

Analyzing other effective measures for biodiversity conservation: the case of the complementary strategies in Colombia



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INTRODUCTION

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Colombia has made a considerable effort in order to accomplish the Aichi target 11 (13.71% land, 8.49% oceans), by strengthening current protected areas and establishing new ones in ecosystems poorly represented on the national protected area system. Nevertheless, it is well known that countries will hardly achieved the Aichi target 11 by 2020 if they do not take into account **Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures - OECM**. The IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, specifically the Task Force on OECM, is working to establish criteria to recognize those measures and avoid misunderstandings on the issue. In those areas, conservation should be *de facto*, and could include areas where conservation is partial, voluntary or even secondary or ancillary.

In Colombia, several efforts have been made in order to increase visibility and recognize different conservation strategies, some of them known as Complementary Conservation Strategies. These measures include different governance arrangements and can range from private lands to community managed territories. This work presents some representative cases in order to analyze how this measures contribute to biodiversity conservation and can be replicated in a possible peace scenario. This analysis can also enrich the discussion about the criteria that should be established to identify OECM worldwide.

During the Colombian Protected Area Congress (2014) several institutions proposed a definition for Complementary Conservation Strategies, which was a good starting point for a discussion that is still taking place:

“An area with clearly defined boundaries, where a community or an institution implements actions to ensure conservation, restoration or sustainable use of its biological and cultural diversity, which is complementary to protected areas and contributes to their connectivity.” (Colombian Protected Area Congress, 2014)

In the 2014 Protected Areas Congress and several workshops, the following steps were identified to move forward with the issue of Complementary Conservation Strategies:

- Establish criteria to clearly define OECM and evaluate their effectiveness on biodiversity conservation.
- Identify social motivation for promoting these strategies at local scale.
- Discuss which identified Complementary Conservation Strategies are or should be OECM.
- Compile information on OECM from community, institutions, private sector, etc.
- Promote and recognize different forms and levels of governance.

- Include all the stakeholders in the discussion (communities, institutions, networks, etc.).
- Recognize the role and importance of OECM on biodiversity conservation.
- Learn from different experiences and apply the knowledge to build new strategies on a country with new opportunities and probably new threats to biodiversity.
- Establish long term monitoring of conservation outcomes.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL EXAMPLES OF COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES

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1. Orinoquia traditional cattle ranching and biodiversity conservation

Altagracia is a locality of the department of Casanare, in the Colombian Orinoco basin. The dominant ecosystem is the flooded savannah with interspersed “Moriche” (*Mauritia flexuosa*) palm forests. In the area several farm owners, representing 13 families, joined to establish a voluntary conservation process in 11.000 hectares. A large portion (74%) of the area is used for traditional cattle ranching and 26% is dedicated to conservation. The area was also designated as an Important Bird Area, recognized by Birdlife International, thanks to the work of two NGOs: **Fundación Cunaguaro and Asociación Calidris**, mainly because of the presence of a representative population (31% of the total population) of the Orinoco Goose, *Oressochen jubatus*. The principal objective of this site is to preserve the natural ecosystems and traditional uses like cattle ranching and other cultural associated practices. This initiative is a response from the community to possible threats that might result in the loss of their territory and their cultural practices as a consequence the loss of biological diversity. It's not clear how long will the agreement between these landowners stand, since it depends entirely on them. The Natural National Parks office has accompanied this voluntary conservation process and some of the properties had become private reserves while others are considered to be complementary conservation strategies.

The properties involved in the process are:

- **San Cristóbal**. Owner Henry Parada.
- Miralindo**. Owner: Devier Salazar (deviermiralind@hotmail.com).
- Santa Clara**. Owner: Yedirbarblay Salazar.
- Las Palmas**. Owner: Víctor Morales.
- **Lagunazo**. Owner: Magdiel Arismendi magdielarismendi@hotmail.com

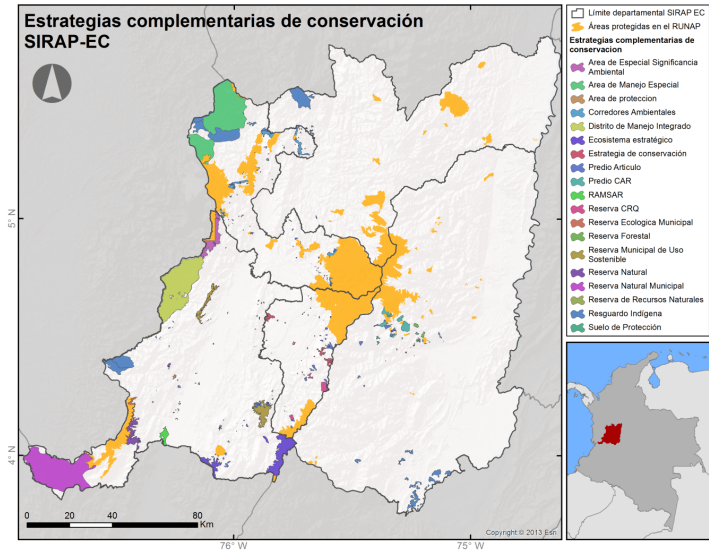
2. Colombian Coffee region: Pioneers on identifying other conservation measures



SIRAP

Eje cafetero

The Regional Protected Areas Systems in Colombia are recognized as networking spaces for conservation initiatives, involving institutions, environmental authorities, communities and NGOs. In the Colombian coffee growing region, which comprises five departments, the regional protected area system is considered one of the most advanced and effective, regarding implementation of conservation strategies. It has pioneered the identification and recognition of Complementary Conservation Strategies-CCS, some of which were former protected areas currently not recognized by the recent normativity. Using several criteria, they identified 199,316 hectares as CCS, including forest reserves, buffer zones, highlands (paramo ecosystems), protected areas within indigenous and afro-descendants' collective territories, local and urban protected areas, wetlands, biological corridors, areas for water conservation, Important Bird Areas and private lands. The next step of this process is the evaluation of biodiversity conservation effectiveness on these areas.



RESNATUR: A NETWORK OF NETWORKS

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The Colombian Network of Civil Society Nature Reserves (Resnatur) is a nonprofit civil association that since 1991 has brought together owners who **voluntarily** decide to manage their rural land according to practices regarding biodiversity conservation and sustainable production. The common mission of these nature reserves is to contribute to the consolidation and positioning of **private conservation** initiatives for the construction of alternative social fabric, models of living, and development. It brings together type C and D governance initiatives (private and of local communities).

Resnatur works mainly on: 1) Restoration processes in nature reserves, 2) Community and member knowledge about strategies for conservation-sustainable production 3) Promoting tools for participation in environmental issues by Resnatur members and community.

Colombia recognizes private reserves as areas protected by law, conducted via the environmental authority, in this case the Natural National Parks office. Resnatur includes both registered reserves and others that do not need registration in order to be recognized as conservation strategies or have land tenure issues. The latter may be considered Complementary Conservation Strategies, or as criteria become clear, Other Area Based Conservation Measures. More information on: <http://www.resnatur.org.co>.

Testimony from a network member:

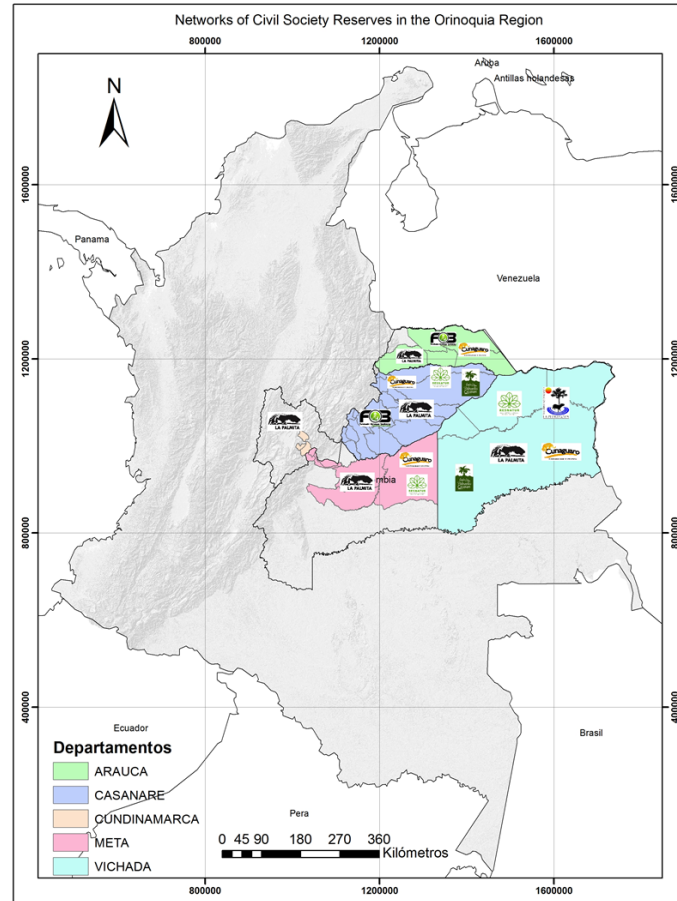
*“(...) Being organized with another group of people and reserves is a strength, it is not feeling alone.”
“The reserves are not just the nature part, but also the social part, all the interaction that exists!”* See testimony at: (Spanish only).

[VIDEO] <https://www.youtube.com/embed/RNGeNXtAHfc?fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

An example of articulation in the Orinoquia



Given the lack of representativeness of protected areas at the national level in the Colombian Orinoquia region, several NGOs have promoted and supported an exercise of environmental governance by private individuals and organizations, with the support of the Regional System of Protected Areas in Orinoquia (Sirapo). This management is undertaken through the creation and registry of civil society nature reserves and other private land conservation figures, with a conservation-sustainable production approach, conservation agreements, and participatory research projects. This joint project among articulated organizations is materializing with the elaboration of the management plans for civil society nature reserves guide, contextualized for the reality of the Colombian Orinoquia.



SOME COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES ASSOCIATED WITH RESNATUR

1. Colombian Hindu Tea: an enterprise for conservation Carlota Llano, carlotallano@hotmail.com

[VIDEO] <https://www.youtube.com/embed/AN91Db5y11g?fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

- The **Himalaya Private Reserve** is a strategic site for connectivity between relic forests and their associated fauna. It covers 213 hectares, 98 of which are registered in the Natural National Parks office; Himalaya is associated to Resnatur too. It is located in Bitaco (Valle del Cauca department) in the biogeographical Chocó, one of the most biodiverse regions in the world.

- Its owners created the Himalaya Agricultural Company a leader in Colombia in the production of organic teas and fruit infusions with its Hindú brand, which is certified at the national and international level.

- The **Himalaya Agricultural Foundation** has undertaken an ambitious environmental and social project that includes the supply of potable water, solutions for sewage, restoration processes and comprehensive management of solid wastes. At least 300 had benefited from their projects. This strategy undertakes environmental management of the territory for a healthy life in family and community.

2. Creating seeds of life Sonia Pérez, direccionejecutiva@asosemillas.org

- The **Semillas Reserve** is located in the Boyacá department, in the Tibasosa municipality, and covers 14.200 hectares. The owners' goal is to protect a unique relic forest and dry *páramo*, in the Cerro de Guática, in the middle of the Valle de Sugamuxi. This strategy is classified as type C governance.

- The **Semillas Association** for Sustainable Development (AsoSemillas) carries out projects to conserve the *páramo*, which is characteristic in its important biological and cultural singularity, and to connect the local community interested in supporting conservation-sustainable production processes like quinoa crops.

- Within the AsoSemillas programs, the elaboration of radio outreach programs through Radio Semillas stands out: <http://www.radiosemillas.org/>

3. SERRANIAGUA: connecting realities

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- The Serraniagua Corporation brings together more than 30 community nature reserves, including Cerro El Inglés and Galápagos in the Valle del Cauca department. Cerro El Inglés conserves a broad group of endemic species included in different categories of threatened species.

[VIDEO] <https://player.vimeo.com/video/30021471>

- Andean cloud forests occupy 95% of the reserve, which has become a center for scientific investigation and a community biodiversity monitoring process, in alliance with Colombian and foreign universities.
- Serraniagua Corporation was created in 1996 to learn about, value, and conserve the Serranía de Los Paraguas. It has designed a community conservation strategy (Type D governance) that includes community nature reserves, associations of agro-ecological producers, networks of peasant women groups associated with rural aqueducts, and cultural collectives.

<http://www.serraniagua.org>

FUNDACIÓN NATURA: WORKING ON RECIPROCAL WATER AGREEMENTS

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The **reciprocal water agreements** are a payment for environmental services strategy, which aim to solve a water quality and regulation issue in Las Cruces river basin, in Norte de Santander department. The water from this basin is used by 12,800 inhabitants of the San Vicente de Chucurí town. The payment involves the owners of the high areas, the beneficiaries, the water administration company (Administradora Pública Cooperativa Manantiales de Chucurí) and the municipality.

An annual payment is given to the land owners who sign an agreement with which they commit to change land use from agriculture to conservation, prevent pollution and diminish land erosion. In order to manage the resources, a local fund was created and the water administration company was strengthened. To date, 2,258 voluntary contributions from the community have been received, 61 agreements have been signed, 490.5 hectares of natural ecosystems are being conserved or restored, 703.5 hectares of cacao, coffee and grass are have been managed with good practices.

A Reciprocal Water Agreement (Acuerdo Voluntario por el Agua-ARA-) is: 1) A voluntary agreement, 2) with local and global benefits, 3) is based on reciprocity, 4) includes the principle of conditionality, 5) involves a local institution, 6) its financing becomes permanent and 7) interests and conflicts are negotiated.

[VIDEO] <https://www.youtube.com/embed/L4rCaX-xLGk?fs=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

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CONSERVATION-PRODUCTION AGREEMENTS BY FUNDACIÓN NATURA

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Conservation-Production Agreements are a tool used to negotiate with one or more stakeholders on a private property in order to develop a land planning process. Taking into account a landscape approach, conservation, management and land use zones are established. This strategy has been implemented on several areas of the Andean Colombian region (Oak corridor, Santander department) and in the Orinoco region (Casanare and Vichada departments), involving cattle ranchers and cacao and coffee growers. These agreements have allowed the implementation of good land use practices, they have strengthened conservation strategies to improve connectivity in the landscape with both local and regional outcomes, they have restored degraded lands, have protected ecosystems and have proposed actions to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

In order to sign the agreement, a relationship based on trust had to be built. The agreements are made with a **civil contract**, where the purposes, the geographic areas, the duration, the ways to solve conflicts, the penalties in the case they are needed, and the resources invested are described. The agreement is validated by legal or informal ways, but it has to be framed on legal parameters in order to be able to call for the compliance of it.