed in the center. The others are set off to the sides, but that one is the centerpiece.

I also saw that here in Sonsón, the *ruana* wasn't present, neither at local fairs nor in shops. There was no experience around it, contrary to what the tradition used to be.

Since the group formed by the government was so large, I told my grandmother, "I think it's time to rescue some looms." So I took on the task of searching and asking who still had a loom. That's how I asked Angélica, one of the weavers from Perrillo. She had a 67-year-old loom. When I asked if she would lend it to me or teach me how to weave, she said no, she told me she didn't have time and that she was very ill. I asked if she would sell it to me, but she refused, saying she wanted to keep it. So I didn't insist anymore and kept looking.

It felt like looking for a needle in a haystack, because no matter how much you search, you just can't find it. Then we had a problem at the Casa de la Cultura, and the loom we were working on had been dismantled. During those days, I had to go to the village of San José de las Cruces, where I'm from, to support some young people with agricultural work. While I was there, one of my aunts said, "I think we saw a wheel in your great-grandmother's house, and that wheel is a spinning wheel."

When I went there, we had to push the door down because the house was falling apart, the hillside was literally coming down on it. Inside, I found the spinning wheels, our traditional spinning wheels. I turned to the other room and found a loom. It's a loom that is over 150 years old, because it belonged to my great-great-grandmother. I now have it here, restored and fully functional.

It has won twice at the Fiestas del Maíz[10] in the traditional trades and crafts category. As a character, I also appear as "the weaver." It's something very beautiful, because if I hadn't rescued it, that loom would have disappeared. Instead, here in the workshop I show the

[10] The Corn festival is a traditional festivity of the municipality of Sonsón.

techniques and its original parts: the rollers, the reed, the spinning wheel, the heddles, and the shuttles.

For me, finding it was extremely important. It was like the engine that pushed me to rescue this tradition, and I didn't want it to end up like the pieces you see in museums, objects from traditional trades that just sit there.

Interviewer: Yeison, was your great-great-grandmother from Perrillo?

Yeison Marín: My great-great-grandmother was Rosana Granada. She was from Perrillo, and the loom belonged to her. The loom was inherited only among women. There was a lot of sexism around here, so women had to do many things, including weaving. I've been told stories of women who would not hand over a loom unless it was to another woman in the same family. Even if another family needed it, but was unrelated by surname or family ties, the owners of the loom preferred to burn all their machinery rather than pass on that knowledge. There was a strong sense of selfishness around it.

Interviewer: So the loom that belonged to your great-great-grandmother in Perrillo ended up in your great-grandmother's house in San José de las Cruces, and that's where you found it?

Yeison Marín: Yes, that's where I found it.

Interviewer: And what is it that sets it apart from other looms?

Yeison Marín: I've taken on the task of looking for weavings similar to these around the world, and they are very similar. For example, loom-woven carpets are made in a very similar loom to this one. In Argentina, for instance, there is also a loom that is almost identical to this one. What comes out of the loom is a plain weaving, one thread over, one thread under. Have you ever noticed coffee sacks?

Interviewer: Yes.

Yeison Marín: Those sacks are very similar to the weaving that this loom produces. The weaving is vertical, because the loom stands upright. There are looms that measure about 1.5 meters, and others that are close to two meters. The loom is positioned against the

wall, inclined about thirty to forty degrees from the floor to the wall, so it ends up almost lying down. You have to weave standing up.

This craft was always done by women, usually in a corridor or in the cluttered room. They had to do the entire process: washing the wool, drying it, carding it, spinning it, setting it up on the warp, and then weaving, almost producing between two and five garments per week, so that men could come into town and sell the *ruanas*. For me, that is the great meaning: the *ruana* strongly supported the local economy here in Sonsón, because it was also exchanged with other municipalities that didn't have sheep.

In the village of Perrillo, more than twenty-three families had between fifty and three hundred sheep per household. Each household was different: one family had white sheep, another brown sheep, others had mixed-color sheep, and others gray sheep. Each family deeply respected their sheep and what distinguished them.

Interviewer: You're telling me that in the municipality there are now very few flocks, and that you have to bring in wool from other towns.

Yeison Marín: We don't have any. Right now, there is only a rural youth farm initiative that has a few sheep for subsistence, for milk, basically.

If I want wool, I have to wait until the sheep are shorn, and that can take four to eight months per sheep. That's the timeframe. To get good use and high-quality wool, you have to wait. You have to understand that a sheep has to go through that whole process out in the elements for us to be able to spin good-quality wool. If the fibers are too short, the wool doesn't get wasted, but it turns into felt. You have to break it apart and make sheets or layers, and then soften them. Wool that's too short breaks at the fiber level. It's like hair, the longer the hair, the easier it is to braid it. With long wool fibers, we get the best quality weavings.

Interviewer: I understand. So going back to the story, you found the loom in your great-grandmother's house in San José de las Cruces, you restored it, and that's when you really began this process that had already been calling to you, especially since you already had your grandfather's *ruana* as motivation. You told me that your grandmother and your mother did crochet, but did they also weave *ruanas*?

Yeison Marín: Yes, they also wove *ruanas*. My grandmother Rubiela was the youngest of the sisters in the household, and the tasks she was given were finishing the blankets, assembling them, embroidering them, and carding them. But she was able to watch her sisters weave, and she also had to do the work of washing the wool, drying it, spinning it, either by hand or on the spinning wheel. My mother on the other hand, lived for about five years with my great-great-grandmother in Perrillo.

In the countryside, from about the age of three, whether you're a boy or a girl, you're already a useful or productive part of the farm. I remember that I started walking around age two, and by the time I was three or four, I was already penning the calves, *gariteaba*[11], bringing food to my grandfather, and carrying firewood. It was somewhere between play and already having a role within the household. Women, for example, had to go gather firewood or play while carding the wool.

For weaving, for making a *ruana*, you need a lot of patience. From the moment the sheep is shorn, there's a huge process involved in transforming the wool. My grandmother and my mother said that they would sit with my great-great-grandmother and help organize the wool, and then my great-great-grandmother would be the one who, at night, began spinning first and later set up the weaving on the loom.

When my mother was a bit older, she also helped Aunt Eva, who is my grandfather Reinaldo's sister. She also wove *ruanas* and blankets. But when so many flocks disappeared, due to hunting, predators like dogs and wild animals, and economic issues, the sheep population began to decline. Without raw material, they no longer saw an opportunity. They also didn't consider buying industrial wool to make a *ruana* occasionally. They didn't have the financial means to do so, and those *ruanas* weren't as attractive as the ones made with sheep's wool.

One day, a man came to the workshop and brought me a *ruana* to restore. It was a *ruana* woven here in Sonsón, but it was made with industrial wool. The man told me, "No, this was made here, it's a black sheep's-wool *ruana*." And I told him, "No, that's industrial wool." He said, "So I've believed that lie all this time?" And yes, many people were sold

[11] Bring warm lunch to agricultural workers in the countryside.

that deception. Not knowing allows people to sell *ruanas* made with industrial wool, and buyers think, “Oh, I have a *Ruana Perrileña*.”

You have to know that the artisan is from Perrillo and that the *ruana* was woven on a traditional loom from Perrillo. This also has a designation, it has its denomination of origin. For me, that’s very beautiful, because Sonsón, as the cradle of Antioquian colonization, has had a lot of national recognition. Several of the products that have come out of this workshop are now owned by people from Sonsón who live abroad and have purchased my work.

So yes, that was the driving force, understanding how my mother and my grandmother used to weave. I asked my aunts, and they would tell me over the phone, “Look, just stay calm. Set up the loom like this, do it this way. Set the warp, pass the shuttle, press up, press down.” And I I began to imagine everything and, at the same time, to recreate a sense of memory. So when they described the stitch exactly as it was, I was able to recreate it again. That’s how I began, through the information passed down by my family.

However, at first my aunts didn’t want to teach me; other relatives asked me why I would bother with that. I asked other weavers, and they told me that weaving was for women, that men didn’t do that.

Interviewer: Are you an only child?

Yeison Marín: No, I have three sisters.

Interviewer: Because I find that curious. You’ve told me several times that this is a craft passed down from woman to woman. But in the end, even though you have sisters, you were the one who took it on and learned it.

Yeison Marín: Well, it was my initiative because I saw it more as an act of rescuing memory. Also because I wanted to look for another kind of job. It’s not the same to work for a company and keep a fixed schedule, even if you earn good benefits. And because of health issues affecting my grandmother, my mother, my father, and one of my aunts and because there was no one else to take care of medical matters, I was able to do that from home if I started my own business here. So, after analyzing the situation, I began to

take it on. Once I found my great-great-grandmother's loom and brought it here, that's when I really started.

Not long after, the loom that belonged to Angélica, one of the weavers, also became available. Angélica finally said yes and told me she would sell me the loom and teach me how to weave at her house.

Interviewer: Angélica was another one of the weavers still living in Sonsón?

Yeison Marín: Yes, another weaver from Perrillo. She wasn't originally from Perrillo, but she was taught by Dioselina, who was from Perrillo and taught her the *ruana* technique. They continued weaving because they had to take care of their parents at home and had no other source of income.

So making *ruanas* became a kind of home-based productive unit. Even knowing how demanding it is, because wool generates a lot of heat. That's why women developed arthritis, suffered strokes, or had frequent headaches. When you weave, the wool heats up a lot. They had to weave, then go outside and be exposed to the cold, and that caused them harm.

Angélica used to tell me, "If you're going to learn this technique, if you're going outside, go out wearing gloves." People often ask me why I wear gloves, and it's because Angélica always told me that if I was starting out, I had to wear gloves. Washing the wool wasn't a problem, but when weaving, you must always wear gloves. That was her recommendation, and they knew it because they never took that precaution themselves. This craft is demanding, and they didn't take much care of themselves, and now they are very ill.

That's how Angélica's loom came to me. Then another loom appeared, this time a horizontal one. So I started with two vertical looms: my great-great-grandmother's loom and then Angélica's, which is much larger and on which I am currently weaving a rug for a hotel.

Later, this other loom appeared, of Canadian origin. It's a four-frame horizontal loom, very similar to those used in Boyacá and to others found around the world. This loom spent 23

years in Bogotá being used by an artisan from Sonsón. She passed away, and her family brought the loom back to Sonsón, disassembled, trying to donate it to museums or convents, but none would accept it.

Because of that, they stored it in the attic of the house for another 21 years. In 2023, through a Carmelite priest, I was told that a woman had a loom and that I should speak with her. At that time, I already wanted to step away from the group brought by the government. You could advance in weaving there, but you didn't have the freedom to set up new yarns, make fabrics, make a cushion, or make a rug. You had to ask for permission or wait to see if it was possible. Since there were so many people, it was impossible, everyone wanted to work on the same loom at the same time.

That's when I said to my grandmother, "Would you allow me to set up and gradually build a workshop here at home?" She said, "Yes. You're taking care of me, and it's just the three of us in this very large house, so yes." That's how I began. I knew it would be here, and I took on the task of finding a name that would give me identity. That's how Maitamá Tejidos Ancestrales[12] was born.

Before, all the weavers were known only by their names. But in the municipality, no one had taken on the task of creating a brand that embraced this craft. If some of the other artisans at the time felt they were going to have competition from me, in reality I wasn't going to take their work away. What I wanted was to carry out a family heritage rescue and to break a pattern, becoming the first male weaver in the family.

I started watching videos from other countries, and also from places closer by, like Boyacá or Pasto. Men and women are weavers there. Here in Sonsón, there was a stigma that only women wove. But I decided to step into that arena. At first, I didn't tell anyone. I set up the workshop at home, and when the horizontal loom arrived, I began running tests. That led me to develop a collection for Alado Diseño, and at one point for Exito[13], that was my first recognition.

[12] Yeison's brand, the name Maitamá refers to a moorland area of Sonsón and its ancestral weavings.
[13] Large Colombian supermarket chain.

Even without fully understanding how the fashion industry worked, they told me, “Yeison, you have knowledge that comes from generations, the knowledge of weaving. What you’re contributing with is knowledge, because you understand how the machine works. As designers, we’ll give you the templates, the color palette, and the yarns you’ll work with. Since you already understand the machine perfectly, it saves us a trip from Medellín to Sonsón. We’ll simply communicate with you by phone. We’re going to make 50 rugs, each 50 centimeters by 70 centimeters long, this is the color palette, and these are the yarns.”

So I said yes, I wanted to work with them, even if they weren’t paying me. What I was gaining was recognition directly through them. So I started working with them and told them to teach me. They would say, “Look for the color palette, start exploring step by step which raw materials you can use, and what other *ruanas* you can produce using the same looms. You can call them *Ruanas Perrileñas* because your family is from there, so you have that authority.”

It’s not the same for someone from Boyacá to buy *ruanas* from me and go back to Boyacá to sell *Ruanas Perrileñas*, that wouldn’t be successful. Just like it wouldn’t make sense for me to bring *ruanas* from Boyacá here and sell them as *ruanas* from Boyacá. Why sell another type of *ruana* when we already have our own *ruana*, our own identity?

So I began mixing horizontal-loom techniques with the same wool base. Once a young man here asked me, “Why are you telling me this is a *Ruana Perrileña* if you’re not making it on a vertical loom?” And I said, “Do you know how long it takes me just to set up the vertical loom? And it only produces one piece of garment. On the horizontal loom, using the same stitch, I can produce two, five, six, or even ten *ruanas* consecutively. But I’m working with the same raw material and the same technique. And besides, I’m from a family from Perrillo, that’s my identity.”

If we analyze it closely, the looms in Sonsón were introduced from other places. Someone brought that knowledge during the colonization period. Even so, our native Indigenous ancestors already practiced weaving here. We’ve found spindles and rollers, which are tools used to shape textiles. I believe there is information about Chief Cirigó’s tribe, they were located on the higher slopes and traded with Indigenous communities from the Arma

River, who brought them cotton. They were already dressing themselves. In other words, there were early garments, because having a spindle and a roller means that the Indigenous community that lived here already made clothing for their needs.

Interviewer: Yeison, I had a question from earlier. How did the people from Perrillo learn to make the vertical looms that remained there? Do you happen to know?

Yeison Marín: I've been trying to research about that, because it was knowledge passed down through generations. What we do know is that sheep were introduced here from the municipality of San Félix in Caldas. There were very wealthy people here, so within the weaving trade, we believe they must have brought something from other countries or regions. I see this same loom in videos from other places.

For example, the way they weave in Pasto is very similar to the weaving done here. The main difference is that they don't use sheep's wool, they use industrial wool. I don't believe the looms were invented here; they were introduced from another region. When the first settlers arrived, surely one of them came with that knowledge and realized they needed protection from the cold, because we are in a moorland zone. As for the exact origin of the loom, I don't have that knowledge, that would require a separate investigation.

Interviewer: You mentioned that in Sonsón there were four weavers and yourself.

Yeison Marín: Yes. There's Angélica, but she has already stopped making *ruanas*. She wasn't from Perrillo, but she learned the technique.

Interviewer: Is there anyone from Perrillo who still makes *ruanas*?

Yeison Marín: Luz Mary, she's my grandmother's cousin on my father's side. She continues working with the *ruanas*. And Luz Marina, who makes them occasionally. She lives in the village of Sirgua Abajo. During the violence period, she was displaced; she was very brave and strong, she carried the loom on her back and brought it to her house, and she still preserves it. Last year or the year before, she invited me to her home and was weaving a *ruana*. She continues making *ruanas*, not on a large scale, because of household responsibilities, she now has other roles, but she still makes them. She showed me the loom and told me it was the one she brought from Perrillo. She also said,

“If I ever leave this house, the first thing to go is the loom.” For me, that’s what makes it unique, the loom already has its own identity.

Interviewer: Do you happen to have a photo of the vertical loom? I’m very curious about these artifacts and their history. I’ve seen looms before, but a vertical loom leaning against a wall and worked standing up, I can’t quite picture it. And now that you’ve told me Luz Marina carried it on her back, I’m even more curious to see it.

Yeison Marín: It completely comes apart, it’s a loom that can be fully disassembled, which is something very beautiful. I’m going to show you and share some photos of the two looms. One is the large loom in the patio, and the other is my great-great-grandmother’s loom.

My great-great-grandmother’s loom has only one modification: legs were added at the bottom so it wouldn’t fall over. That’s the loom that appears in the traditional arts and trades exhibit during the Fiestas del Maíz.

I’m going to send you two more images of the large loom in the patio. The man in the photo is wearing a traditional *Ruana Perrileña*. There you’ll see a full wool warp on the large loom, which extends toward the back and allows continuous weaving. In another photo, I appear with a visitor, and the person in the middle is my grandmother. I’m wearing a *Ruana Perrileña*, and the *ruana* hanging there belonged to my grandfather.

Interviewer: Oh, but it’s in very good condition.

Yeison Marín: Yes, and if you notice the picture above, you’ll see people playing guitar, and among them is my grandfather wearing the *ruana*. That’s part of the workshop. The horizontal loom I mentioned, of Canadian origin, is the one in the center. The loom in the patio is the one used during the project with the Government of Antioquia, that loom is currently on loan to me.

Interviewer: I find it very interesting how you’ve embraced this tradition and adapted it to modern times on a different loom, a horizontal one, that still allows you to continue the craft, weaving with sheep’s wool using the same technique, but in a more efficient way, because it allows you to produce more pieces.

Yeison Marín: That's correct.

So when visitors arrive, they first see my great-great-grandmother's loom at the entrance, and behind it there's a map of Sonsón. That's the introduction I give them so they understand the context. I show them my grandfather's *ruana* and explain why we call it a *Ruana Perrileña*, because we have a village called Perrillo.

I also show the vertical weaving technique. Then we move to the loom in the patio, the horizontal one, where I demonstrate the weaving motion, which is much faster. Then we go to the other loom, where you can work seated. It also allows me to use it as a table, I place a board on it, which lets me finish the *ruanas*: shaping the collar, carding them, and doing things I can't do on the other looms.

Interviewer: I see. And for example, Luz Marina, the woman you mentioned who brought the loom from Perrillo, does she still weave on a vertical loom?

Yeison Marín: Yes. Luz Marina and Luz Mary still weave on vertical looms. They continue practicing the craft.

Interviewer: Yeison, now that we've reached this point in the story where you've told me how you learned to weave, how you recovered the heritage, how you set up your workshop in your grandmother's house, and how you acquired these looms, I'd like to ask you about the present. How has it been to already have your business, your looms, and to have made this craft more visible through the institutions that have contacted you? And how do you see the future of this craft?

Because from what you've told me, the only three people who practice it now are Luz Marina in Sirgua Abajo, Luz Mary, and yourself. So how do you see the present and the future in terms of opportunities, positive aspects, as well as needs and challenges?

Yeison Marín: One major achievement is that I've officially registered Maitamá Tejidos Ancestrales as a brand, I had already been working with it for five years. I've received economic support through the "Sonsón Seed Capital program". I'm part of the Sonsón museum network, but as a living-arts experience. That means I don't just tell a story like

in a traditional museum, it becomes interactive. Visitors can touch things, try on the *ruana*, and see how each process is done.

Through what I've created, I've also participated in events like the "Colombia Is the Regions" fair, to gain visibility and to show departments like Cundinamarca and Boyacá that Sonsón, being a moorland area, also has weaving and *ruanas*, and that this too is part of our identity.

I don't see it as a risk for myself. I know I have competitors, departments like Boyacá are seen as major producers. And worldwide, there are also places that produce wool textiles. What I'm offering and selling is my story, the story of Sonsón and the story of the village of Perrillo, that's what has positioned me. Also, being a man in weaving breaks traditional molds. I don't let myself be silenced. A century ago, around the 1900s, there was also a male weaver here in Sonsón who learned techniques based on those from Pasto. He brought that knowledge, set up a business, and was also trained in woodworking, so he built his own looms and began weaving here. That history also gives me strength to continue.

We understand that if I don't pass this legacy on to my family or to others who want to learn, it will eventually disappear. That's what I've been focused on, finding resources to prevent that from happening. There are artisans from Perrillo who no longer practice the craft because the problem is the lack of new machines to spin the wool, spinning wheels that don't require electricity. That's also part of my brand's mission: to be a green, environmentally friendly productive unit.

The artisans would only need to spin the wool at home, because I can obtain wool that's already washed. Nearby, for example, we have the village of Boquerón, in the municipality of Carmen de Viboral, where there are now flocks. They started with dairy and meat production, but now the sheep are also producing wool during shearing. This year, seeing how far the process has come, I became interested in joining a sheep-farming association, which would give me many more possibilities for sourcing wool from different places. I would be the one buying locally instead of bringing it from places like Boyacá or Marulanda, and I would carry out the entire transformation process here.

The main challenge is the lack of machines and financial resources. If I were able to obtain them, I could propose placing them in each artisan's home under a loan agreement. I've already spoken with five women who would be interested. They would practice their craft at home and, at night, take care of carding and spinning the wool. They would be paid for the time they work.

If I don't work with other artisans who are part of the entire process of making a *ruana*, I'll always remain stuck, because I would have to do everything myself, from washing the wool to completing the garment. On the other hand, if I have several people weaving, I can simply come here, set up the loom, and weave without any problem, because there are already others working on different stages of the process. While *ruanas* are being produced here, I can also take advantage of that time to attend more fairs.

For example, I was invited to the fair "Colombia Is the Regions." I took ten *ruanas* and came back with only one, which was made from industrial wool; I sold the rest. I also think things need to be transformed. My family has always woven *ruanas* strictly by commission, that is, you'd see the artisan weaving nonstop, from Sunday to Sunday. I wanted to change that concept a bit, especially after I met a man whom the Government of Antioquia brought in to restore the loom that had been dismantled. He came from Boyacá, from an area near Tunja, and he told me, "The day you want to learn more about weaving, I'll teach you with no strings attached. If you want to learn, once you earn some money, I'll invite you to stay at my house and I'll teach you."

This man told me, "There's a lot of selfishness here." And it's exactly what I told you before, what that man from Boyacá said about selfishness is what also happened in the village of Perrillo. People closed themselves off; everything revolved around the self and nothing more.

What's also happening is that many young people are leaving because of education opportunities in the city. They no longer want to work in the countryside, they sell their farms, and turn them into vacation properties. Sheep are disappearing as well.

He taught me everything he knew, and with what I earned from the "Sonsón Seed Capital program", I came back to Sonsón and told Fernando from the Entrepreneurship Office:

“Fernando, I’m ready. Can I participate in the first local fair on January 24?” And he said yes.

When I arrived with the production I had made in Boyacá, everyone asked me, “Oh, are you from Boyacá?” And I said, no, I’m from Sonsón, and I have my own weaving, my machines, and my workshop. Because when I started this, when I decided to establish my business here and began attending fairs, I always said that I also made *ruanas*.

I was very young, that is why people didn’t trust me. I needed someone to lend me money so I could buy wool; I needed capital, and no one was willing to lend me anything. That created a conflict for me: I knew how to weave, but if I couldn’t buy raw materials, everything stopped. That’s when I analyzed the structure of the business, applied for funding, and went to Boyacá. When I returned, I came back with ten *ruanas*. I also managed to make some placemats and rugs. That gave me strength to show the community that I didn’t just make *ruanas*, but that I also did restoration work.

What’s beautiful is that a *ruana* doesn’t have just four uses, it has no limits. It’s not something you wear four times and that’s it, it can last four generations: great-grandfather, grandfather, father, and children. If a *ruana* is well cared for, it can be completely restored. I’ve restored *ruanas* that are over sixty years old, *ruanas* from before I was born. That’s possible because the raw material, sheep’s wool, doesn’t change color; it’s very fine and much easier to restore.

People are also starting to notice a trend: young people now wear their father’s *ruana*. There used to be a culture where only elderly people wore *ruanas*. I wanted to change that idea, because I’m young and I can wear a *ruana* too. Who said a *ruana* has an age? Or that a woman can’t wear one? So I started exploring contemporary colors, brighter tones like red, blue, pink. Since the natural wool is white, you can dye it with pigments and give it a different color.

I don’t lose the essence; I don’t industrialize it, but I do make it more visually appealing to create new product lines, for example also for interior decoration, for people to fall in love with it. I set myself the task of showing designers that I’m not afraid to take risks. It’s about doing and doing, making cushions, bed runners, batches of *ruanas*, and moving on to the

next thing. That's how I built and filled the workshop with different products. For example, I have a catalog on WhatsApp.

And it's not just what's in the catalog, I can also work on custom orders, depending on what people like. Foreigners have come here, and of the more than fifty *ruanas* I've produced over the past four years, twenty are now outside Colombia, in countries like Australia, France, Sweden, Spain, Portugal, Canada, the United States, and Mexico. And of course, here in Sonsón, more than one local has been equipped with their own *ruana*.

Another thing I've taken into account in my production is that *ruanas* used to be very short. This was because our ancestors made small frames, like the one on my great-great-grandmother's loom, the size was determined by the man who built it for the woman artisan. Looking at it closely, they were very smart. Imagine walking with a *ruana* longer than your waist along a "mule trail". A long *ruana* would get caught in the brush along those narrow paths. So women as artisans and men as craftsmen merged their knowledge to design a *ruana* that protected them from the cold, was waterproof because it retained the natural grease, so water would run off, but also because it was short, it allowed for much greater mobility when handling oxen and mules.

Today life is different, we have wide roads. So now what I do is that I make them longer but with the same weight as the original short *ruana*, they weigh the same. I make them longer but lighter and much thinner, very much like the style of the *ruanas* from Boyacá, since part of my knowledge came from there and I replicated it here. I've even made some with hoods, which became a trend.

What I did encounter here in Sonsón was resistance around pricing. Twenty years ago, a *ruana* cost 100,000 Colombian pesos[14], and people thought the price should still be the same today, as if its price was preserved just like the garment itself. I explained that today *ruanas* have different values: some cost 250,000 Colombian pesos[15], others 450,000[16],

[14] Around 23 Euros.
[15] Around 58 Euros.
[16] Around 104 Euros.

and I've even sold *ruanas* for up to one million Colombian pesos[17]. The price is the same for locals and foreigners.

That's how I started to become known. Last year, my goal was to impact two schools through weaving. I took with me what I call a "mother loom," a very small loom that can be used for teaching and making wool coasters. I'm not a teacher, but I graduated from a school focused on education. I never imagined myself as a teacher, but through weaving, I realized it's essential to replicate this knowledge in schools. If you go child by child and show them how to weave, in two and a half hours they already learn. I worked with children from preschool through fifth grade.

I thought: if a child can do it, it can be replicated in other programs. I also gave workshops at the senior center, so in the end I was teaching people from ages eight to seventy-eight. At the snior center we created groups of fifteen to twenty people. I taught four workshops, each lasting eight hours, divided into two-hour sessions.

The school workshops were entirely my initiative, no one else had done this here. I developed my own teaching methodology and learned to have the patience to work one-on-one with people.

The workshops at the senior center happened because they noticed my teaching approach. At a fair, they told me they had received funding from the Ministry of Culture to rescue traditional arts and trades. They offered courses in basketry, horseshoe-making, gardening, weaving, and oral tradition. Those who enrolled in weaving came to my workshop, where I taught them what loom weaving truly is and why it's called *Ruana Perrileña*. Older adults were delighted by weaving. The program paid for the materials; I provided the instruction. I've also spoken with the University of Antioquia, and they asked me to submit a proposal.

For visitors, I charge 40,000[18] Colombian pesos per person for the experience, which lasts about two hours and includes materials and instruction. For students, I'm more

[17] Around 230 Euros.
[18] Around 10 Euros.

flexible because they come in groups; I charge 20,000[19] Colombian pesos per student. I'm also part of a local entrepreneurs' group in Sonsón.

It's been challenging because this is how I make my living. Sometimes people tell me that I'm not selling anything. But right now, for example, I'm developing another line, not *ruanas*, but cushions. I already have six wool cushions commissioned. I keep things balanced: while one *ruana* sells, I'm either at another fair or spinning wool.

That has been my role, contributing to weaving. I would love to have a greater impact in Sonsón, but we need economic resources, especially machinery. I'd like to be able to move a spinning wheel easily and tell an artisan, "Would you like to work with me? Here's a sack of wool to spin." Many already know how to spin; the knowledge exists. And if someone doesn't know, they can work with me here in the workshop. The advantage is that no energy is required, just daylight. At night it can also be done with light, but it's better to use daylight. That's my idea: to bring together people with different roles and also find someone else to work with me in the workshop.

We could work on a profit-sharing basis, and if production becomes steady, we could even pay hourly wages. Right now, unfortunately, I can't offer a minimum salary, not even I earn that much. With how expensive everything is in Colombia today, many agreements are needed for handmade work to be sustainable. But my proposal is to grow as a business in the future.

Interviewer: I find it very beautiful, Yeison, that your personal project is also a collective one, it is an economic initiative, yes, but also a way of weaving community, transmitting knowledge, and ensuring it doesn't disappear with you or the two other women who still weave. At the same time, it allows you to earn a living. I truly hope this plan continues.

Yeison Marín: We're now entering the fifth generation, my nephew and niece. Through play, I tell them, "Come, let's spin this, let's weave on the little loom," so they see it as a game. Seeing elders practice their craft can inspire children.

[19] Around 5 Euros.

The *Ruana Perrileña* from Sonsón is very similar to those from Boyacá because the raw material is the same: wool, and if we use the same machines, they'll look alike. My differentiating factor is the tradition and heritage I'm rescuing and the original *ruanas* from here.

When people come looking specifically for a traditional *Ruana Perrileña*, I study my grandfather's *ruana* and those of my aunts, examining the threads, the warp and weft. I already have the theory, so I can recreate them. For me, it's deeply enriching, because by demonstrating what I do, I'm also impacting Sonsón, I'm trying to keep a tradition alive, not just preserve my own.

At first, after the horizontal loom was damaged, I thought about closing myself off and not teaching anyone. My family didn't want to talk about it. Some cousins said it wasn't profitable, that they wanted money, money, money. But then I thought: if I die, that's it, no one continues this. All the effort to rescue it would be pointless. The looms would fill with dust again or be turned into firewood. You never know what happens to your things after you are gone, they could become museum pieces or just disappear entirely.

I decided to move forward. I didn't want to clash with the community, but I did want to show the women who said weaving was only for women that a man can do it too. I learned alongside them. Two of them even told me that if I get spinning wheels, I should count them in, so they wouldn't depend so much on electricity or traditional wheels. I once let them work with my electric wheel, it's very good, you just turn it on and start spinning.

That has also been my impact: showing people that I'm not going to be selfish. If someone else in Sonsón wants to learn and sell their *ruanas*, even better. Maybe they're afraid to start alone, so I could also propose that they bring their *ruanas* here, set a price, and I sell them alongside mine. If there's a fair and I can't attend, the other person could go and represent us. We wouldn't see each other as enemies, but as strategic allies growing together. The goal is to keep impacting Sonsón and strengthening what's being done here.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing your life story and future plans, Yeison. All this knowledge you have, it's nowhere else. It has to be written down, preserved somewhere, because who else will talk about this?

Yeison Marín: I would really like to ask central questions and speak with each weaver. There's no record of their life stories, this is living information. Once, a young tour guide said, "I lived my whole life with my grandmother and never once asked where she came from."

Right now, the municipality is trying to start a sheep project, bringing sheep back because some farms have realized they're more profitable than cattle. In just eight months, you have a lamb for meat. Sheep's milk is also in high demand, it's more nutritious than cow's milk. Another advantage is that sheep help control pests.

I'm part of the Provica association, and they told me the only missing piece is wool transformation. They already have leather, dairy, and meat, but what about the wool? That's how they found me. They visited Sonsón, they loved it, and said this should be promoted as a tourist attraction.

Places like Boyacá and Marulanda have a "wool route." Sonsón could have one too. I see great potential there, it could attract young people and even create a group of male weavers. Not to compete with women, but to safeguard the stories of aunts, mothers, and grandmothers. If a daughter didn't learn but a man wants to, generational knowledge can still be passed on.

I agreed to this interview because that's exactly what I want, to keep impacting the municipality and give visibility to traditions that haven't died, but continue through lineage. Passing on knowledge and ensuring generational continuity is essential.

Sonsón is 225 years old, but indigenous peoples were here long before and already knew how to weave. Humanity has always lived through shared knowledge, cultures teaching one another. I've researched about looms, followed masters from Peru who weave tapestries like paintings, and an elderly man in Patagonia who also weaves *ruanas*. That's how I met and learned from the master in Boyacá.

I hope this information has been enriching. There's still "*mucha tela por cortar*"[20], this is just an introduction. What I do comes from passion. It anchors me. I tell my family's story and create a process for and with them. My mother and grandmother don't have fixed salaries, but here in the workshop I can involve them, one does crochet, the other makes scarves. We can also teach crochet and knitting techniques.

In these four years, I've achieved a lot, impacted the territory, and I'm very happy with what I've done.

Interviewer: Thank you so much, Yeison.

1.1. Interview with Luz Marina Henao – Interviewer: Adelaida Henao Warren (20-02-2026)

Interviewer: Well, Luz Marina, I would like you to tell me about your story, about the place you come from. Your daughter Damaris told me that you are from Perrillo, so I'd like to know a bit about what life was like there for you. How you lived in Perrillo, how you learned the craft of making *ruanas* and dedicated yourself to it, what it was like to leave Perrillo, and how you continued making *ruanas* afterward. Your personal story, whatever you'd like to share with me.

Luz Marina: I have a lot to tell you, I don't even know where to begin. Yes, my life was in Perrillo. I was born and raised there. The art of weaving was everything. We all did it: our mothers, our grandmothers. They taught us how to do it, and we were always working. After midday, that was the job, to sit down and work with the wool, making *ruanas* and also blankets. There was never a shortage of sheep; every farm had its flock, and all the families worked with wool.

Interviewer: At what age did you start working with wool and weaving? How old were you when your mother or grandmother told you it was time to learn?

[20] An expression Colombians use to express that there is still a lot to talk, discuss or research about a certain topic. It literally translates to: there's still a lot of fabric left to cut.

Luz Marina: Around ten or eleven years old we would start working. We began with small tasks, and that's how we learned. You start little by little, until at some point you know enough and begin working properly, until you're able to do it on your own.

We learned all the tasks, we used to watch what our mothers did and we learned by doing. We did everything: washing the wool, putting it in the sun and then out in the *sereno*[21] to dry. After the wool was brought to my house, I would wash it with hot water and soap. It had to be left to soak for a while, and then it was rubbed with a wooden mallet, but not too hard, so the wool wouldn't become compacted. It was good to leave it in the sun and the *sereno* so the wool would whiten. It takes between two and three days to dry. Then we'd start working it, removing any dirt it had, spinning it, and finally making the *ruana* or the blanket. I still have the loom I had in Perrillo, here in my house.

Interviewer: And do you still use it?

Luz Marina: Yes, sometimes. In fact, not long ago I managed to get some wool and made a *ruana*. The thing is, when we were in Perrillo, there was no problem with getting the wool, there were always sheep. Once we left, getting wool became very difficult because the sheep started disappearing. The village disappeared, and the sheep disappeared too, just like that.

Interviewer: When people began leaving the village, did they leave the sheep behind or sell them? What happened to all the flocks?

Luz Marina: Some were sold very cheaply, others were lost because the village was left empty, uninhabited, and they just disappeared.

Interviewer: And did your family have sheep?

Luz Marina: Yes, everyone did. We had a flock. Each family had one. There were seventeen families, and each one had its flock. Most of those households worked with wool, you could say all of them did. That's the story.

Interviewer: You were born and raised in Perrillo, around what year did you leave?

[21] Cool evening air.

Luz Marina: Around 2002. We came to live near Sonsón, in a village called Sirgua Abajo.

Interviewer: Did you bring the loom from Perrillo to Sirgua Abajo?

Luz Marina: Yes, I still have it, it's very heavy. But we brought it on a mule. When we left Perrillo, there were only three or four families left, no more.

Interviewer: Have you been back to Perrillo since then?

Luz Marina: I went back twice, but I haven't returned in a long time.

Interviewer: Is there anything left there now?

Luz Marina: Maybe a few little houses that had good roofs. The ones that had holes in the roof and leaks have already collapsed. There's a lot of dense vegetation, and a lot of water. It's abandoned, it feels very sad, and it's frightening to be there.

Interviewer: When you left, what motivated you to bring the loom and continue weaving *ruanas*?

Luz Marina: That was the work that gave me money to survive. So we came here, and we bought wool that was brought from San Félix. I worked a lot with wool even after leaving Perrillo.

Interviewer: When was the last time you made a *ruana*?

Luz Marina: About a year ago.

Interviewer: Do you know if other people who left Perrillo continued weaving?

Luz Marina: Not really, no. As far as I know, they didn't. People went to different places, some went to Aguadas in Caldas, others went very far away. I don't think they continued.

Interviewer: It's wonderful that you were able to continue. Did you try to pass this knowledge on? Is there anyone in your family who wanted to take it up?

Luz Marina: No. I have the knowledge, but my family took other paths. And really, because of the lack of wool, it wasn't possible. If there had been wool available, it would have been easier for them to learn, but wool is very scarce. So there was no opportunity for them to learn.

Interviewer: What do you enjoy most about this craft, about making the original *Ruana Perrileña*?

Luz Marina (laughing): I feel very proud when I make a *ruana*, very *guapa*[22], because making a *ruana* involves many things.

Interviewer: About how long does it take you to make one?

Luz Marina: If you can dedicate all your time to it, from morning until the afternoon, you can finish one in a week. But since I'm alone now, I first have to cook, clean the house, feed the animals, you understand? So I can only work on the *ruana* two or three times a day. But if you can work continuously, one *ruana* takes about a week. Washing the wool, drying it, spinning it, and setting it up on the loom, that all takes time.

When we were in Perrillo, though, you could finish a *ruana* or a blanket in a week because we were fully dedicated to it. You'd wake up early, take care of whatever chores were needed in the house, and then there was almost an exact time to start working with the wool.

Interviewer: When you were there, did each person make the whole *ruana*, or were tasks divided?

Luz Marina: When I worked with my sisters, we divided the tasks, because there was so much work to do. One day one of us worked with the wool while another took care of the house and animals. The next day we switched and took turns. That way, when someone was working on the wool and weaving, they didn't have to worry about household chores, they could focus completely on making the *ruana* or the blanket.

Interviewer: Who taught you?

Luz Marina: My mother.

Interviewer: And did men weave?

Luz Marina: They always helped with some tasks, because making a *ruana* was a lot of work. They would remove dirt from the wool and sometimes help set things up. Their main

[22] Strong, capable, skilled.

job was caring for the sheep and shearing them. Sometimes, if they were being very diligent, they'd even wash the wool (laughs). But only if they were really diligent, otherwise, it was up to us women.

Interviewer: Can you tell me a bit about life in Perrillo?

Luz Marina: Life there was very pleasant. Everything revolved around the sheep. On Sundays we'd go gather them and apply powder to them. Have you heard of Neguvón[23]?

Interviewer: No, what is that?

Luz Marina: It's a powder you put into the sheep's wool so they don't get lice. On Sundays we'd gather the sheep and apply it, give them salt, and tame them. If sheep weren't enclosed, they became very surly. When they were enclosed regularly, they were much calmer.

Life was good. We hardly went anywhere else, our life was basically watching over the sheep.

Interviewer: So life in Perrillo revolved around sheep, weaving, and enjoying life.

Luz Marina: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: Did all the families know each other?

Luz Marina: Oh yes, very well, and we were very close.

Interviewer: How did you sell the *ruanas*?

Luz Marina: We sold them by commission. People in the area knew we made *ruanas*. They would order one, two, three, even four at a time, and we'd tell them when they'd be ready.

Interviewer: Where did you sell them?

Luz Marina: In Sonsón, but also in Aguadas, in Caldas.

[23] Veterinary insecticide and parasiticide, commonly used to treat external parasites. It is typically sold as a soluble powder.

Interviewer: How far was Perrillo from Sonsón?

Luz Marina: You wouldn't imagine, five or six hours by mule, and then another hour by car. Very far.

Interviewer: So you mainly left the village just to sell *ruanas* and blankets?

Luz Marina: Yes, exactly.

Interviewer: It must have been a beautiful life. Everyone grew up doing the same thing.

Luz Marina: Yes, it was very peaceful, everyone had their own flocks, we were surrounded by animals.

Interviewer: If you're comfortable sharing, how did you end up leaving?

Luz Marina: Because of the violence. The guerrillas arrived and began taking over everything, the land, the pastures. They brought in mules, I don't know from where, and released them onto any pasture they wanted. Once they did that, the land was no longer ours.

Later, when the army came in, and all those groups[24], everything became very dangerous. We had to leave We had to organize ourselves and leave however we could. Those of us who could, left.

Interviewer: Did you have family in Sirgua Abajo?

Luz Marina: My father. I arrived with my children, they were very young, ten, eleven, and twelve years old.

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Luz Marina: Four, and one boy I adopted.

Interviewer: Do they remember life in Perrillo?

[24] Refering to paramilitary groups.

Luz Marina: Yes, very much. It was a beautiful life, just fields, land, forest, and wooden houses. Perrillo was a very beautiful remote place. All of our houses were made of wood, walls and floors.

Interviewer: Where did the looms come from?

Luz Marina: They were made there by local craftsmen. In a village there's always someone who builds houses and things like that, they knew how to make looms.

Interviewer: Did you inherit yours or have it made?

Luz Marina: I inherited it, from my husband's grandmother. It's very old.

Interviewer: It's a vertical loom, right?

Luz Marina: Yes.

Interviewer: When you arrived in Sirgua Abajo, how did you resume life and the weaving?

Luz Marina: Things were very different. We arrived at a coffee farm. Only when I had time and wool available I was able to make a *ruana*. Later we moved to another village in Abejorral, that's when I completely stopped weaving for a while. Because of fate, because of how things happened, I stopped. Later we returned to Sirgua Abajo and I took it up again, but only occasionally.

Interviewer: And you returned to the coffee farm?

Luz Marina: Yes. There, there was always so much work to do and so little wool, that there was no time for weaving.

Interviewer: I understand perfectly. Since so few people still make the *Ruana Perrileña*, do you think this craft is likely to disappear?

Luz Marina: Yes, it's almost gone. There's only one person I know in Sonsón who still does it, a young man named Yeison. He brings wool from far away and teaches the craft. The municipality supports him at fairs, he takes out the loom, some *ruanas*, and sells them.

Interviewer: I spoke with him, he's very kind. I found it curious that he's a man weaving. I always thought this was a women's craft.

Luz Marina: Yes, but he has skilled hands. Men's hands are usually stiffer for wool, but Yeison handles it well, he's very skilled.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your story?

Luz Marina: Life in Perrillo was good and peaceful. The sheep gave us life, we enjoyed them very much. We made *ruanas* weekly and we knew the earnings would buy groceries. We had three farms, one with cattle, one with mules, and one with sixty sheep. We kept those sheep very well cared for, in very clean pastures. We pampered them so they would be well. We even had black and gray sheep, it was beautiful.

Interviewer: There are no flocks left in Sonsón, right?

Luz Marina: No, wool has to be brought from elsewhere. You don't see sheep around here anymore. I haven't seen them again. In Perrillo, from one day to the next, the flocks had to disappear. People had to leave, and they ended.

Interviewer: Did others take their looms when they left?

Luz Marina: Yes, most did. They couldn't use them anymore, but they took them.

Interviewer: It's admirable that you continued weaving. That despite having to leave Perrillo and arriving at a coffee farm where you had other things to do, you didn't lose the art of making the *ruana*.

Luz Marina: As long as there's wool, I still can do it.

But you need a place like Perrillo and its conditions to sustain this craft. Cold land and flocks everywhere. All families had sheep. You couldn't have dogs either, they would harm or kill the sheep. At one point, it was very easy for a dog from another village to arrive. And sometimes it happened. From one moment to the next we would realize something had happened to the sheep, and it had been a dog that came from somewhere else. Also if you wanted to have the sheep in good condition, you needed good, well-maintained pastures.

Somewhere else it would have been difficult to live under these conditions. Look, there was the possibility of leaving and finding pastures somewhere else, but then the dogs… You can't have sheep anymore; in one night they wipe them out.

On the other hand, since everyone in the village had flocks, we all had to look out for each other, help take care of everyone's sheep. We knew that if someone had a dog, it had to be very gentle. Do you understand?

What allowed us to live among sheep and weave the *ruanas* was the territory itself.

Interviewer: It was a collective craft and everyone depended on the same thing.

Luz Marina: Exactly. We all looked out for each other.

Also the mayor's office from Sonsón once supported us, veterinarians came and helped us deworm the sheep. They even brought breeding sheep from Marulanda to improve the flocks.

After the violence, no one returned, there was nothing left to live on.

Interviewer: Thank you so much for sharing your story, about your life in Perrillo, and about the *ruana*.

Luz Marina: You're welcome, I'm glad to help with whatever I can.

4. Analysis

The forced displacement of Perrillo's inhabitants set in motion a chain of losses that together demonstrate the devastating impact of armed conflict on ICH: the abandonment of a territory that provided the resources for a traditional practice; the disappearance of sheep flocks; the interruption of a cultural practice transmitted from generation to generation; the dispersal of a community whose members depended on one another to sustain a collective artisanal production; the silence surrounding this place and its people; and the near disappearance of the *Ruana Perrileña* itself.

Each of the elements that constitute ICH was affected during the displacement process in Perrillo and each loss deepened the next. The first element to consider is the environment in which the practice took place. Perrillo, a moorland area full of sheep flocks, which, as Luz Marina repeatedly mentions in her testimony, was the territory that gave them life. The second element encompasses the material instruments used to make the *ruana*: looms and spinning wheels, which, as Yeison recounts, were either abandoned in Perrillo or transported to the places of destination, where, due to lack of space and time, they could no longer be used. Both the territory and the tools were lost, but most critically, so were the people.

The third and most irreplaceable element is the people themselves, those who carry the knowledge, transmit it, protect it, and reinforce community bonds through this cultural practice. The inhabitants of Perrillo were displaced to different areas of the departments of Antioquia and Caldas, forced to leave behind their homes, their community and their way of life. As Luz Marina explains in her testimony, they moved to places where they had to perform occupations different from those to which they were accustomed in order to survive, where they could no longer keep sheep or have neighbors dedicated to the same work and who understood the collective care and processes necessary for the survival of this practice. The displacement caused by the Colombian armed conflict completely disrupted the three constituent elements of ICH, confirming what Blake & Goodarzi (2024) warned, that armed conflict threatens not only cultural objects, but the living human systems through which heritage is created, transmitted and kept alive.

The consequences of this disruption extend beyond the loss of a cultural practice. As introduced in the theoretical framework, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's concept of *nuda vita* offers a powerful lens through which to understand what displacement truly does to the people it affects. In the case of Perrillo, displacement did not merely tear a community from its land, it stripped its inhabitants of the very elements that made their lives fully human. Although the former inhabitants of Perrillo, their families, and subsequent generations continued their lives as best they could, they were forcibly separated from their occupation, their culture, their practice, their context, and their own way of living, reduced to what Agamben would call their mere natural life. As Luz Marina emphasized in the conversation I had with her: Perrillo gave them life.

The former inhabitants of Perrillo were separated from their flocks, their weaving, and their collective practice, forced to move to places where they could no longer continue their way of life. The armed conflict stripped the inhabitants of Perrillo because it disrupted their cultural heritage, endangered the existence of the *Ruana Perrileña*, and destroyed the context that made them more than mere biological beings. In Agamben's terms, forced displacement creates bare lives, human beings preserved in biological existence but exiled from the cultural world that gave that existence meaning.

This distinction between bare biological life and fully human cultural life is precisely what existing legal instruments fail to account for. As Blake & Goodarzi (2024) propose, alternative instruments such as International Humanitarian Law could indeed protect the *nuda vita*, the reduced life that remains after displacement. Displaced people can be protected, but not their tradition nor the territory that made them human and provided them with a unique way of life that distinguished them from others. IHL can protect life detached from its context, but it cannot protect the *Ruana Perrileña* nor the community that creates it and in failing to do so, it falls short of UNESCO's foundational mission: to combat ignorance, foster human diversity, and prevent the conditions that lead to conflict in the first place.

It is here that the testimonies of Yeison Marín and Luz Marina Henao become essential. They are two of the three artisans who currently weave the *Ruana Perrileña*, with Luz Marina being one of the only two artisans originally from Perrillo who still maintain this

practice. The Colombian armed conflict in the eastern subregion of the department of Antioquia almost completely erased from the map a territory in which all the conditions for a tradition to exist were present and displaced those who carried the knowledge to weave, teach, and create the necessary tools for the craft. How, then, can the *Ruana Perrileña* be safeguarded as ICH if Perrillo no longer exists and its inhabitants were forced to settle in places where conditions do not allow them to continue this tradition?

And yet, despite all of this, the *Ruana Perrileña* has not entirely disappeared. The answer to this question lies, paradoxically, in the very people the conflict sought to silence.

Luz Marina Henao embodies, perhaps more than anyone, the human cost of what the theoretical framework of this thesis describes. She was born and raised in Perrillo, learned to weave from her mother at around ten years old, and dedicated her life to a practice that was inseparable from the territory, the community, and the sheep flocks that surrounded her. When the guerrillas arrived and took over the land, and when the army and paramilitary groups turned Perrillo into a war zone, Luz Marina did something that speaks profoundly about the relationship between a person and their heritage: she carried her loom and brought it with her into her new destination. The loom, inherited from her husband's grandmother, was not merely a tool, it was, as Yeison would later describe it, an object that already had its own identity.

In Sirgua Abajo, the village near Sonsón where she rebuilt her life, the conditions that had made the *Ruana Perrileña* possible no longer existed. There were no sheep, no neighbors who shared the knowledge, no community organized around the collective care that the craft required. As Luz Marina explains in her testimony, weaving became something she could only do occasionally, when wool was available and when household responsibilities allowed. The transmission process that had sustained the tradition for generations, mothers teaching daughters from a young age, sisters dividing tasks, families organizing their entire week around the wool was disrupted. As she reflects with resignation, her family took other paths, and without wool, there was no opportunity for them to learn.

What Luz Marina's story illustrates with painful clarity is precisely what CRESPIAL (2020) identifies as the deepest risk of displacement for ICH: the rupture of the relationship between people, territory, and the resources that make a cultural practice viable. The

loom survived. The knowledge survived, in Luz Marina's hands. But the conditions that allowed that knowledge to be transmitted, recreated, and kept alive as a living practice did not. In Agamben's terms, Luz Marina carried with her the instruments of a fully human life, but was forced into a world that could not accommodate them. Her loom, is both a symbol of extraordinary resilience and a testament to an irreplaceable loss.

Yeison Marín embodies, in the deepest sense of the word, what CRESPIAL (2020) describes as the reconstruction of social fabric through resilience. Where Luz Marina represents the generation that lived the rupture firsthand, Yeison represents something equally extraordinary, a generation that inherited the wound without inheriting the practice, and chose to go back for it anyway. The armed conflict caused an absolute rupture in all possible mechanisms through which the knowledge of the *Ruana Perrileña* could have been passed down to him, displacing his great-great-grandmother from Perrillo, scattering his family across different territories, and forcing his own displacement as a child from the village of San José Las Cruces. His mother and grandmother carried fragments of the knowledge, but without sheep, without looms, and without the territory that had made the practice viable, that knowledge had nowhere to land.

The turning point came not through institutional support or a formal safeguarding program, but through a personal act of recovery rooted in grief and memory. When his grandfather died and the family discovered a *Ruana Perrileña* folded in a trunk among his clothes, Yeison asked to keep it. He did not yet know what he would do with it. A year later, when he found his great-great-grandmother's loom hidden in a collapsing house in San José Las Cruces, something shifted. As he recounts in his interview, it was like finding the engine that would push him to rescue this tradition. Tirelessly, he sought someone who could teach him to weave, traveling as far as Boyacá to find a master willing to share his knowledge without conditions. He succeeded. And as he reflects, facing the rupture caused by the conflict and having the courage to act was precisely what helped him heal the wounds it had inflicted.

What makes Yeison's story analytically significant is not only the act of recovery itself, but the way in which he reinterprets the heritage from within a transformed world of meanings. As CRESPIAL (2020) explains, both ancient and emerging traditions, through processes

of hybridization and redefinition, can reconstruct social bonds and a sense of collective belonging within the new realities generated by conflict. Yeison embodies this process entirely. In a cultural environment where weaving had always been exclusively a women's practice, he became the first male weaver in his family. On looms that the tradition had never used, he recreated the same stitch, with the same wool and the same identity. In colors and formats that speak to contemporary markets, he carries a heritage that is centuries old. By founding Maitamá Tejidos Ancestrales, Yeison did not merely preserve a craft, he activated it from his own understanding and within the new urban context in which he finds himself, ensuring that the *Ruana Perrileña* enters the future rather than remaining only in the past.

Together, Luz Marina and Yeison demonstrate that the survival of the *Ruana Perrileña* has depended entirely on individual acts of extraordinary courage and devotion, in the complete absence of institutional protection. This is precisely the gap that this thesis seeks to make visible. Despite their extraordinary efforts, the survival of the *Ruana Perrileña* rests on the shoulders of three individuals, with no formal protection in place. This raises the question of what Colombia's existing cultural heritage instruments actually offer in a case like this one.

The Ministry of Culture, through its Directorate and the ICH Group, manages the National Inventory of Cultural Heritage. The main purpose of this program is to coordinate the processes of identification, documentation, and evaluation of cultural heritage, as well as the registration of movable and immovable cultural assets in the country and of cultural manifestations or intangible practices, serving as a source of information for defining actions aimed at their management and protection (Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y los Saberes, n.d.). In 2015, the program issued a handbook outlining the Process of Identification and Safeguarding Recommendations for Colombia's Intangible Cultural Heritage, as well as a guide for including different ICH expressions in the format that allows their nomination for inclusion in the Intangible Cultural Heritage inventories and the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Both the List and the inventories are registration tools designed to safeguard the cultural expressions of communities in Colombia and are structured according to UNESCO

guidelines. However, these registration tools do not account for the urgency and risk framework under which ICH exists due to the armed conflict in Colombia. Although there is an urgency clause for cases at risk of disappearing, in the case of the *Ruana Perrileña*, there is no longer a community capable of advancing the registration process, as the conflict, through displacement, dispersed the community of Perrillo and left the territory abandoned. The very instrument designed to protect heritage like the *Ruana Perrileña* presupposes the existence of a living community capable of activating it, a presupposition that armed conflict systematically destroys.

As the case of Perrillo demonstrates, the families were forced to settle in various places where they had acquaintances who could host them and to adapt to the livelihoods available in those locations. With only three weavers remaining, there is currently no community capable of advancing the registration process of the *Ruana Perrileña* as ICH of Colombia, much less funding it. Likewise, there is no space in the municipality of Sonsón that provides the necessary resources, especially wool, to allow the practice to continue even if safeguarding were achieved. How can heritage be safeguarded through an inventory or a list when the community that should register it no longer exists, when only three people still weave the *ruana* under conditions that do not favor it, and when the process of knowledge transmission is completely interrupted? Can the ICH of a community be safeguarded when there is no longer a fully living community or heritage to protect?

These are not merely rhetorical questions. They are the questions that the armed conflict in Colombia has made unavoidable, and that the existing frameworks of both international and national intangible cultural heritage protection have yet to answer.

The case of the *Ruana Perrileña* demonstrates with clarity that the existing frameworks for protecting ICH are insufficient in contexts of armed conflict. What is needed is not only a legal instrument that protects cultural property, nor only an inventory system that documents living practices, but a comprehensive approach that intervenes before displacement destroys the conditions that make a cultural practice possible in the first place. Such an approach would need to protect the territory, the instruments, and above all the people, not merely as biological lives, but as the irreplaceable bearers of

knowledge, memory, and identity that UNESCO's foundational mission was designed to recognize and uphold. The stories of all the women of Perrillo who wove the *ruana* daily but were unable to continue after displacement, whose names do not appear in any inventory and whose knowledge has never been documented, are a reminder of how much has already been lost in silence.

Addressing this gap requires beginning at the local level, where the living knowledge that still survives can be found and where the full extent of the damage can be understood. It is only through direct contact with people like Luz Marina and Yeison, the last bearers of a tradition that armed conflict nearly erased, that it becomes possible to visualize how each constituent element of ICH has been affected. No inventory, no legal instrument, and no institutional framework can substitute for this kind of grounded, human-centered knowledge. The protection of ICH in situations of armed conflict must therefore begin where the knowledge still lives, in the hands, the memory, and the voices of those who, against all odds, have kept it alive.

Translating this understanding into action requires thinking in terms of concrete methodologies. This is where the language of local development becomes relevant and specifically, the concept of a local-level approach implemented through a participatory model, one that places people like Yeison and Luz Marina at the center of any initiative aimed at protecting and reviving the Ruana Perrileña. As CRESPIAL (2020) explains, it is the communities themselves that determine the possible scenarios for rebuilding the social fabric in response to the impacts of war. Both ancient and emerging traditions, through processes of hybridization or redefinition, can reconstruct social bonds and a sense of collective belonging within the new realities generated by conflict. Yeison and Luz Marina already embody this process. They carry in their hands and their memory the history of Perrillo, the knowledge of the *ruana*, and an understanding of why there is no longer a community able to sustain this heritage, as well as a vision, however fragile, of what it might take to bring it back. Any future initiative that does not begin with their voices will have missed the point entirely.

The analysis developed throughout this chapter demonstrates that the case of the *Ruana Perrileña* is not an isolated tragedy but a concrete and documented example of a much

broader phenomenon: the systematic destruction of ICH through armed conflict and forced displacement, in the absence of adequate instruments for its protection. While the full design of a project to address this reality goes beyond the scope of this thesis, this work seeks to make the case visible and position it as a potential starting point for future initiatives, not only for the *Ruana Perrileña*, but for other expressions of ICH affected by conflict across Colombia.

5. The *Ruana Perrileña* as a starting point: recommendations for future research and project development

The case of the *Ruana Perrileña* represents both a need and an opportunity. It is a need because, as this thesis has demonstrated, the tradition is on the verge of disappearing and the existing instruments for its protection are insufficient. It is an opportunity because the living knowledge still exists in the hands of Luz Marina, Yeison, and Luz Mary, and because the story of Perrillo, once made visible, has the potential to inspire initiatives that could be replicated in relation to other intangible heritage affected by conflict across Colombia. Projects in the field of local development arise precisely from this intersection of need and opportunity, focused on achieving specific objectives for specific beneficiaries within a defined geographic area and timeframe (Pozza, 2024). Protecting the *Ruana Perrileña* as Colombian ICH would allow a focus on a real-life case at the local level, involving in its design the people who have first-hand knowledge of this reality.

Project design in the field of local development begins with the participatory identification of a problem and the construction of a problem tree, a tool that maps the initial problem, its underlying causes, and its consequences, making the complexity of a situation visible at a glance. Although a real problem tree must always be built in close collaboration with the communities and actors directly involved, the information gathered through the interviews with Yeison and Luz Marina made it possible to construct a draft that reflects their understanding of the situation. This draft, presented in the following section, is offered not as a finished product but as an invitation, a first step toward the kind of participatory, locally grounded project design that the protection of the *Ruana Perrileña* demands.

The disappearance of the *Ruana Perrileña* weaving tradition in the municipality of Sonsón, Antioquia, is presented as the initial problem at the center of the diagram. At the bottom are the key strategic problems, the main reasons behind the emergence of this situation, each preceded by their underlying causes. At the top are the effects that its disappearance has generated and continues to generate, at both the local and national levels. Together, these three levels make visible a reality that statistics cannot capture: the slow, silent unraveling of a living cultural practice in the aftermath of armed conflict. This problem tree (Figure 7) represents only a draft, constructed from a single perspective

and drawing solely on the information gathered through the interviews conducted for this thesis. A real design process would need to be carried out in a participatory manner, with Yeison, Luz Marina, Luz Mary, and any other actors directly involved indicating how to prioritize and structure the tree. It is offered here not as a conclusion, but as a beginning, an open door toward the kind of locally grounded, community-led project design that the *Ruana Perrileña* and the people who keep it alive deserve.

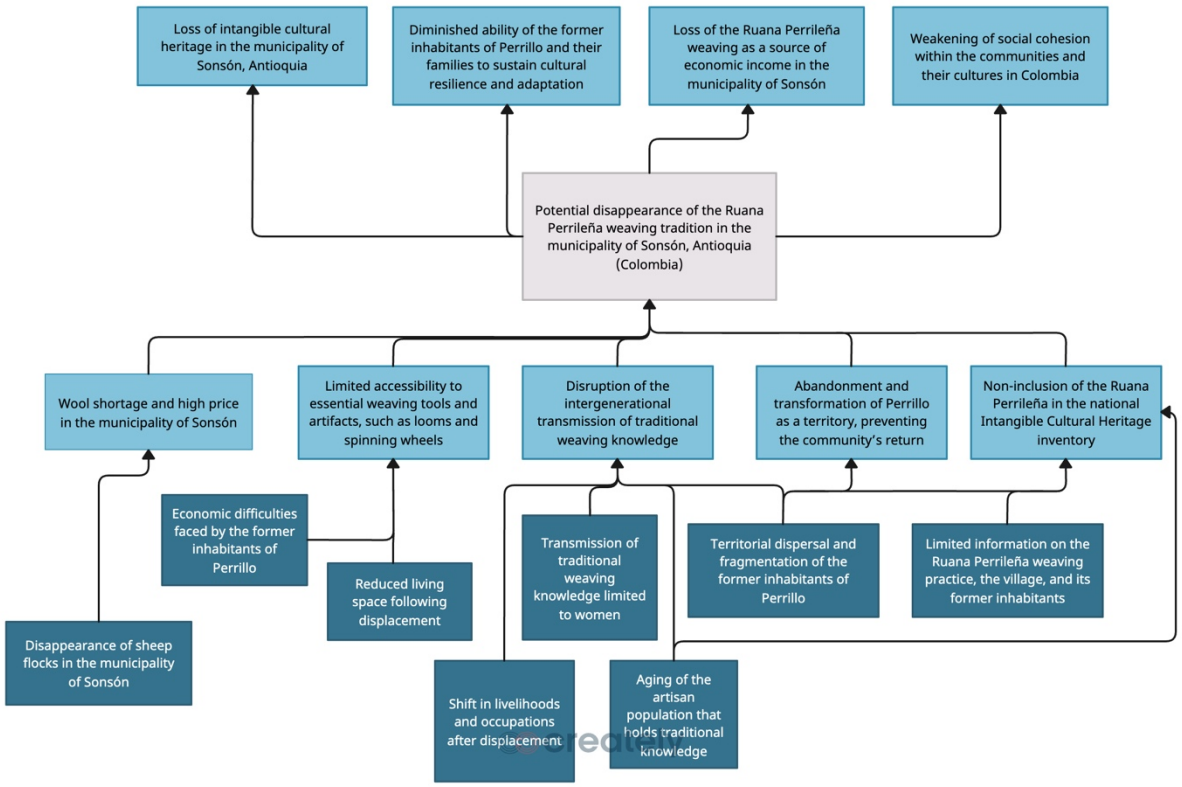

Figure 7 Problem Tree. Source: Own elaboration

Conclusion

A *ruana* woven in Perrillo took approximately one week to make. The wool had to be washed, dried, carded, spun on a wooden spinning wheel, and then woven standing up on a vertical loom leaning against the wall, thread by thread, stitch by stitch, until the fabric reached the required length. Every family in the village knew how to do this. Every farm had its sheep flock. Every daughter learned from her mother. The *Ruana Perrileña* was not a monument, not a building, not a work of art stored in a museum. It was a living practice, carried in the bodies and memory of a community, inseparable from the territory that made it possible and from the relationships that gave it meaning.

Armed conflict destroyed the conditions for that practice to continue. The FARC arrived, then the ELN, then the army and the paramilitaries. Families were forced to leave. Sheep disappeared. Looms were abandoned. The knowledge that had been transmitted from mother to daughter for generations was interrupted, not because anyone chose to stop, but because the world in which that transmission was possible ceased to exist.

This thesis has argued that what happened in Perrillo is not an isolated case, but a concrete and documented example of a much broader and largely invisible phenomenon: the destruction of Intangible Cultural Heritage through armed conflict and forced displacement, in the absence of adequate legal or institutional instruments for its protection. The existing frameworks, UNESCO's 2003 Convention, International Humanitarian Law and Colombia's national inventory mechanisms, were not designed to intervene before displacement destroys the conditions that make a cultural practice viable. They can document what survives. They cannot protect what disappears.

The theoretical framework developed in the first chapter traced this gap through the work of scholars and institutions who have tried to name it. Blake & Goodarzi (2024) demonstrate that while IHL can be interpreted broadly enough to protect some elements of ICH, it has no provisions specifically designed for the living human systems through which heritage is created and transmitted. CRESPIAL (2020) identifies forced displacement as one of the primary risks that armed conflict represents to ICH, precisely because it ruptures the relationship between people, territory, and the resources that make a cultural practice viable. And Colombia's national instruments, as the case of

Perrillo illustrates, presuppose the existence of a community capable of activating them, a presupposition that armed conflict systematically destroys.

Agamben's concept of *nuda vita* offered the most precise language for naming what displacement does to the people it affects. The former inhabitants of Perrillo were not simply relocated. They were stripped of the occupations, relationships, knowledge and territory that made their lives fully human, reduced to bare biological existence in places where the cultural world that had given that existence meaning could not follow them. Luz Marina carried her loom on a mule when she left. But she could not carry the sheep, the neighbors and the shared routines. The loom survived. The practice, in any living sense, did not.

And yet the *Ruana Perrileña* has not entirely disappeared. This is the paradox at the heart of this thesis. The tradition survived not because any institution protected it, but because of the extraordinary personal choices of two individuals who refused, each in their own way, to let it be entirely lost.

Luz Marina Henao was born and raised in Perrillo, learned to weave at around ten years old, and has kept her inherited loom in her house in Sirgua Abajo for more than twenty years since her displacement. She weaves occasionally, when wool is available and household responsibilities allow. Her family took other paths. Without wool, there was no opportunity for them to learn. What Luz Marina carries is irreplaceable: the knowledge is in her hands, and her hands are getting older.

Yeison Marín grew up displaced, without sheep, without a loom, without the territory that would have made the *Ruana Perrileña* part of his daily life. What he had were fragments: his grandmother's stories, his grandfather's *ruana* folded in a trunk and a collapsing house in San José Las Cruces where a 150-year-old loom had been waiting for someone to find it. He found it, restored it, traveled to Boyacá to learn from a master weaver, and returned to Sonsón to build a workshop, a business, and a methodology for transmitting the knowledge he had recovered. He teaches children at schools and older adults at the senior center. He is the first male weaver in his family and as he said: if he does not pass this on, it will disappear, and all the effort to rescue it will have been pointless.

Together, Luz Marina and Yeison are the living proof of everything this thesis has argued. They demonstrate that ICH, even when its conditions have been destroyed, can survive through individual acts of resilience, memory and devotion. They also demonstrate, more soberly, that survival rooted entirely in individual will is precarious. One generation from now, if nothing changes, there may be no one left to weave the *Ruana Perrileña*.

The recommendations proposed in the final chapter of this thesis, built around a draft problem tree developed from the testimonies of Yeison and Luz Marina, are offered not as a finished plan but as a beginning. They suggest that any future initiative aimed at protecting the *Ruana Perrileña* must start where the knowledge still lives: in the hands, the memory, and the voices of the people who have kept it alive. A participatory, locally grounded approach, centered on the specific realities of Sonsón, its lack of sheep flocks, its dispersed community of former Perrillo inhabitants, its three remaining weavers, and the extraordinary project that Yeison has already begun building alone, is the only approach that could do justice to the complexity of what has been lost and to the fragile continuity that still remains.

This thesis was written as an act of documentation and recognition. It does not claim though to be the first to have looked at Perrillo. Adriana Marín Franco's research preceded it and made much of what follows possible, giving voice to former inhabitants whose testimonies might otherwise have remained entirely unrecorded. What this thesis adds is a framework, a way of situating what happened in Perrillo within the broader discussion on ICH, armed conflict, and the limits of existing instruments for protection, and of placing the *Ruana Perrileña* in the academic conversation where it has rarely appeared. The women of Perrillo who wove the *ruana* daily, whose names do not appear in any inventory and whose knowledge was never been documented, deserve at least that much. So do Luz Marina, who carried her loom on a mule and never stopped, and Yeison, who found his great-great-grandmother's loom in a collapsing house and decided that was reason enough to begin.

The threads were interrupted. They have not yet been entirely lost. Whether they are woven back together, or whether the *Ruana Perrileña* becomes only a memory, will depend on what comes next.

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