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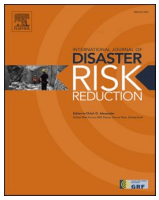

'A walk with the lads': Masculinities' perspectives, gender dynamics and resilience in Soacha, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Soacha is a municipality in the periphery of Colombia's capital Bogotá, whose population has soared over the past two decades with a constant influx of people displaced by conflict all over the country. The result is a fragile municipality with a majority of highly vulnerable settlements due to: high levels of tenure insecurity; generalised lack of protection and territorial control by gangs; normalised violence; and high levels of intra-urban displacement. Disenfranchisement and lack of rights set the backdrop in which the daily lives of hundreds of thousands of people transcur.

As part of the Horizon 2020 project, the 'Preparedness and Resilience to address Urban Vulnerability' (PRUV) Consortium employed the Urban Vulnerability Walk methodology to understand the vulnerabilities of both men and women in a gender-segregated research in one locality –Altos de Florida. While the methodology was useful to identify vulnerabilities and risks, it proved equally useful to better understand the resources of the community, both of the women and the men, in order to overcome the difficulties in which they are immersed and to build a sustainable future.

1. Introduction

Urban areas can be rendered vulnerable –that is, lacking capacities to face risks and threats-due to multiple factors including rapid and unplanned development, environmental degradation, precarious livelihoods and resource pressures. These challenges are likely to grow given that the proportion of the world's population living in urban areas is projected to increase from the current 53%–70% by 2050 [1,2]. Over the past 40 years, the urban population in lower income and fragile countries has increased by 326% [2]. Approximately one billion people or one third of the developing world's urban population live in 'slums', mostly in highly vulnerable areas [3,4].

The *typical* humanitarian crisis of the future is likely to be urban rather than rural with all the attendant systemic complexity that cities present [5–9]. This sentiment is echoed in a raft of recent global policy documents that warn of the future urban threat, including the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; Sustainable Development Goals [10]; World Humanitarian Synthesis Report, October 2015 [9]; Secretary General's Report in preparation for the World Humanitarian Summit [11]; UN-Habitat III, October 2016 [12]; and the IFRC World Disasters Report 2016 [13].

Against this policy backdrop, there are calls to build urban resilience. While the debate concerning the definition and practice of urban resilience continues, a growing number of academics and policymakers are suggesting that the solutions to humanitarian needs should come from within affected communities or what is being termed 'localised response' [14,15]. In this vein, the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) consultations recommended that humanitarian aid organisations invest in building social capital and strengthening local structures [9]:57). Similarly, Gibbons et al. [16] advise that recognising resources and capacities of beneficiaries requires close engagement and the building of a sense of empathy with affected populations that recognises their agency as they bid to recover and return to normality.

Communities living in informal urban settlements suffer human rights violations as a consequence of urban violence and tenure insecurity. Our research project, 'Preparedness and Resilience to address Urban Vulnerability' (PRUV), was designed to better understand these challenges from the perspective of the communities themselves. This is a Horizon 2020 project which brings together partners from Ireland, the UK, Spain, Kenya, Indonesia, Colombia, the Netherlands and Germany

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to implement research in three case-studies: Soacha (Colombia), in Nairobi (Kenya) and in Jakarta (Indonesia).[1]

Colombia, the focus of this paper, is a country which has received much attention for its high levels of violence and criminality: it is the main exporter and producer of cocaine in the whole world [17], and extremely high murder rates: although, according to official figures, in 2016 the murder rate stood at 24.4 per 100,000 –the lowest since 1974- [96],[2] the decreasing trend in the murder rate stopped in recent years and 2019 ended with a rate of 25 per 100,000 [21]. More worryingly, murder rates are increasing exponentially in some regions [22]. At the same time, Colombia has become the deadliest country in the world to be a human rights' defender; of the 304 defenders killed globally in 2019, over a third were killed in Colombia alone [23]. Colombia also suffers from an armed conflict which, despite recent attempts at conflict resolution, has been raging for the best part of the last 70 years. The results of this conflict have been dire: it has resulted, according to most conservative figures, in a quarter of a million dead and 25,000 disappeared -all from a population of 47 million [24]. On top of this, a staggering 7.7 million people are recognised as internally displaced people by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, with no signs of them going back home any time soon [25]. Many of the displaced end up in vulnerable urban settlement such as Soacha, which are particularly vulnerable in a country prone to earthquakes, volcanic activity and floods, and a topography where landslides are frequent occurrences [26]. In these settings particularly vulnerable groups such as internally displaced persons, women and youth, have received particular attention; yet, male adults have received little attention as gendered agents involved in wider dynamics of vulnerability.

Notwithstanding numerous policies attempting, with varying degrees of success,[3] to target the vulnerability and risks faced by the inhabitants of vulnerable urban settlements, their situation remains critical, particularly in places like Soacha (see section 2.3). The current paper summarises recent qualitative research activities carried out in Soacha (April 2018) for the PRUV project. Using a masculinities framework, we made a demonstration on how a particular methodological tool, the Urban Vulnerability Walk, which was used among many others, can help to explore how normative expectations and the gendered nature of males, impact their perceptions of vulnerability on the ground, but also the resources which they have to build up resilience in an extremely adverse context. This paper, therefore, has a double purpose: on the one hand, it is a demonstration on the merits and limitations of a particular research tool. On the other, it discusses issues of vulnerability, resilience and masculinity based on the results of the application of this method.

2. Conceptual framework and methodology

In this section we describe the theoretical framework and the methodology used in this research, together with the characteristics of the case-study.

2.1. Masculinities, gender and vulnerabilities

It has often been assumed that gender is something related only to females [28]. This frequently results in gender-segregated research concentrating primarily on female roles, while studies that focus on male contributions tend to be treated as "gender-neutral" information. However, gender studies are not synonymous with women's studies. Gender studies analyse power-mediated interactions between the roles defined as male and female; interactions in which behaviour and attitudes are defined and regulated. Instead of assuming an essentialist approach to gender analysis, we employ an approach that analyses dialectically constituted relationships of the 'masculine' with the 'feminine' –as well as other sexualities-as a social, historical and contextualised process [29]. As such, the study of men and their position in the gendered order becomes of paramount importance in order to get a full picture of the dialectical, contradictory but co-constitutive, nature of these interactions. Masculinity is a social construct necessarily related to notions of femininities and to other –often marginalised-masculinities; it is produced in the course of interactions between males and females [30,31], and we should also add other gender identities.

Studies on 'masculinity' originated in the early 1980s. They built on previous social research and psychoanalysis, as well as developments in gay and feminist theory. Through these studies a normative concept of 'Hegemonic Masculinities' emerged, understood as 'the pattern of practice (…) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue'. It embodied the 'expectations of being a man and it ideologically legitimised the global subordination of women to men' [32]: 832). Although the concept of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' has been the target of some criticism [33], it remains a useful tool to analyse social and ethnic gender difference [34,35]. Its premise that men police one another in order to ensure that normative expectations of masculinities are reinforced is particularly useful. It posits that 'Hegemonic Masculinities' are reinforced by: concealing/hiding vulnerabilities; assuming a man is right, exercises self-control and has superior knowledge [33]:13). Violence often arises as a response to conceal vulnerability or when these assumptions are challenged in order to affirm a dominant concept of masculinity (Ibid: 18). Particularly in vulnerable contexts, where risk is ubiquitous, men tend to emphasise their empowerment through violence-aggression, stoicism, physical prowess and bravery to negate any external sign of weakness [36].

However, not all masculinities are the same; class and colonial relations have had profound impacts on gendered orders and the construction of masculinities.[4] Violence in postcolonial contexts, indeed, is constitutive of gender relations and of Southern masculinities [93]. Global –and violent-processes such as decolonisation, post-colonial development and neoliberal development, need to be properly considered for a sound understanding of these masculinities. European, white, middle-class male and female researchers and NGO practitioners often reproduce class and colonial biases against men in the Global South, demonised as brutish, hyper-masculine and *macho* [37].[5] These biases reinforce decontextualized, ahistorical, crude and paternalistic caricature of helpless and subservient women who need to be saved (typically by English-speaking, white, middle-class professionals) from genetically violent, drunk and unpredictable men. These damaging stereotypes need to be confronted by empirical evidence that scratches the surface.

Since the 1990s there has been increasing interest in the gendered nature of disaster impacts, prevention and post-disaster work [38]. However, most of this gender literature has centred in women and girls [39–41], and so far, men have remained largely 'invisible as gendered

[1] More information on the project can be found at http://pruv.ucd.ie/.

[2] This decrease in murder rates owed partly to efforts done to change operational methods of the police [18], but also to integral approaches which focused on small and localised interventions in infrastructure and access to services [19,20].

[3] Other than localised interventions for public safety reasons in areas of Bogotá and Medellín (see previous footnote), Colombia has also been doing some efforts in relation to natural disasters' risk. As such, since 1989 the country has a National System for Disaster Management and Prevention, which has been for a number of years incorporating participatory approaches to risk reduction [26,27].

[4] On the class impact on the construction on masculinities, see the excellent ethnographic work of Gutmann [37] in Mexico.

[5] Even the fact that in English language the word for a sexist, *macho*, is borrowed from Spanish is very telling about prejudices against Latin American men.

actors in most disaster studies' [42]:9). This is starting to change; there is a growing awareness of the impact the social construction of masculinity has in disaster prevention, response and management, as well as in pre-disaster conditions and post-disaster reconstruction. There is growing awareness too of the role of hegemonic men, removed from disasters, who have enormous power on deciding actions –and budgets-in the face of disaster (Ibid). Although the notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been built in the negation of men's vulnerabilities, disaster studies have brought them to the fore[6]; men as gendered actors respond to the disaster cycle differentially, are impacted differentially, and that their roles in pre-disaster conditions are critical.

Acknowledging that not all men are the same, other than the traditional focus on hegemonic masculinities, some have pointed out that disasters affect different types of men -indigenous, LGBTQI,[7] disabled, old, young, working-class, etc.- differentially [62–66]. Particular attention needs to be paid to the masculinities of those living in extremely vulnerable contexts, in order to understand the implications that normative expectations have on men. We also need to be cognisant that these normative expectations may inadvertently be reinforced by gender discourses which 'feminise' vulnerability. One should not take as a given the vulnerability of women *vis-a-vis* men, but rather we should explore how the notion of vulnerability is shaped in specific contexts within the framework of relations between genders. The idea that women are necessarily, in a quasi-naturalistic way, more vulnerable than men is problematised in a body of research, including the case of forcefully displaced people in Colombia [67] and in relation to economic recession [68]. Precisely because of the nature of normative masculinities, the vulnerabilities of men tend to be concealed and are often considered a source of shame in the eyes of peers [33,69], something which came up in conversations with both women and men. This makes it more pressing to find ways to bring these vulnerabilities to the surface through evidence based research.

2.2. Urban Vulnerability Walk

Participatory research methods were largely developed in Colombia by the pioneering work of Orlando Fals Borda [70]. A range of normative and pragmatic claims in favour of participatory approaches to research are often made by their advocates [71]. These approaches are associated with the promotion of inclusion, active participation, trust, empowerment, the integration and generation of 'hybrid' knowledge (local and expert), producing high quality information, stimulating consensus among participants, taking into account the capacities of communities, instigating change and solutions according to the needs and culture of communities, stimulating engagement with the process and ownership of outcomes, producing better and more durable responses, among other benefits.[8]

For all of their advantages, we may need to be aware of the limitations and some problematic aspects of participatory research. Power dynamics can be reproduced too in participatory research, and prevalent power relations can be even reinforced [72,82]. This form of research can also lead to participation fatigue, to dysfunctional forms of consensus, it can be regarded as ineffective by local participants (especially if expectations are too big), and it can also operate as a façade for the co-optation of the powerless [83]. The process is also time-consuming and can fail because of inexperienced facilitation [73]. What's more, further empirical evidence on many of its alleged advantages –other than the effectiveness and durability of the responses based on this approach-is required [71].

Notwithstanding these potential limitations, their advantages far outweigh the potential risks. Participatory methods, indeed, are increasingly popular among academics, practitioners and policy-makers; this trend includes researchers working on both vulnerability and resilience enhancement. Disaster risk reduction research has witnessed an upsurge in the use of participatory tools, particularly in the framework of community based responses to risks and vulnerabilities.[9] In the field of masculinities' studies, the use of participatory approaches has been more limited, yet some research has advanced the use of these methods (ie., [86,87]. However, participatory approaches to research masculinities in the context of risk, vulnerabilities and resilience analysis, remain insufficiently explored and used. Our pilot experience in this project, gives us insights about their potential and represents a modest contribution in this sense.

One of the participatory methods used was the Urban Vulnerability Walk (UVW), an adaptation of the Transect Walks (TW), a widely used and well-tested participatory social research method. This particular adaptation of the TW was implemented first by Plan International (one of the PRUV partners) and UN-Habitat in 2013 to explore the safety needs of urban adolescent girls. It is designed to understand the ways in which the locals, experience their territory and how they perceive vulnerabilities and risks. The method, as developed by Plan International, examines seven areas of vulnerability, namely: Personal Safety; General Safety of the Area; Security Resources; Environmental Vulnerability; Accessibility; Community Spaces and Inclusion. The study carried out two UVWs: the first with a group of women and then secondly with a group of men. We added a further area, not related to vulnerability, namely Capacities and Resilience in the course of the men's UVW in Soacha to give a more comprehensive account of how communities experience their territory. The research is contextualised through localised indicators (presence of spaces to socialise, street lights, police, sidewalks, activities which promote inclusion, effective social networks, food banks, etc.) to analyse levels of vulnerability for each of the issues listed above (See Table 2).

This method was used as part of a broader set of qualitative research methods which included social cartographies (linked closely to the UVW), Focus Group Discussions and Key-Informant Interviews. In order to gather quantitative data, given the lack of institutional and reliable official data, the project conducted an extensive survey on key indicators of vulnerability in the case-study. The unit of analysis in the UVW method was at both the group and individual levels. Information from the group was elicited during the walk and this was followed by a request for each individual participant to complete a form to allow individual reflection on the group's discussions and to further elaborate on issues of vulnerability that were considered important to each individual.

This research activity was made possible because of the work carried out by the Jesuit Refugee Service, JRS, a partner organisation within the PRUV consortium. In the men's group, six men participated through our partner, all of them 21 years and older, plus two coordinators of the JRS and one of the authors of this paper. Only one of the six men, the youngest among them, had been born in Bogotá. All the others were originally from different rural regions of the country and none of them was a community leader.

It is important to insist that, although in this research we used participatory tools, including the UVW, and for some aspects of it we even used a participatory ethos, this research, as such, was *not*

[6] A growing body of literature addresses questions such as why men's mortality in disasters is particularly high [43,44]; the impact of masculinity in access to health services or risk health behaviour which impact life expectancy [45]; men and displacement [46]; men's views on gender responsive emergency strategies [47]; men and disaster related gender violence and abuse [48–50]; masculinities, environmental hazards and climate change [51–53]; men and post-disaster trauma [54–57]; disaster impact on men's livelihoods [58]; masculinities and perception of risks [59,60]; and men and preparedness to disaster [61].

[7] Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and Intersex community.

[8] See for instance, Refs. [71–81].

[9] [73,74,76–78,81,84,85].

participatory: participant communities were not involved in the process of research design, or in setting up the objectives of the research. This does not mean, however, that in the course of the research they did not set up their own objectives and expectations, which were later incorporated into, and served as the basis of, policy recommendations[10].

2.3. Case study: comuna VI, Altos de la Florida, Soacha

Soacha is a municipality to the south-west of Bogotá; it is divided into six districts or *comunas* and two subdivisions called *corregimientos*, composed of 14 *veredas* or hamlets, and 358 legal districts, 63 of them informal settlements, including our case study, Altos de la Florida. This division and fractionalisation create a municipality that is a collection of 'communities with different social fabric and invisible barriers'. There are no reliable statistics and basic demographic information is contested, with the official national bureau of statistics estimating the population of the municipality at roughly half a million people, while local government claims that the population exceeds a million [97].

Violence is rife in Soacha. Right-wing paramilitarism, which has grown steadily in Bogotá since the 1990s - arrived to Soacha in 2001. Its arrival was bloody. An estimated 600 young people were killed in the Soacha neighbourhood Altos de Cazucá alone between 2003 and 2005 in a territorial dispute between the paramilitaries and the public security forces. These conflicts are complex and typically involve widespread collusion with parties of both sides of the conflict and internal feuds. This situation has resulted in mass forced intra-urban displacement. These paramilitaries, which control numerous criminal enterprises most notably drug micro-trafficking, are fragmented into scores of smaller private armies [88]; Defensoría del Pueblo, 2016). In 2008 a scandal broke into the mainstream news called the 'false positives' (*falsos positivos*): this consisted of the kidnapping of poor young men from Soacha by both the army and the police to be murdered and presented to the news as guerrillas killed in combat. The State, has not only reneged on its protection function in Soacha but it is widely reported to be responsible for direct violence against its population; adding to the vulnerability of the population [89,90].

Threats against social groups that do not conform to the culture of the parties to the conflict are constant, including: teachers leading youth groups, humanitarian organisations and community leaders, as well as the so-called threats of 'social cleansing' targeting people labelled as 'undesirable': drug users, sex workers and members of the LGBTI community[11] [91]; Rojas, 1996). This label has become normalised in that it is frequently internalised and used by the very victims of this dehumanising labelling to refer to themselves [92]: 114). Threats rarely, if ever, remain verbal or written and they often can lead to lethal aggression. Murder rates in Soacha are high. The homicide rate in the municipality is estimated at 14.9 per 100,000 inhabitants -mostly men between 18 and 26 years old [98]. While there are high levels of inter- and intra-displacement, the high levels of violence, severely restrict mobility of the community, especially young people, across veritable invisible boundaries between sectors.

The case-study area for this research, the district of Altos de la Florida (Comuna VI), was established as an informal settlement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and is located in south-western Soacha (Fig. 1). The district is divided into 4 sectors, plus the new and emerging sector of Piedras Blancas. The more established sectors (the older sectors 1 and 2) account for most of the 'formalised' properties, while informal tenure systems remain exceedingly high if not universal in sectors 3, 4

Fig. 1. A panoramic view of Altos de la Florida, Soacha.

and in Piedras Blancas. According to the 2013 census, Altos de la Florida had a population of roughly 6000 people and 1800 families. In addition, according to UNHCR and UNDP estimates, '40% of the community is displaced population (maybe more) and 60% is part of the host community' [99]. Altos de Florida seems a world apart from Bogotá. The only way to reach the neighbourhood is by minibus or jeep, similar to those widely used in the countryside. The road that took us there is dusty and windy. On the way fellow passengers are in good spirits, all the while covering their noses with handkerchiefs. An array of accents from all parts of Colombia can be heard: there you hear some *costeño* speaking, here some *tolimense*, over there some *caqueteño*, there some *valluno*, there some *paisa*, some others with a strong accent from the Pacific coast, and the ubiquitous *rolo* accent from Bogotá, revealing the varied social and ethnic composition of this ever-growing community. Almost 70% of the population in Altos de la Florida have no access to drinkable water and have to pay private providers to access containers with water, at a very high cost. There is no legal electricity scheme, the first school was built by a UN programme in 2009 and there is no primary care centre or a functional sewage system [98].

3. A stroll in Soacha: UVW, men, vulnerability and resilience

We met at around 9am with the participants in the local parochial house. Everyone –including ourselves-was late. This was good in the end, as it gave us a more laid back environment, and we were chatting endlessly of all sorts of small-and-not-so-small-talk until everyone gathered and we thought it was time to depart. We explained the principles of the UWV to participants, and then we let them decide where they would take us on tour in their community.

Early in the activity, an important limitation of the UVW adaptation of the TW emerged as the focus on vulnerabilities concealed other perceptions of the area which the participants were obviously keen to share. The participant men were not interested in giving us a 'poverty pornography' trip. Although vulnerabilities and risks were highlighted during the discussion both directly and indirectly, the group wanted to show us what they liked of their own neighbourhood. It was clearly evident that, while outsiders may perceive this quarter as a poor neighbourhood in desperate need of intervention, the locals also experience it as home. This is a place they have created themselves and which they are improving each passing day. When one looks at the world through these lenses, and abandons paternalistic assumptions, suddenly one acknowledges local efforts to improve their lived environment, evidenced in initiatives like hanging pots of plants at the entry to houses and different colours with which they paint their facades. This is not only a mechanism to cope with daily poverty, but an expressed sense of

[10] This point is important, since some research claiming to be participatory do not meet the basic criteria for it to be considered as such; this also happens within the field of disaster risk reduction research [81].

[11] In Colombia, advocacy organisations for people of non-heteronormative sexualities and members of that community use the LGBTI acronym, without the Q for queer, a term which is not widely used.

pride in their achievement to improve the area.

We realized then the big sense of pride in having developed their neighbourhood by themselves. They had done so in the face of obvious difficulties and challenges, through their effort and resourcefulness and they were rightly proud. The positives expressed by the group were not limited to the physical environment. They also expressed positive social achievements, particularly the custom of engaging in collective works, variably called *cambio de mano, convite, jornada cívica* or *minga*, and which typically consist of saving a day a week for working in collective projects for the benefit of the whole community or to support elderly or sick members of the community. Notwithstanding the fact that the Colombian peasantry has a huge tendency towards individual ownership of land, they also have a tendency towards practising collective and concerted action. Certain positive aspects of the rural culture have been adopted by the community in the city and put into practice while building up their neighbourhood, showing extraordinary resilience. At one point in the UVW some human waste was seen running down the street out of a house due to the lack of sewage system. A participant admitted, 'this is something that embarrasses us. We wouldn't like you to see such an image, but we are working on it. We will do some work, a project, so we can have proper sewage here. We will get support with the materials and we will do the work ourselves'. It was clearly evident that, contrary to what some NGO workers have told us in the past and accounts during the women's UVW, these men seemed to have a great sense of ownership of the neighbourhood despite the insecure tenure and lack of formal property ownership systems.

Technically, they are all squatters of a desolate hillside prone to landslides belonging to a big landlord, which they have turned into their home and where insecurity and the permanent risk of eviction are universally perceived as the biggest risks. This is not just a problem of Altos de Florida. Tenure insecurity is a persistent problem in Colombia that lies at the root of the armed conflict that has blighted the nation for over half a century. Displacement is aided by insecure land tenure, and displacement in turn reinforces the insecurity of tenure as there is a roving population constantly looking for a new place to settle down, with the hope that this time it will be for good. Unable to buy land through the 'formal' market, they occupy barren lands in the outskirts of the city. Alternatively, informally, they buy small plots there, which eventually authorities may agree to regularise and formalise. Thus, the Colombian cities have grown without planning, responding to the immediate needs of a most vulnerable population. And yet, in the midst of this unspeakable vulnerability and violence, the resourcefulness and creativity of the displaced are the basis of an extraordinarily resilient culture.

Their understanding of their own vulnerability was diametrically opposed to dominant discourses that equate security with policing. They identified their lack of rights and insecure tenure as their main risks and vulnerabilities. The problem of pollution caused by a charcoal kiln also emerged in the course of the walk. Physical violence remains a big issue, however, it is largely unspoken about by men who tried to show us that they were 'in control' of their territory. These men told us that it was better if we stayed in a particular sector (sector 4 and Piedras Blancas), because it was safe, whereas the other sectors weren't. Immediately we could perceive one of those invisible borders at work. They said they felt really safe at any time in this area. That nothing ever happened. But if they crossed to the other side of the divide, to the other sectors, there could be 'trouble'. What kind of trouble? Just trouble. People can be nasty, they rob, and hurt outsiders. And what happened –we asked-if others cross to this side of the quarter? 'We don't mind', they said, 'as long as they are quiet and orderly. But the moment they start to act the maggot and do harm, then we have to deal with them and tell them to leave'. How that does happen? 'That is something the men do. We come together, and go and tell them to leave or face consequences. They would leave immediately'. It was important for them to emphasise that they were in control, that they were fulfilling normative expectations of masculine figures as security providers -something 'men do'.

As we passed in front of a territorial marker -a large stone painted with the name of the infamous right-wing paramilitary organisation, the AUC and the word "paraco", which is slang for paramilitary-, the group reacted with a collective shrugging of shoulders when asked about the meaning of that marker (Fig. 2). It is obvious that everybody there knows what that means and what it represents; yet, no one said a word, apart from the youngest man who approached one of us when the others had passed. He indicated that the marker could mean anything, that anyone can go and paint something, "any stupid lad" could have done it. Quickly, he added that we should catch up with the others. Confronted with a very tangible risk, the group's reaction seems to suggest these men preferring to just ignore it, as if denial would make risk disappear.

Risks other than those related to personal safety, were not ignored, particularly environmental hazards, such as landslides, mentioned by both women and men. The participants led us to the charcoal kiln nearby, which they single out as the biggest cause of pollution in this part of Soacha (Fig. 3). This is one of the few enterprises in this area. People collect any wood they can find on these largely treeless slopes, bring it here and turn it into charcoal for sale. It does help some locals to get an extra income, but it comes at a price. When the wind blows in the direction of Altos de Florida and Piedras Blancas, the smoke can be suffocating. To the other side of the charcoal kiln, there is a dump used by different textile factories. When asked, as we were walking up the dirt road, if they were thinking of doing collective works to improve the state of the road –which they complained that not only is it the cause of a lot of dust in the dry season, but in the rainy season it is impassable. 'Not while the charcoal kiln is here' one of the men said. 'We will not do the work so they benefit from it'. So collective work is a means to bring the community together, but it is also a means to mark the boundaries of the community as such.

They saved something truly extraordinary for the end of the UVW: 'The man of the sun, the reason why Soacha is called this way'. Soacha is a word that comes from the *muysc cubun* language, which was spoken by the *muiscas*, the original inhabitants of these lands when the Spaniards arrived and conquered them in the 16th century. It derives from the words *Sua*, which means sun, and *Cha*, which means man, 'the man of the sun'. On the top of the hill in Piedras Blancas, there was a rock painting dating back at least 500 years, which our partners in Soacha had never heard about (Fig. 4). This was their pride and a hidden treasure. It was an anthropomorphic figure, painted in red, staring at us with an ancient gaze: a character with radiant spikes coming out of its head, surrounded by batons. This was another marker of territoriality, yet an ancient one, a faint reminder, a testament of a world violently disrupted and torn apart through colonialism and conquest. But it can

Fig. 2. A rock painted with the name of the AUC right-wing paramilitaries, marking their territory.

Fig. 3. The charcoal kiln in Altos de la Florida.

Fig. 4. he man of the Sun, a centuries old Muisca painting in Altos de la Florida.

also be understood as the link to the roots of an uprooted population.

On the way back to the parochial house where we would finish the activity after 3 h of walk, they pointed at three massive crosses on the top of the hill in front of the 'man of the sun'. Those crosses are the scene of a pilgrimage once a year on Easter. One of the crosses had fallen because of strong winds. They said they would fix that soon, but that a dream would be that there was a museum up there, on the hill, to tell everyone the story of how they had built the neighbourhood and all the work they had put into it.

In the final discussion, when asked what security means to them, at unison they claimed 'rights'. No one mentioned more police presence at first, and then only one person mentioned it in passing as they were brainstorming concepts of what security is. What could be felt in the room was a sense of disenfranchisement. Men discussed about the lack of rights, and when asked if they wanted to work closely with the authorities, people were unsure; distrust runs deep in the communities and they feel that if the authorities get involved in works for the community, not only will there be corruption, but also that any such works would only prelude their eviction. They feel that their work, their work alone, is the sole guarantee they have to prove that they have a moral –if not legal-right to the land. They may not have deeds over their property, but they own the work they have invested in it.

4. Discussion: being men in a vulnerable setting

When applying the UVW method, the need for flexibility and/or adaptations was evident to satisfy our research purposes. While total objectivity was never envisaged, obvious biases can influence responses from research participants such as the framing of questions. For that purpose, in the men's group we avoided insisting on the 'vulnerability' aspect as the sole purpose of the walk, and, although the UVW was the format we were following, we presented it as a walk for them to show us what they thought was important in their neighbourhood, to show us those things that made them proud, but also those things that they thought could and should be improved. Otherwise, we may have ended with a biased view of the neighbourhood. This was important also because we are exploring the vulnerabilities of fragile urban settlements, but in order to understand the resources of the communities to face these challenges. It is not just about the needs and wants of the communities, but it is, most importantly about their abilities and capacities. This is why we expanded the scope of the issues covered by the research to accommodate the notion of resilience.

This group of men were walking us through their neighbourhood, the place they call home. A class bias may make the external observer look at it as a 'slum' where deficiencies and needs dominate, but they tried to accentuate the positive; to show us was what they have created in a barren land. They were genuinely proud of their achievements, of the community they are building up, and certainly they didn't want to do with us 'poverty pornography', to let us gaze on their miseries and want. They were embarrassed when we came across human waste running down a lane. Partly because of normative expectations, whether as a male group that assumed a sense of leadership and hence responsibility for the poorly services community or more fundamentally as human beings with an innate sense of dignity, they did not want to portray themselves as powerless and vulnerable victims. They wanted us to recognise their resourcefulness and resilience. Although vulnerabilities came up, to focus on them exclusively distorts the perspectives of these communities, silences an important part of their experience, and attacks their sense of dignity. Most importantly, by adopting a patronising approach and reducing them to their vulnerabilities, as if nothing else mattered, we would be reinforcing their sense of exclusion and marginalisation.

About the vulnerabilities, on the various areas identified in the method there were significant differences with women on the issues of Personal Safety and General Safety (See Table 1). While women mentioned unease about drug use, men didn't mention this during the UVW, although this came up in the men's group who worked in the social cartography –some participants were the same in both groups. Men insisted that they felt very safe in the sectors we walked through, but that crossing into other sectors could be dangerous, it could cause 'trouble', which is consistent with the view of women who mentioned robberies and attacks to their 'integrity' on the way to Soacha at dawn, while crossing other sectors. Women, for instance, identified the lack of lights at night-time as a security concern, whereas men expressed that within the sector they didn't feel the lack of lights caused a problem. On this issue, these men seemingly concealed their vulnerabilities by not talking about them, as the very telling silence when passing in front of paramilitary graffiti. Also, the vigilante attitude, of guaranteeing the security of their sector by coming together and putting troublesome outsiders in line, because that's what 'men do', is an activity which increases their vulnerability, although they are not likely to recognise it, in a place with extremely high murder rates.

Another striking difference on the areas of General Safety and Security Resources, is that while women linked security with police presence, men didn't mention police at all with the lone exception by one of one participants at the end of the discussion with a single reference and no further elaboration. What men did mention was rights, and although women did mention the issue of tenure and access to basic services and rights such as education and health, men were far more vehement on

Table 1
Gendered differences in the seven areas of vulnerabilities explored in the UWV (Soacha, April 2018).

Vulnerabilities	Males	Females
Personal Safety	- Crossing into other sector, safe in their own	- Drug use - Crossing into other sectors - Domestic abuse linked to male depression
General Safety	- Land tenure - Rights: education, health	- Absence of public lights - Land tenure (less emphasis than men) - Rights: education, health (less emphasis than men)
Security Resources	- Men have vigilante groups	- Lack of Police presence
Environmental Safety	Consistency with females in pointing out the charcoal kiln and landslides	Consistency with males
Accessibility	Consistency with females on dismal state of roads, insufficient public transport	Consistency with males
Community Spaces	Consistency with females on lack of community spaces (especially child-minding facilities) and poor management of them	Consistency with males
Inclusion	- Consistency with females on lack of infrastructure for disabled population - Invisible borders between sectors (Unity within sectors)	- Invisible borders between sectors (Lack of unity within sectors)

this point. Rights and land tenure were central to their concerns, and this was the bottom line of their vulnerability –the fear of being evicted. Although there was consistency on this last point between men and women, emphasis was different.

Far more consistency existed on the area of Environment, with both men and women pointing out the charcoal kiln and the risks of landslides. Similarly, on the issue of Accessibility, there was consistency across groupings in acknowledging: the dismal state of the roads, the insufficient public transport, and the difficulties with private operators after 6pm when public transport ceases. On the issue of Community Spaces there was also agreement that there was a serious lack of community spaces and that existing spaces are poorly managed and are not accessible to the community at large. This lack of spaces and community facilities seems to be particularly lacking when associated with crèches and child-minding facilities. Men complained that children were left alone in their homes all day (sometimes as late as midnight) as the parents went out working and they depended on neighbours to keep an eye on the children. Men and women also agreed on the issue of Inclusion, mentioning the difficulties that people with disability have to get around in the area with steep hills and dirt roads. The existence of 'invisible borders' between the sectors was mentioned by both groupings albeit with different emphasis. While the women emphasised the lack of unity between sectors, the men insisted that within the sectors there was much unity.

A hidden vulnerability of men appeared in the women's group linked to domestic violence and male depression. A scholar [67] identified that a cause of so many couples breaking down after displacement, is the 'inversion of gender roles', because of the different opportunities men and women have to 'insert themselves in the labor market in the city'. 'Most male refugees were previously employed in agriculture and livestock raising, and which are not very useful skills in the new urban environment', which demoralises them and makes them feel worthless. For women, who before displacement 'dedicated a greater part of their time to domestic labours, forced migration did not mean such an abrupt change in labor routine' as they can find work as cooks, in domestic service, etc. [67]:163). Violence in this context is not only a result of

Table 2
The UWV principles as implemented in the course of our PRUV research (Soacha, April 2018).

1.Personal Safety	1. How safe do you feel in your community? 2. Is there street light guiding you on your walk? 3. Do houses have lights on? 4. Do businesses have lights on? 5. Can you see clearly what is up ahead? 6. Are there dark corners that you cannot see? 7. Are there places someone could hide without being seen? 8. Are there trees, bushes, or other structures blocking your view? 9. Is it easy to see people's faces from far away? Can you estimate the furthest distance you can see someone's face (in meters)? 10. Are there sidewalks on which you can walk safely and where the traffic can see you? 11. If you called for help would someone hear you? How close is the closest person who could hear you (in meters)? 12. Do you feel safe inside the household? Do you have access to proper hygiene facilities? Is your home in a safe area?
2.General Safety of Area	1. 1.Are there many people using the space? 2. Is the space used by men, women, boys and girls? 3. Are there people of many different ages using the space? 4. Is this area busy? 5. Do the people using the space change with the time of day? 6. What kind of businesses are there in this place? 7. Do women and girls get any unwanted attention (catcalling, verbal harassment etc.) from men or boys in the area, or any other types of abuse? 8. Does the area have a lot of burglaries, robberies, mugging, stabbings or other assaults? 9. Is there much substance abuse in the area? Does it affect the area's safety?
3. Security Resources	1. Are there places you can run to if you were in trouble? 2. Do you see any security guards around? Are there security cameras? 3. Do you see any police around? How trusting is the community of formal protection measures, such as the police/army? Are there any informal protection measures (private security, neighbourhood watch, etc.)? 4. Are there emergency phones available where you could reach the police? Is there public Wifi available so that you can call? 5. Are there business owners and community leaders around to help you if you needed? 6. Can you rely on your spouse/family members etc. to help you out if you feel unsafe? How can they help you?
4. Environmental Vulnerability	1. Is there a landfill nearby? Is there contamination from other sources (construction sites, industrial activities, etc.)? 2. Are the streets dirty or polluted? Is there a lot of garbage on the street? Are there trash cans available in the street? Do you know if the garbage/trash is collected regularly? 3. Does this place seem cared for? Are there places that people have damaged on purpose? Are there things that are broken around you? If so, do they take a long time to get fixed? 4. How vulnerable is the area to natural disasters (such as flooding, fires, landslides, rocks falling, etc.)? 5. Is your household positioned anywhere that can make vulnerable to environmental factors, such as those mentioned above?
5. Accessibility	1. Do the streets have names here? If so, are there street signs to tell you what the names are? 2. Are there other markings of where you are (names of buildings, maps, etc.) 3. If you were in this area by yourself, would you be able to find your way home easily?

(*continued on next page*)

Table 2 (*continued*)

	4. How is the transport in the area? Is it easy to get around, in and out of the area? 5. Is it easy to get to work/school/childcare facilities from this area? 6. Is the area more accessible to some people than others (i.e. people with disabilities, the elderly etc.)?
6. Community Spaces	1. Are there social and cultural activities that take place in this area? If so, who participates in these activities? 2. Are there communities and groups that are concerned with the neighbourhood? Who are they and how do you feel about them? 3. Do you have friends and neighbours you can count on in the area if you need help? 4. How effective are the existing spaces in encouraging the community to connect? What spaces have the most potential for future transformation? 5. What is missing in the area in relation to community spaces? 6. Are there any spaces that are used specifically for purposes related to the needs of certain vulnerable groups (training on prevention of GBV/drug-prevention/violence-prevention measures/addiction services etc.)?
7. Inclusion	1. Are there places in the area where certain people cannot go? Where/why? 2. Do you feel that you are welcomed in the area? Why/why not? 3. Do you see people with special needs (parents with young children, people who are in wheelchairs or use walking sticks, elderly people, people who are visually or hearing impaired) walking around in the area? What challenges would people with disabilities have in accessing this space? 4. Is there much contact between neighbours? Do you collaborate on certain issues, either related to your shared space, community or other? 5. In what way could the urban spaces create greater inclusion for the more vulnerable members of our community?
8. Capacities and Resilience	*Do you feel most in control of your life in the neighbourhood when:* 1. You are financial secure? 2. Have the support of family and friends? the community? 3. Have access to food, drinking water, hygiene facilities, electricity etc.? 4. Have access to community services such as social centres, health services, transport, training, education, centres of worship, etc? 5. Know that you are unlikely to be at risk from environmental factors such as floods? 6. Know that you are unlikely to be at risk from pollution/contamination? 7. Know that you are unlikely to be at risk from crime? 8. Know that you have the legal protection of your city council/government/local authorities? 9. Know that your family members have access to services mentioned above? 10. Other?

gendered relations, but also constitutive of this relations [93]. Women talked in the UVW about men's alcohol and substance abuse, and depression, linked to the fact that it was more difficult for men to find a job, which corroborates the previous observations. Alcohol and substance abuse is one of the ways in which men cope with trauma and loss in the aftermath of traumatic situations, particularly given the lack of psycho-social interventions directed towards men; there is an 'assumption underlying such therapeutic interventions, though frequently not articulated as such, that women and children are most in need of psychosocial therapy (…) [for] men (…) are always dominant and aggressive' [57]: 94). Men's problems with self-esteem and with their sense of self-respect can lead to violence, as has been noted elsewhere [94]. This violence can be the expression of the reassertion of gendered roles after traumatic situations [50]. However, men did not talk about this. They rather talked about their collective work to improve the neighbourhood, something in which they bring their rural baggage to towns, and which they can reproduce in their new environment.

This capacity to come together to improve the place in which they live is something that our discussion on the area we added in the UVW with men: capacities and resilience. This area was not discussed with the women, so we can't really compare but had this area been considered, other than the mere vulnerabilities, a different scenario may have emerged, one in which participants would have thought of those things that bring them together and of those resources they count on, as a community, to face their many challenges. No man in the group was community leader, so they were not familiar with narratives emphasising their vulnerability to attract more economic commitments from potential donors, in a pattern of donor dependency which can be very damaging to their own resilience and capacities. They did not seem to expect much from the NGOs or from politicians for that matter. When asked about what type of support they needed, one participant replied, 'the best support we could get, is to be left alone here, to be guaranteed our right to live here, to get support for our own initiatives, and for them to stop polluting us with the charcoal kiln and dumping rubbish in our neighbourhood. The rest we can do ourselves'. Everyone agreed. Although far-off from their respective places of origin, they are too familiar with the issues they face in Soacha; they have grown savvy on how to manoeuvre in a context where there is a lack of rights, no recognition, territorial control by violent agents and insecurity of tenure. They know that all they can rely upon to secure a better future for them and their children in a place they now call home, is their own effort.

5. Conclusions

The UVW proved to be a useful method for working with men's perceptions of their vulnerabilities –including those that men are reluctant to admit or readily dismiss-, and also for them to share their abilities/capacities. Thus, it provided a more nuanced picture than the unidimensional role of men as aggressors, which has become a staple of NGO literature [57] reinforcing class and colonial biases. Much more work needs to be done to understand the meanings of being men in vulnerable urban settlements of Colombia; but this exploratory work already provides a complex picture which challenges some prevalent assumptions.

Although the perception of some vulnerabilities were shared between the male and female groups, such as environmental vulnerabilities and their mutual concern for children, others were in stark contrast, such as physical vulnerability. What these men perceived as a paramount risk, tenure insecurity, also represents a challenge to the normative expectations of men as bread-winners –a role increasingly challenged across Latin America by the disruptions of neoliberal economics, casualization, and structural adjustments [95]. A positive engagement with men's hidden vulnerabilities is necessary to challenge hegemonic masculinities' normative expectations, many of which are detrimental to the self-esteem and physical integrity of these vulnerable men and those around them.

More importantly, we realized the limitations of this method to give account of the resources that communities have in order to build resilience. An exclusive and explicit emphasis on vulnerability risks influencing the responses, introducing class biases of researchers, silencing important elements of the communities' experiences, and most detrimentally, reinforcing their sense of exclusion and marginalisation, therefore undermining their dignity. Thus, we modified this approach also to include areas of empowerment and joy in the case-studies of Nairobi and Jakarta, which were subsequently carried out in the course of the year, in order to capture the resilience of these communities. Far from a picture of hopeless insecurity we realized how, through collective practices, these men and women appropriate the territory and build,

where some may just see a slum, a place they proudly call home.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

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Appendix

1. The right-wing paramilitary group, AUC, states their hold on this territory, the painting seemingly unnoticed by the participants (Image by José Antonio Gutiérrez D.)

2. The man of the sun, the 500-year-old rock painting dominating Piedras Blancas (Image by José Antonio Gutiérrez D.);

3. Paint it black' -The charcoal kiln, the main environmental vulnerability in the sector, but one of the few economic opportunities (Image by José Antonio Gutiérrez D.)

4. A panoramic view of Piedras Blancas and Altos de la Florida from the heights of Soacha, (Image by José Antonio Gutiérrez D.)

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101652.

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