



MOBILIZING GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE: REFUGEE RESEARCH IN AN AGE OF DISPLACEMENT

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Bittersweet Symphony: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Network Building in Latin America

Beatriz Eugenia Sánchez-Mojica

It is forbidden to cry without learning.

Alfredo Cuervo Barrero

Introduction

Roberto Vidal, a legal scholar at Javeriana University in Bogotá, was a founding partner of the RRN and joined the executive of International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM) in 2008, becoming president in 2016. He saw the advantages of networking and with the support of the RRN committed to mobilizing a regional network in Latin America. With his colleague Beatriz Eugenia Sánchez-Mojica, a legal scholar at Los Andes University, Vidal began to reach out to academic and NGO colleagues in Colombia and migration scholars in countries in the region. Vidal had worked closely with civil society organizations particularly the *Instituto Latinoamericano para una Sociedad y un*

Derecho Alternativo (ILSA). ILSA is a regional network of lawyers' associations, representatives of academic communities, and members of NGOs in Latin America that use a broad human rights approach to promote research and advocacy activities on economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights, and the extension of legal services to excluded populations. Connections were made with academics and practitioners in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Venezuela. The administrative staff of Javeriana University and Los Andes University Law School were particularly supportive and agreed to host an organizing conference in November 2010.¹ Funding was secured from the Association of Universities and Colleges Canada (AUCC) and support was also provided by the Jesuit Refugee Service and the National Secretariat of Social Pastoral of Colombia.

At the conference, thirty researchers mapped out the issues related to forced migration including the root causes, the impact of forced migration on Latin American states, the search of durable solutions and the contribution of forced migrants to the process of peace building. They agreed to form the first ever network focused on forced migration in the hemisphere. The Latin American Network for Forced Migration (LANFM)/*Red latino americana de migración forzada* emerged as an attempt to weave bonds between researchers and pre-existing networks from those very diverse origins by promoting knowledge exchange and production, as well partnership building. The intent was to mobilize and exchange knowledge that contributes to alliance building and to inform the development of both national and international policy frameworks and humanitarian practices relevant to refugees and forced migrants in Latin America.

The organizing of LANFM took place in a complex context. In 2010 more than 400,000 people were newly displaced inside their own countries in the region (IDMC 2010, 14). Colombia's internal armed conflict was the major source of forced migration, having produced over 5 million IDPs (IDMC 2010, 16) and more than 324,000 refugees; most had looked for haven in Ecuador, Venezuela, and other countries of the region. Forced displacement was also taking place in Mexico, Guatemala, and Peru; however, their figures were significantly lower (IDMC 2010, 69). States' responses to this phenomenon were extremely diverse. Colombia, for example, recognized IDPs as an issue in the late nineties and developed a sophisticated public policy to deal with it (Sánchez 2009; Vidal 2008). In

sharp contrast, neither Guatemala nor Mexico had even considered forced migration as a problem itself and had made no effort to measure its impact or create a public policy to face it (IDMC 2014, 70–1; Rubio 2017).

This chapter meditates on the lights and shadows of the unfinished building process of this network. The Latin American Network for Forced Migration has been a valuable tool for development of new projects, exchange of experiences, and partnership building. It has also faced deep challenges, including the preservation of the network itself. LANFM's main achievements have been in the areas of partnership building and networking, through the organization and hosting of four important workshops and an international conference. The first workshop focused on developing a regional network for research and advocacy. The second drew out connections between trade and investment and forced migration. The third highlighted connections between violence and migration and drew together experiences in Colombia, Mexico, El Salvador, and Guatemala. The last workshop addressed the impacts of extractive industries, such as mining, and brought together academics and NGO representatives from Colombia and Canada. Finally, the international conference was a successful attempt to create ties between the regional network and a global one: the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration (IASFM). However, it was a bittersweet achievement. This event also marked the beginning of the end for LANFM.

The main discussions and contributions of the four workshops and the international conference are highlighted below.

Forced Migration in Latin America: Creating Regional Networks for Research and Advocacy

Our 2010 conference, entitled *Forced Migration Latin America: Creating Regional Networks for Research and Advocacy*, sought to consolidate existing relationships between academic and NGO researchers and practitioners and to develop a broader regional network (LANFM 2010). Participants in this initial meeting were primarily from institutions and organizations in Colombia and Canada with representatives from Mexico, Peru, Costa Rica, the United States, and Spain.

The conference had two central aspects. Firstly, the overflow of traditional responses to forced migration, including the rights of refugees and protection systems of internal displacement, in the presence of factors such as development, climate change, urban violence, war on drugs, degradation of non-international armed conflicts, and new forms of terrorism, which had increased the number of forced migrants without adequate protection and care. And secondly, the reduced presence in global forums such as IASFM of forced migration processes in Latin America due to a lack of links between academics and practitioners in the region. As a result, the conference focused on the need to consolidate networks to facilitate future multilateral dialogue spaces on forced migration in Latin America and spaces for ongoing communication between regional practitioners and researchers and global networks of forced migration studies.

For this purpose, the methodology developed in the meeting included a closed meeting of international experts on four themes: 1) the forms of forced migration in Latin America; 2) forced migration policies in the region; 3) regional responses; and 4) alternatives to forced migration and the creation of regional research networks as a strategy. The conference was open and included participants from the academic community, organizations, and government entities interested in Colombia in order to present the conclusions and discussions that emerged from previous meetings. This exercise allowed us to advance and question the landscape of forms and solutions to forced migration in Latin America, identifying relevant local and regional trends in the consolidation of specific studies and possible public policy proposals to address and mitigate the adverse effects of these situations.

Trade and Investment-Induced Population Displacement in Latin America

The second workshop organized by LANFM was held at York University in Toronto, Canada, from 12–14 October 2011 (Ravecca and Payne 2011). It aimed to systematize current knowledge on the connection between trade and investment and forced migration and to establish a common research agenda for LANFM. Understanding and addressing the relevant drivers of forced migration flows is critical to developing new research and policy responses that will improve human rights implementation and

human development. A number of trade and investment factors have been linked to forced migration including conflict over resources in the context of “development” activities such as mining, monoculture farming, and petroleum extraction. As well, food insecurity and long-term climate changes that are having negative impacts on the livelihoods of vulnerable communities across the region are seen as related to the phenomenon of forced migration. In this regard the workshop offered innovative perspectives on the problem.

Among other factors explored in the inaugural meeting of the LANFM in 2010, researchers observed that international trading relationships and flows of foreign direct investment have had profound economic, social, and ecological impacts on the region and consequently may contribute to migratory flows, both as push and pull factors. They observed that some of the paths connecting trade and investment to forced migration are direct while others are more indirect and consequently more challenging to assess. Building on these established relationships, the second gathering of the LANFM in Toronto in 2011 was planned in order to: 1) expand our collective understanding of newly emerging or under-studied forms of forced migration; (2) address various policy dimensions including legal standards for businesses engaged in investment and trade that generate population displacements; and (3) identify best policies for supporting those who are displaced.

The aims of this second workshop were to bring together distinct groups of researchers in order to systematize current knowledge on the connection between trade and investment and forced migration, to identify common research agendas for the LANFM, and to put in place capacity building plans to carry out this agenda. Researchers from Latin America and Canada, both academics and researchers from non-governmental organizations including experts on forced migration, investment and trade, gathered for a full day of formal presentations. This was followed by a facilitated second day aimed at identifying research themes for future collaboration. Following the formal sessions of the workshop, a smaller group of scholars met with the directors of CERLAC and CRS for an additional day to explore future joint research initiatives between LANFM, the Refugee Research Network (RRN), and Canadian scholars. The gathering nourished the ground for ongoing alliance building rooted in this mobilization and exchange of knowledge, which was expected to inform the

development of policy frameworks and humanitarian practices affecting forced migrants in Latin America and Canada. Through an interactive collective process, three specific areas of focus were identified, and small groups were established to further develop them. These specific focus areas were Law and Regulation, Vulnerability, and Advocacy/Civil Society. Each group clarified their issues, developed relevant research questions, and identified advocacy strategies.

Migration and Violence: Lessons from Colombia for the Americas

A workshop supported by LANFM focusing on “Migration and Violence: Lessons from Colombia for the Americas” was held in Bogotá on 29–30 June 2012. It was also connected to the Transatlantic Forum on Migration and Integration (TFMI). The workshop explored the issue of drug-violence induced migration in Colombia with a view to lessons learned and research gaps in the Central American context. It focused especially on the migration (both international and internal) resulting from the protracted drug-related conflict in Colombia. A series of panels by Colombian experts in the legal, social science, and public policy fields addressed Colombia’s relatively long history in dealing with the internal and international migration consequences of drug-related violence. Each panel discussion also featured a Central American expert as respondent to engage these issues from the Central American context. Central American experts also provided context on how migration and violence in the region and the effects of drug-related violence have impacted international and internal migration patterns.

The main objective of the conference was to foster the development of interdisciplinary academic research in Central America and Mexico regarding the relationship between violence—particularly narco-violence—and migration. The setting in Bogotá was deliberate as the organizers wanted to discuss how lessons learned from Colombia’s experience with narco-induced migration could be leveraged for the benefit of Central America and Mexico. With the participation of experts on international cooperation, authorities, university officials, and civil society, the conference highlighted research results and relevant

intervention experiences from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Mexico. The debate by participants on the forced migration experiences of these four countries allowed the identification of valuable but complex epistemological challenges to understanding the links between violence and human mobility.

Colombia is illustrative of the consequences of forced displacement including the attribution of penal and civil responsibilities. Due to the complexity of the causes that trigger forced mobility, the traditional attribution of culpability to an individual who has caused forced displacement has been proven inadequate. Thus, more systematic approaches to the consequences of crime were introduced. The Colombian approach to dealing with the loss of land by victims of crime is the best example of this trend. This country also faces the challenge of determining whether displacement took place due to political violence or other types of violence, differentiating the infractions of international humanitarian law within the framework of armed internal conflict, mass violations of human rights, generalized violence, and/or of internal strife and unrest. The classical distinctions between political violence and violence due to common organized crime do not appear to function adequately in all cases in order to account for the political nature of local actors such as narcotraffickers, to the extent that it also groups diverse legal actors like officials and businessmen who seek to control political, economic, and social relations that are woven together in a territory. In this sense, the *Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras* (the Law of Victims and Land Restitution) issued in 2011 in Colombia represents a setback in the recognition of rights of victims of displacement as it reduces justice to only victims of the armed internal conflict, leaving violations of human rights, pervasive violence, disturbances, and interior strife out. Furthermore, the law does not include protection for those who have been displaced due to fumigations, the victims of so-called emerging gangs, the victims who sought refuge abroad,² and collective victims such as labour unions, as well as those who are part of social movements and opposing parties. The economic activities in rural areas such as mega-mining and the cultivation of agro-combustibles have raised questions about the financing of non-state armed groups and the creation of new cycles of displacement.

Extractive Industries and Violence in Latin America

A fourth workshop on *Extractive Industries and Violence in Latin America* was hosted in Bogotá on 7–8 December 2013. This workshop was supported by a broader project led by the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC) and the Centre for Refugee Studies (CRS) at York University in Canada and funded by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). The project aimed to implement a partnership strategy to foster collaborative research and networking among Canadian and Latin American researchers to produce and disseminate new policy-relevant knowledge about the complex determinants of forced migration in the region. The partners organized a two-day workshop in Bogotá with a coordinated session in Toronto. The workshop brought together researchers, NGO practitioners, and graduate students from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Mexico, and Canada to: 1) systematize and critically engage with current knowledge on the connection between extractive industries (EIs), violence, and forced migration; 2) establish a common regional research agenda; and 3) put in place capacity-building plans to carry out this agenda (Ibáñez and Vásquez 2014).

The workshop focused on the impact of recent expanding EI development on violence and involuntary displacement of local populations in Latin America. The partners noted that EI activity has expanded rapidly around the globe in recent years in response to the growing demand for minerals and energy from rapidly industrializing countries such as China. This expansion coincided with widespread deregulation and trade liberalization in Latin America, which weakened institutional capacities to regulate the industry and the conflicts it generated. Boom conditions in mining and petroleum producing countries, meanwhile, generated a sharp rise in often violent socio-environmental and political conflicts at the sites of EI operations.

The workshop was exploratory, aiming to foster dialogue, develop future agendas, and to incorporate new researchers into LANFM. The project was built as a research-exchange project and thus no actual research was funded. The workshop methodology was designed to bring together two distinct clusters of researchers from Canadian and Latin American institutions that rarely interact—researchers of extractive industries and researchers of forced migration—in order to foster dialogue across these

areas and to develop a common research agenda. EI researchers presented on their area of specialization and addressed possible intersections between the processes they study and the production of new vulnerabilities and conflicts that may trigger forced displacement. Researchers of forced displacement presented their case studies and commented on possible connections between forced migration processes and the operation of EIs. Presentations were organized around thematic panels that included researchers from both research clusters, followed by a session of open questions and discussion. Two days of formal presentations by experts assessed the state of knowledge on the topic, made connections between knowledge silos, and identified knowledge gaps in the field. The presentation of case studies from Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, Mexico, and Canada helped ground the discussion in concrete experiences, and permitted participants to identify regional patterns as well as country-specific conditions. As a result, participants gained a much richer understanding of the determinants of forced migration in the region and their relationship with EI development. In organizing the workshop, partners decided to include case studies from four countries not originally included in the proposal (Bolivia, Guatemala, Haiti, and Mexico) because these countries were also experiencing significant EI development, violence, and displacement and their inclusion could help broaden the regional coverage of the workshop and of the network.

Knowledge of each other and an open and consensual approach to decision-making were both essential for the success of the project. The collaborative approach helped identify themes of relevance to Latin American partners and their need to broaden the regional coverage of the network. The networks of the Centre for Research on Latin America and the Caribbean (CERLAC) were useful to identify non-Colombian participants to be invited and added to the network. The workshop's contribution to development includes enhanced capacity for partner collaboration through the plan identified above, and the production of policy-relevant knowledge about the mechanisms that produce vulnerabilities to violence and forced displacement among communities in relation to EI development. Considering the outcomes and the investment of time, effort, and funding, the partners' assessment was that the project was extremely valuable, especially in setting the basis for future collaboration.

IASFM XV Conference: Forced Migration and Peace

In July 2014, Javeriana University, the Pensar Institute (of which Vidal was then director), and Los Andes University organized and held the fifteenth IASFM conference in Bogotá. The complicated relationship between peace and forced migration was the central theme of the event. More than 300 participants from twenty-five countries including academics, activists, members of civil society organizations, officials from international organizations, and forced migrants met and discussed the worldwide situation of forced migration.³ The topic was examined in the context of two distinct and simultaneous processes: first, the celebration of thirty years of the Cartagena Declaration, an international rights instrument that proved a turning point in managing forced migration in post-conflict situations; and second, the peace talks between the Colombian government, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and the National Liberation Army (ELN).⁴

The event pursued two main objectives. First, to establish a space for reflection and discussion so that academics, activists, policymakers, and forced migrants could revive the spirit of the Cartagena Declaration, revisiting the lessons that it—and the process it originated from—might offer the Colombian peace process (that was then in progress) and the expected post-conflict period that would follow. The second objective was to deepen the horizontal dialogue between global north and south and to build peer relationships in the study of, debates around, and search for solutions related to the complex phenomenon of forced migration.

The conference delved into six subjects, all linked to the relationship between forced migration and peace. Peace-building and forced exodus was the first subject. It revolved around the idea that any agenda aimed at peacefully resolving conflict must include both management of internal displacement and refugee protection, and compensation for victims. The second topic was justice and forced migration. It focused on the study and analysis of the role of justice systems—at national, regional, and international levels—in recognizing and guaranteeing the rights of forced migrants, including victims of both armed conflicts and situations associated with undemocratic regimes. The discussion around regional responses to forced migration (the third issue) centred on the Cartagena Declaration as an instrument for managing the pressing issue of shelter and forced

displacement in the Americas. Lasting and sustainable solutions for overcoming uprooting was the fourth matter of study. It focused on the need to develop sustainable solutions that allow displaced people and refugees to put their uprooting behind them, as well as the need for a critical stance towards existing policies and programs to determine the impact, achievements, and the challenges faced in their implementation. Forced migration in times of peace, the next topic, examined the increasing number of cases of forced migration in situations other than armed conflict. These included environmental disasters, development projects, and violence caused by mafias and criminal groups. Finally, resistance and migration analyzed how displaced people and refugees have shown their ability to create their own spaces and offer resistance to exile and uprooting.

It is important to note that, although this was an IASFM conference, LANFM took a crucial role in it. In fact, I was the conference program chair. Organizing this event in Bogotá was a strategy to weave links between the two networks. Following the conclusions reached at the first workshop in 2010, it was the aim to increase the presence in global forums of forced migration processes in Latin America. Moreover, there was the goal of enabling regional academics and practitioners to meet their peers from other regions, in order to start multilateral and horizontal dialogues. The conference's second objective was crafted to embed the goals set by the Latin American network since the beginning.

The endeavour gave its fruits. *IASFM XIV Conference* was an auspicious space for debate, knowledge sharing, and network building between LANFM's members and the rest of the world. Several projects and collaborations were born there. It must be highlighted that some of the most interesting ideas and proposals emerged from the "south to south" dialogues. It was the case of an exchange initiative for PhD students from Colombia and India, promoted by Universidad del Rosario and the Calcutta Research Group. The attendance of Colombian academics to the *International Conference on Gender, Empowerment and Conflict in South Asia*, held by the Calcutta Research Group in November 2014 was another product of this dialogue. One more was the relationship built with South American Network for Environmental Migration (RESAMA) a pioneering Brazilian and Uruguayan initiative for coordination and mobilization of experts, researchers, and practitioners to include the subject of environmental migration in public agendas in the region. This collaboration,

still ongoing, has produced valuable results—such as the book *Refugiados Ambientais*, published in 2018, which contains some articles from the Latin American network members.

Another achievement was the increasing presence of Latin American forced migration issues in the following IASFM conferences: *XVI Conference: Rethinking Forced Migration and Displacement: Theory, Policy, and Praxis*, held in Poznan (Poland) in 2016, included two Latin American panels, with three more for the XVII Conference in Thessaloniki, Greece, in July 2018. Moreover, a permanent working group, formed by former LANFM members and other global south scholars, was created inside IASFM with the purpose of improving the relationship between academia and innovative empirical work for the co-production of knowledge in forced migration.

Paradoxically, and in spite of those achievements, Bogotá's conference was the last event organized by LANFM. Months before the conference, and due to various personal and professional reasons, both Vidal and Sánchez announced their decision to leave their coordination role in the network. That announcement triggered a debate about its future. Finally, a decision was made, including some significant changes to the initiative. It was relaunched by the *II Humanitarian Conference on Forced Migration Issues*, that took place in Bogotá a couple of days before IASFM event, as the *Red sobre Migraciones Forzadas en las Américas (RMFA)/Network on Forced Migration in the Americas*. In a public statement it was announced that RMFA will pursue two objectives. First, it will present an annual report about the institutional responses to forced migration in the region that will be prepared based on research developed by its members. Second, it will hold a biannual conference, where the challenges pointed out by the reports would be studied, and recommendations to lead them will be presented to the region's governments (IICRHMF 2014, 16).

Colombian NGO CODHES⁵ agreed to coordinate the network and a group of young scholars and graduate students joined it. Even a Facebook page⁶ and a new website were launched. It seemed like a bright new beginning. However, this initiative was short-lived. Less than a year later the network disappeared.

Bittersweet Symphony: Lessons and Challenges in Building the LANFM

LANFM's birth couldn't have taken place under better omens. The first Latin American network of networks emerged with perfect timing. There was a rising interest for forced migration in the region. The issue was being studied by an increasing number of local scholars, particularly in Colombia (e.g., Ibáñez 2008; Rodríguez 2010; Somohano and Yankelevich 2011). Moreover, international organizations, such as UNHCR and UNPD, were working on it, as well as several NGOs and other organizations from the civil society (e.g., CODHES and Colombian Episcopal Conference 2006). Even states were gradually taking forced migration into consideration. Colombia's sophisticated public policy regarding IDPs is undoubtedly the best known of these state responses (IDMC 2013). But there were other official attempts to manage non-voluntary migration in the region. Peru's Law on internal displacement of 2004⁷ and the broad concept of asylum and refuge as a human right in Ecuador's Constitution⁸ are perfect examples of those efforts. Therefore, the moment was truly auspicious to start weaving bonds between Latin American academics, practitioners, and even policymakers that were working from different perspectives on non-voluntary exodus issues in the region. There were plenty of experiences, lessons learned, and questions to share and discuss.

Moreover, LANFM's first conference was a success. It gathered a very diverse group of academics, NGO members, practitioners, as well as graduate and undergraduate students—all eager to be part of the network building experience. The quality of the lectures presented back then was outstanding, discussions were intense and fruitful, and multiple ideas for future collaborations between members of the new network were proposed. The event concluded with a statement expressing the participants' strong commitment to continue working together, enlarging and strengthening the newborn community. But only five years later, that community no longer existed. Although LANFM managed to organize three successful workshops as well as a significant international conference, it was unable to sustain itself. How can this be explained? There are four related factors that were not apparent during the network's lifetime.

Only a careful reflection about the context and circumstances of the network has unveiled them.

First of all, despite the multiple ideas that emerged after the first congress and after every workshop, LANFM was unable to transform these ideas into sustainable research projects. Efforts were made, e.g., an application to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a Partnership Grant in 2011, but they were not successful. The network's inability to bring funded projects to its membership gradually lowered enthusiasm. If the new community was unable to expand and deepen members' research agendas, there was no point investing time and other resources in it. Thus, little by little, partners stopped presenting initiatives to this forum.

Secondly, there was a lack of strategy for keeping the members in touch between conferences and workshops. The LANFM website, hosted at the RRN website, was launched after the first conference,⁹ but it never worked as a true space for conveying and debating ideas, papers, and projects. It just informed members about future events. Absence of continued communication among LANFM's members weakened even more the interest they once shared in the common project. After the IASFM Conference, the Facebook page and website launched by RMFA were not able to keep the community together.

These two factors described above—the network's failed efforts to find funding for its membership projects, as well as its shortcomings on keeping alive the bonds among its members—are linked to a third factor. The network never developed its own administrative structure nor obtained funds to sustain its activities. This means it totally depended on the resources generously given by its partners, in particular York, Javeriana, and Los Andes universities. This kind of arrangement proved adequate for organizing conferences and workshops, but it didn't allow LANFM to go further. Formulating research projects, finding partners, and looking for development funds are all complex activities that demand time as well as human and monetary resources. Building and operating an online platform to connect members equally requires multiple inputs. The network's lack of infrastructure prevented it from performing an ambitious role as an engine for the research agendas of its members and confined it to the position of event host.

Finally, the absence of strong leadership is the fourth element that explains LANFM's short life. As it has been said, this initiative was conceived as a network of networks. The original idea was to build links among pre-existing, well-organized collaborative structures, each one carrying out clear research agendas. This imagined scenario didn't demand a powerful leadership, but a soft one, able to build consensus and developing a coordination strategy among peers. However, the real scenario where the new network had to perform ended up being very different. There weren't networks but universities, NGOs, and people in their personal capacity were the ones who joined LANFM. In other words, there were no groups, only individuals. Thus there wasn't a need to coordinate different collaborative programs; there was a need to design and build one from scratch. But, as previously mentioned, the network didn't have the resources to face such a challenge.

The juncture of these factors led to a weak network. The enthusiasm and goodwill of its members couldn't disguise the fact that there wasn't a solid common ground. There was, of course, a shared matter of interest, but not a project to work on together. People and institutions gathered every time there was a conference or a workshop, but once the event was over conversations among them ceased. When the network stopped organizing events, the silence became absolute.

Moreover, an additional factor should be taken into consideration. LANFM's existence and performance were linked to the leadership provided by the coordinators Sánchez and Vidal. Their professional bond as well as their friendship gave support, energy, and drive to the whole project. This can be a valuable and useful way of working, as demonstrated by Bose and Lustrum's chapter; and in fact, at the beginning it was. But it also implies a risk: it can be a challenge for the new coordinators to maintain a structure built in such a particular way.

The bitterness of the experience has now been exposed, but LANFM also left behind a certain sweetness. Actually, members of the extinct LANFM are still receiving benefits from their past membership. First, it allowed people from diverse backgrounds to meet each other, to share ideas, and even to imagine common projects. It wasn't the first attempt to build a regional network—e.g., *Red Andina de Migraciones/Andean Network on Migration* was founded in 2009,¹⁰ but it was a pioneer joining academic and NGO researchers. Therefore, it was a valuable meeting

space to gather people and institutions with a variety of approaches and concerns on forced migration issues. Some of these gatherings have been fruitful. As noted, publications have been written by people connected by this initiative.

Second, it promoted academic exchanges and collaboration among the partner universities. Javeriana and Los Andes have developed an intense relationship regarding forced migration issues that has stood the test of time. Several workshops and seminars have been organized by this tandem, and the collaboration is still going on. In fact, they have recently published the first book on Colombian exiles of the internal armed conflict (Iranzo and Louidor 2018). Following LANFM's spirit, the book brings together works from academics, practitioners, and activists, offering a colourful and multidisciplinary approach. Moreover, a strong relationship between York and Javeriana was built. There has been an intense activity that included exchanges of doctoral students and visiting scholars particularly in refugee law; activities have continued to take place after the network ceased to exist.

Finally, it boosted the presence of scholars and NGO members from Latin America in global forums such as IASFM. It also helped to start building a global south-south dialogue. This last achievement is extremely valuable. There is in Latin America a long tradition of academic dialogue and collaboration with the global north, a complex relationship with plenty of shadow and lights (for an analysis of the global north's dark side and the path to overcoming it, see chapter 1). However, and in spite of the existence of comparable contexts of forced migration, there has been little exchange of knowledge and expertise with countries such as India, Sri Lanka, or Turkey. LANFM opened some paths for this process, throughout collaboration initiatives among the Calcutta Research Group and three Colombian Universities (Javeriana, Los Andes, and Rosario). Those were baby steps but in the right direction and there are chances to enlarge them.

Before ending this chapter, a new question arises. The LANFM experience has had both lights and shadows, but could it be resumed? Would it be worthwhile? The answer is a conditional "yes."

The current context is, perhaps, even more propitious than it was in 2010. The region is facing complex forced migration processes that pose equally complex questions. Each scenario including: Colombian post-conflict processes, Northern Triangle forced displacement caused by criminal

gang violence, Venezuela's mass flight due to its political and economic crisis, and Brazil's quest for sustainable solutions to the environmental migration issue, is equally interesting and full of possibilities for academics to work with. Besides, both local academic communities and NGOs have been very active, producing numerous research works on these matters (e.g., Cantor and Rodríguez 2016; Céspedes-Báez and Prieto-Rios 2017; Jubilit et al. 2018). There are also new networks, such as the South American Network for Environmental Migration (RESAMA), developing interesting research agendas. A regional network of networks could be the opportunity for these actors to join forces by promoting knowledge exchange and production, as well as partnership building.

Experience has revealed that a good context and suitable partners are not sufficient to build a regional network. Resuming LANFM will demand learning from past lessons. The new version should have strong leadership and resources to support an infrastructure that can maintain the linkages among network members. It also should have its own defined research agenda, according to the particular Latin American context. This doesn't mean that a new LANFM shouldn't be open to its members' projects and initiatives; however, it must have its own goals and mission if it wants to have a long and independent existence.

Notes

- 1 The conference "Forced Migration Latin America: Creating Regional Networks for Research and Advocacy," was hosted at Javeriana University on 17 and 19 November and at Los Andes Law School on 18 November.
- 2 State's recognition of victims abroad came a few years later with a broad interpretation of 2011 Ley de Víctimas y Restitución de Tierras due, in part, to the demands of Colombian refugee organizations, such as Foro Internacional de Víctimas (see Sánchez 2018).
- 3 The ESPMI Network performed a relevant role in the conference organization by coordinating the review process of abstracts submitted.
- 4 Peace talks between Colombian government and FARC reached a successful end in November 2016 with the Acuerdo Final para la Terminación del Conflicto y la Construcción de una Paz Estable y Duradera, signed by the two parties. On the contrary, negotiations with ELN were suspended in January 2018. Resuming this peace process seems unlikely in December 2018.
- 5 CODHES-Consultoría para los Derechos Humanos y el Desplazamiento is one of the oldest and most well-known Colombian NGOs working on forced migration issues.

- 6 <https://www.facebook.com/Red-sobre-Migraciones-Forzadas-en-las-Am%C3%A9ricas-444477895697380/>.
- 7 Peru, Law 28233 of 2004 “Ley de Desplazamientos Internos.”
- 8 Article 41 of 2008’s Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador.
- 9 <http://refugeereseach.net/research-networks/latin-american-network-for-forced-migration-lanfm/>.
- 10 This was a sub-regional network, composed by NGOs from the Andean countries. During its first years it was very active, but activity has significantly decreased since 2014.

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