

Post-Disaster Resettlement

The Transition to the New Community in Gramalote, Colombia

Anthony Oliver-Smith

University of Florida

Carlos Arenas

Displacement Solutions

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Background

In December 2010, extreme rainfall during “La Niña” triggered a set of events, including massive landslides, which resulted in the destruction of the entire town of Gramalote in the department of Norte de Santander, Colombia. The slow onset of the landslide allowed for the complete evacuation of the population before the town was destroyed. After the evacuation, the 3,400 people living in the urban area were dispersed to temporary housing in various locations in nearby municipalities. Immediately following the disaster, the Colombian President, Juan Manuel Santos, promised to rebuild Gramalote at a new site, and to make it “better than before.”

Perhaps not surprisingly, the ambitious relocation project promised by the government to the Gramaloteros was initially characterized by problems, delays, and frustrations, resulting in additional stress and suffering for the victims of the disaster. However, despite all those initial problems, at a later point the relocation of Gramalote could be characterized also as well considered, ambitious, comprehensive, participatory, and well funded. These latter characteristics, that generally are not typical of most post-disaster relocation projects, suggest that the Gramalote project has significant potential to be successful and perhaps possesses elements that could be incorporated into and enhance chances of success for future relocation projects both nationwide and worldwide.

Problems with the project started when it took the Colombian government a full two years after the disaster to select a relocation site. Improvisation, as well as lack of proper communication and transparency in the decision-making process about the relocation site, seriously undermined the trust of the community in the national authorities leading the relocation process. The Ministry of Housing, which initially was in charge of the reconstruction process, took two entire years to select and publicly announce a site in a rural area called Pomaroso where the new town would be located. Despite the long wait, Gramaloteros were very happy about the prospects of having their new town there. However, the final decision was delayed, as the project was also caught in the middle of a change of state agency in charge of leading the process. In fact, in 2012 the Colombian government created a new agency called *Fondo Adaptación* that took charge of all the reconstruction projects planned as a response to the nationwide disasters caused by the torrential rainfall of “La Niña” during the years 2010-2011.

Signs of hope during the reconstruction process emerged when a newly elected Major of Gramalote for the 2013-2016 term, successfully “convinced” *Fondo Adaptación* to develop a governance structure to manage the project with significant local input. Coincidentally, *Fondo Adaptación* had recently hired an experienced consultant to design the relocation process of Gramalote. One of her first recommendations to *Fondo Adaptación* was the creation of a participatory governance structure to manage the relocation project. As a result of both initiatives

the Working Group on Gramalote was created. Through the Working Group, local authorities and informal community leaders were able to voice their opinions and influence all main decisions regarding the reconstruction of Gramalote, alongside regional and national authorities—including *Fondo Adaptación*.

The first major decision that the newly created Working Group on Gramalote had to deal with was the final say about the relocation site for the new town. A multi-criteria matrix was created to evaluate and score all of the proposed sites. Evaluation criteria included quality of the soil, location, road accessibility, cost, water sources, as well as socio-economic features such as proximity to surrounding peasant villages known as “veredas.” Finally, on October 2012, *Fondo Adaptación* announced that the site called Miraflores scored the highest in the multi-criteria evaluation. The change of the relocation site caused considerable mistrust and polarization within the Gramalote community, which continues to some extent to this day.

In fact—despite all of the visible progress in the relocation project—the Gramalote community remained divided, as we witnessed during our field work. To make things more complicated, the newly elected mayor of Gramalote for the 2016-2019 term is one of the leaders of the group of Gramaloteros that have actively opposed the relocation of Gramalote on the Miraflores site. Despite the fact that as of April 2017 the progress of the reconstruction project reached an 80% mark, millions of dollars have been invested in the relocation, and families have started to move to the new town, the current mayor of Gramalote has maintained his opposition/lack of cooperation to the project. At the time of our visit, the first 56 houses had been legally transferred to the new owners and the first wave of 13 families had moved in. From the time we arrived to the end of the month of April, the number of families in residence approximately doubled. Nevertheless, the mayor and his team were still resisting all calls to move to live in the new town, and refused to open their offices in the new municipality building. Clearly, this attitude of resistance and lack of cooperation of the local authorities with the resettlement process is perhaps one of the main factors that could jeopardize its success. However, the fact that at least 40% of the planned 1000 houses are constructed with 58 families now in residence suggests that the new community will be gradually occupied despite such opposition.

The study site of the municipality of Gramalote’s relocation provides a unique context to examine whether resettlement/relocation can be seen as an opportunity for people displaced and dispersed by disaster to recover and reconstitute their former community. Although relocating communities facing natural hazard-related disasters (including climate change) presents undeniable risks and challenges, it can also provide opportunities to offer improved housing solutions to individuals and communities. When an entire community has been dispersed after a disaster and the impacts of climate change, resettlement can provide an opportunity for community recovery for a displaced and fragmented population to come together and reconstitute its social fabric. Such community recovery also provides a context which can support people in overcoming individual trauma (Oliver-Smith, 2005¹). The built environment is both expressive of and shapes social relations. In that regard, material reconstruction can both support and express social reconstitution. It can also undermine the process severely and very frequently has (Oliver-Smith 1991²; 2005¹).

Research Questions

Gramalote's case presents a unique opportunity to study the disaster-displacement-resettlement process in its entirety. The transition from disaster and displacement to relocation is a key linkage in that process. Originally, however, this field project was conceived of as part of a more ambitious project submitted to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a longitudinal, multi-method, three-year project entitled: “An interdisciplinary approach to climate displacement, resilience, and gender in Colombia.” Our original research team was composed of a psychologist, an anthropologist, and a human rights lawyer³.

The premise of our original proposal was that a striking absence of socio-cultural and socio-psychological investigation aimed at understanding factors that support resilience and recovery in the context of post-disaster displacement and resettlement has undermined the knowledge base essential to undertake these processes

successfully. While we were waiting for approval by the NSF, we learned that the Colombian government had decided to start moving families little by little to the new town, as the new houses were available. This unexpected decision moved us to apply for a Quick Response grant from the Natural Hazards Center (NHC) at the University of Colorado. However, the psychologist who was originally part of the original research team was not able to participate in the field work due to maternity leave. As a consequence of the loss of her expertise in gender analysis, we decided to omit the research question on gender that was in our original proposal. This omission, however, was not due to lack of interest in gender issues in resettlement, but rather to our lack of expertise in the form of analysis framed in the larger proposal to the NSF. In fact, we had approximately twice the number of female respondents as male.

Consequently, the two main research questions that were investigated during the process of transition to the new settlement are:

1. What will be the nature and character of community participation in the implementation of the transition process from dispersed residences to the new settlement?
2. How will the organization and delivery of new houses affect the social organization and recovery of the community in its initial stage?

While a participatory planning process can contribute to the foundation for social recovery, the transfer and occupation of the new houses and settlement constitute the initial steps in the material dimension of a new community. Since resettlement is complex and difficult at every stage (de Wet 2006⁴), the transition process in which the new settlement is occupied has been shown to present particularly challenging situations and conditions. These challenges can have serious repercussions for the reconstitution of community—particularly after displacement has dispersed the affected community for an extended period of time. Post-disaster resettlement also is, in effect, the reconstruction of a social structure, in which not everyone is equally invested. The degree to which such differentiation is reflected in the form and spatial organization of a new settlement will play a role in the formation of the new community. Particularly, the distribution of housing has consistently proven to be a difficult process, however organized, and has often provoked high levels of hostility and conflict among residents, sometimes undermining the reconstitution of community integration in the new settlement.

Methods

During our field visit it was our intention to get a real-time, on-the-ground assessment of the community during the transition process, and individual participation in it. Initial relocation processes in Gramalote were supposed to begin around March 2017, but the Colombian government later decided to move the date of the initial transfers of title to houses in the new town around the anniversary of the destruction, in December 2016. Thus, on December 10, 2016, the Colombian President led a formal ceremony in Gramalote, where he officially inaugurated the new town and handed the keys to the new houses to the first 56 of Gramalote's families. The first moves, however, actually took place on March 11, 2017, as originally intended. We arrived in Gramalote on April 6, twenty-six days after the first families moved in.

By the time of our visit only 5% of the total houses had been allocated to their new owners, and only 1% of the Gramaloteros had moved in. We wanted to position ourselves to examine transformations as they were occurring, and to do this in a systematic way. While this research does not pertain to the "disaster moment," we believe it was nonetheless extremely perishable data, which could not be collected after the process was completed. We used in-depth ethnographic methods to observe and document the transfer process to the new settlement, a process that has proven to be central to the restoration of local socio-cultural relations and community integration in resettlement scenarios.

Our primary goal during our field work in Gramalote was to observe and document the transition to, and occupation of, the new post-disaster settlement provided by the national government. Since this occupation process is the first step in the long-term adaptation to the new environment, the quality of the experience for the disaster-affected population is a key element for the project's success or failure. In particular, for most of the displaced population, the transition/occupation process constitutes a "first encounter" on the ground with the government agency that is implementing the project. This agency will temporarily administrate the new settlement for the near future, potentially establishing the basis for cooperation or contestation that characterizes such interactions. In addition, the transition/occupation process is also a "first encounter," or lack of, with the local authorities of Gramalote, who are well known for their opposition to/lack of cooperation with the relocation of the municipality in the site where it has been built.

As in immediate post-disaster event research, our methods were necessarily flexible and appropriate to the dynamics of the process. Given the extremely condensed and fluid nature of the process of occupation of the new settlement, basic ethnographic observation oriented our methodology. There was little chance to get statistically valid samples because we were observing an extremely dynamic process that people engaged with as their circumstances permitted. We also tried to interview women and men, although women outnumbered men, as well as representatives of age cohorts, neighborhoods, and renters/owners.

Interviews with "the new settlers" were informal and lasted between twelve minutes and one hour and thirty-one minutes. As is shown in Table 1, five main topics were addressed during the interviews with people currently living in the new houses built in Gramalote.

General topics addressed	Type of questions asked
1. Route of displacement, adjustment of life projects, and emergency assistance (housing, food and psychological support).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After evacuating Gramalote where did you go, and in how many places have you lived during the last six years? • What did you do before the disaster, and what have you been doing during the last six years? • How do you evaluate the emergency assistance that people from Gramalote have received during the last six years (specifically housing subsidies and food)? • Did you need, or any member of your family, psychological assistance after the disaster? If you received it, how do you evaluate it?
2. Displacement as uprooting and loss of "routine culture"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most challenging aspect for you and your family of leaving Gramalote suddenly? • What have you missed the most during the last six years of not leaving in Gramalote?

3. Physical reconstruction of Gramalote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you participate in any event related to the planning process and/or the physical construction of Gramalote? Why? • Do you think the voice of Gramaloteros was heard during the planning process and/ or physical reconstruction of the new Gramalote? Why? • What do you think about the design of the houses, the dimension, size of the housing lot? What it is missing?
4. Relocation and recovery of Gramalote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did Fondo Adaptación announce the moving? • How did you decide to move? How did you do it? • Did you receive support for the move? • How do you evaluate the role of the former and current local authorities during the last six years?
Social reconstitution of the new Gramalote	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are your family members, friends and former neighbors close to your house in the new Gramalote? • Are you satisfied with the distribution of neighborhoods and homes in the new Gramalote? • What are you planning to do now? What will you do to have a living? • What is the plan to build the town church? Are you involved in that process? • Are Gramaloteros planning to keep celebrating their fiestas patronales (patron saint celebrations) and other traditional cultural events? • Are Gramaloteros planning to revive the social, sport, parent organizations, etc., that existed before?

We also talked to community leaders and to project personnel to get their perspectives on how they see the process currently transpiring and what problems they are seeing. Based on prior work conducted by one of the members of the research team for the non-profit Displacement Solutions following the disaster in Gramalote, we also interviewed government officials at the national, and regional level, as well as community leaders from Gramalote, during the initial phase of relocation. We also conducted phone interviews with two local authorities from Gramalote, who were not in the new town at the time of our visit. We observed and recorded with video and photography the nature and quality of interactions with project personnel in the physical transfer process and during the occupation of the new dwellings.

Our field notes include written journal entries, audio tapes of the interviews, photographs, video clips, and formal maps. We originally hoped to get at least 30 interviews during the nine day trip to Colombia, but we also knew that the final total and their completeness would be entirely dependent on conditions during the move. In the end, we were able to do a total of 33 interviews (22 women, nine men, and two couples as shown in Table 2⁵.

Profile of people interviewed	Number of people interviewed	Comments
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I. Gramaloteros according to current housing status		
1. People that have already received a house in the new Gramalote	9	Eight of the people that have received a house in the new Gramalote are currently living there. The other person decided to rent out her new house in Gramalote and currently lives in the Pomarroso site. Five interviewees were single women and two were couples.
2. People who are currently renting a house in the new Gramalote	2	One of the current renters is an owner that has not received her house yet. The other one is the daughter of parents that will receive a house on a future date. She will not get a new house because she was not living in Gramalote at the time of the disaster. Both renters have businesses; one is a restaurant and the other one a convenience store. Both were women.
3. People currently living in a shelter run by the Catholic church near Gramalote	4	Three of the people interviewed currently living in shelters will receive a house in the new Gramalote. The other person interviewed was not included as a beneficiary of a new house. The interviewees were two women, one man, and the fourth interview was with a couple.
<i>Sub-total</i>	<i>15</i>	
II. Leaders, project personnel, local officials		
1. Members of former Gramalote's Working Group	5	Includes the former mayor and "personero" (local ombudsman) of Gramalote, the representative from the regional government of the Norte de Santander department, and an urban and rural community leader. Five of them were men and one was a woman.
2. AECOM personnel	6	Three of them work closely with the Gramaloteros, two as family advisers, and the other one as leader of the social component of the relocation. Two of them were interviewed in Gramalote and the other one in her office in Cúcuta. The other three people were interviewed at their offices in Bogotá and included the director of the social component of the Gramalote project, and the coordinators of risk issues and communications. All six were women.
3. Officials at Fondo Adaptación (current and former)	3	One is the current manager of the Gramalote project, another is a former consultant who was in charge of designing the relocation process, and the other one was an advisor to the general director of Fondo Adaptación. Two were women and one was a man.

4. Gramalote's officials	2	One is the current mayor (2016-2019 term), and the other one is the current personero of Gramalote (local ombudsman). Both were men.
<i>Sub-total</i>	16	
III. Gramalote's youth	2	One was living with her mother, and the other was a professional on a mission of opening a business in town on behalf of her family. Both were women.
TOTAL	33	

One of the most valuable moments of our participatory observation was when we were able to witness the first meeting ever of the group of families—owners and renters—living in Gramalote⁶. The meeting, organized by AECOM personnel, took place at Gramalote's central plaza on Saturday, April 8, at 3:30 pm. The purpose of the meeting was to start rebuilding a sense of community among the people living there, and to share some information about several issues. Governance was an important topic, considering that the mayor had refused to move to the new town and open his office for business. Issues discussed at the community meeting included how to organize the garbage collection in the new town until the municipality assumed responsibility. There was also a long list of announcements by project functionaries, regarding practical issues such as the schedule for construction of public buildings, the completion of the road, and health insurance coverage. Gramaloteros attending the meeting expressed their overall happiness to be in Gramalote and to be part of that historical process.

1. Findings related to the disaster, displacement, and process of moving to the new settlement:

- *Route of displacement, adjustment of life projects, and emergency assistance (housing, food, and psychological support).* Most of the people interviewed who witnessed the disaster moved to live with family and friends in Cúcuta, a city of approximately 850,000 inhabitants, located around two hours from Gramalote. All of them valued greatly the emergency assistance received over the last six years. Only one family required psychological assistance for one of their children.
- *Displacement as uprooting and loss of "routine culture".* All of the people we interviewed that experienced the disaster had a traumatic experience leaving Gramalote so suddenly, which left a deep impression on them. Being scattered in different places—far from friends and neighbors and for so long—was a very difficult experience for everyone we interviewed.
- *Physical reconstruction of Gramalote:* Our interviewees had, in general, the feeling that there were channels for participation during the process to decide on the physical aspects of the town and the houses. Almost unanimously they liked the houses provided for them. Some of those who used to have bigger houses in the old Gramalote acknowledged that it was not easy for them to adjust to living in a smaller house. They were, however, thankful that Gramalote had been rebuilt, and also appreciated the quality of their new homes. The fact that the new houses allow for expansion was an additional reason for the satisfaction with the design, for most people. Those with whom we spoke also liked the fact that all of the houses have a front room that can be used for some business enterprise, such as a small store, fast food restaurant, or workshop—even though not everyone was planning to open a business.
- *Relocation Processes for Gramaloteros:* People were informed by Fondo Adaptación, through their family advisor, that they would be part of the first group of families that would receive houses in Gramalote. They attended the event with the President in December 2016 and received the keys to their new house. They have

also been assisted during the process of signing the deeds and registering them in the titling office in Cucuta. Most of the people we interviewed moved their belongings to their new houses in Gramalote on their own, but some knew that Fondo Adaptación was willing to help if requested.

- *Social reconstitution of the new Gramalote:* A key element and frequent stumbling block in resettlement is the role of housing distribution in the social reconstitution of a community. The original plan devised by Fondo Adaptación was to use a raffle system in which people would draw lots for housing assignment. However, an experienced member of the relocation team advised basing the distribution of houses on the traditional spatial organization of the old community. Residence in old Gramalote was organized in ten barrios (neighborhoods), some with recognized sub-sections. Fondo Adaptación proved sufficiently flexible to alter the original plan and housing distribution in the new community followed the old model to the extent possible. Gramaloteros were able to choose their houses according to their old barrio identity, which was assigned a particular section of the new community. All of the old barrios have thus been reconstituted in the new community with their dense social networks more or less intact. People we interviewed were unanimously happy about the fact that they will be living with their old neighbors and friends. The reconstitution of these social networks is perhaps one of the most successful features of the relocation process in Gramalote. The fact that people were given the opportunity to reach consensus with their neighbors regarding the assignment of individual houses to individual families was universally appreciated. Some of the first families that moved to live in the new Gramalote have started small businesses, such as convenience stores and a restaurant. Other families have members employed by the relocation project as construction workers and custodians of the newly-built houses.

2. A general evaluation of the relocation process so far:

Resettlement is, by nature, a long-term process. As a result, our evaluation of Gramalote's experience is very preliminary regarding achievements and problems.

I. Positive aspects

- *Increase in the levels of home ownership:* In the old Gramalote, roughly 60% of people were homeowners and around 40% were renters. In the new Gramalote, 100% of its original population will be homeowners. Former renters will have a new house that is smaller than the houses of people who were owners. However, the new town will not be socially divided into sectors of former owners and former renters, as the housing for former renters will be scattered in several areas of the city. A Gramalotero summarized it in this way: "We left unequal and came back as equals."
- *The relocation process has been participatory:* The main decision in the relocation of Gramalote, on the place where the new town would be built, was based on technical reasons and imposed on the Gramaloteros. . The Colombian government handled this initial process very poorly and created a sense of mistrust among an important segment of the population, which is still evident today. After that poor beginning, however, Gramaloteros were allowed to be more involved in the decision-making process and in that context, the relocation process can be characterized as largely participatory. For instance, public events were organized to hear opinions and get feedback on several issues, such as the overall design of the town and the design of the different houses prototypes.
- *Adequate size and quality of housing:* In the Colombian context, the size and overall quality of the houses as assessed by the Gramaloteros have been adequate.
- *A consensual method for the distribution of houses:* As previously note, the distribution of houses was done following the same layout of former neighborhoods. Families from the same neighborhoods were allowed to decide on their home locations by reaching consensus among themselves, instead of by lottery or by a bureaucratic decision. This is an aspect that will nourish the social reconstruction of the community.

- *Family advisors working alongside families:* Over the last two years, each family has had the support of a family advisor from AECOM. Most of them are from Gramalote, but all of them are from the department of Norte de Santander, where Gramalote is located. Having family advisors has proved to be an effective way to build ties and channels of communication between the beneficiaries of the project and the project officials. However, there were only 16 advisors, which meant that each family advisor was in charge of working with approximately 68 families each. Since many families were scattered throughout the department, the family advisors, who depended on public transportation, were not able to provide the same level of service to every family. For some families, the uneven service created occasional resentment.
- *The leadership provided by project officials:* Project officials have demonstrated clear and strong leadership during the process. Project officials have supported and enhanced the capacity of local elected officials, despite their opposition/lack of cooperation.
- *Relocation plan flexibility:* Once a relocation plan was decided on, its application has proved to be quite flexible, allowing for necessary adjustments that could benefit its end result. Obviously, this flexible mindset by Fondo Adaptación has had financial implications, making the relocation project more expensive. However, it could be argued that the project is more expensive only in the short term. Investing more resources now means that more resources will not have to be allocated in the long-term to repair or replace mistakes.

II. Negative aspects

- *The site selected for relocation is an open wound among Gramaloteros:* It was a little surprising to witness that the deep division about the relocation site is still a big issue among some Gramaloteros. Part of the reason for this sharp division is a direct result of the extended time it took to select the new site and to build the new town, allowing for all kinds of rumors and misinformation. For instance, some thought that the town would not be rebuilt, or that the money allocated for the relocation project had been mishandled by politicians. Some people who opposed the project have been very surprised when they visit the new Gramalote for the first time because they perceive the quality of what has been built in the municipality to be quite impressive.
- *Lack of support and leadership by current local authorities:* As we have mentioned in this report, the current mayor and his entire administration are not supporters of the relocation project. It is not entirely clear what those local politicians want to accomplish at this point with their opposition/lack of cooperation.
- *The economic support for Gramaloteros seems weak, late, and improvised:* Despite the fact that several years ago a plan to improve coffee production in Gramalote was successfully implemented, the relocation still lacks an economic plan to support urban Gramaloteros. AECOM is currently trying to put together such a plan to support Gramaloteros' businesses. However, it is already late and still seems improvised and weak.
- *Lack of a resident police force:* Several community leaders, including the mayor, are particularly concerned about the fact that a police department building has yet to be built. At this time, therefore, Gramalote does not have a resident police force and is served only by occasional patrols of police from the post in Las Lomitas—the only surviving neighborhood of the old city. These individuals have concerns not only about ordinary law enforcement, but also about the activities of criminal gangs and still existing guerrilla organizations.
- *Public Administration and Services:* The fact that almost none of the municipal administrative staff is in place while the community is being occupied means that—apart from electricity and water—very few of the necessary public services (e.g., garbage collection) are functioning. For example, while the market building is finished, there are no inspectors or cleaning staff to maintain hygiene or to monitor sales activities. Since at the moment, sales in the market have not yet begun, it will be important that market regulations and personnel be in place before normal economic activity begins. Residents also expressed concern that there is no medical clinic and staff for the community while the hospital is being constructed.

III. Issues that are still unknown

- *The basic element that measures the overall success or failure of a resettlement process is the economic rebirth of a community:* The old Gramalote existed because of its economic relationship with its rural area. Many people we interviewed in Gramalote insisted that the coffee growing campesinos (peasants) were the economic engine of the municipality. However, it is still not clear if the campesinos from rural areas of Gramalote will want to do business in the new Gramalote. One of the main advantages of the selected site, Miraflores, is that it is located in an area that is central and well connected to most of the rural communities or “veredas.”
- *The long-term sustainability of a resettlement process is based on the fact that the youth return to the new town:* Will the new Gramalote provide enough economic opportunities for young people to return?
- *Is some level of healing of the social fabric needed for a community to be able to reconstitute itself?:* Gramalote’s social fabric has been, and remains, somewhat divided as a result of the site selected for the relocation of the town. The former mayor of Gramalote (2013-2016) was one of the main supporters of the relocation process in Miraflores. She was able to work side-by-side with Fondo Adaptación to overcome the challenges of the reconstruction, but still kept an independent voice. The current mayor of Gramalote (2016-2019) is not only one of the main critics of the relocation on Miraflores, but also one of the leaders of the faction that still supports the Pomorroso site. This current mayor and his administration remain reluctant to back the move to the new town, and by the time of our visit to Gramalote in April 2017 he was still refusing to open his offices there. Can a community reconstitute itself under those conditions? Could old and untreated wounds damage the process of reconstituting a community, or can a community have the ability to reconstitute despite sharp divisions led by the person who should be their main leader?
- *The design, funding, and timetable for the construction of the Catholic Church:* Gramalote was a very religious town and its church was the most symbolically important building in the old town. It is still uncertain if the planned new church will contribute to creating a sense of pride among Gramaloteros or become an additional source of disputes. Surprisingly, people we interviewed in Gramalote were unaware of the plans to build a new church. According to them, they have not seen or been consulted about the design for the new church building; by law, this project cannot be supported by the state and is the full responsibility of the Catholic Church.
- *The funding to build the remaining public buildings needed:* It is still unclear when several public buildings such as the cultural center, the nursing home, or the multi-purpose sport center will be built. It is not clear if Gramalote will get financial support from the future Colombian government to be inaugurated in August, 2018.

Possible application of findings

Seventy years of research on development, forced displacement, and resettlement projects has generated a large body of literature documenting the risks and losses imposed on displaced and resettled people. This empirical research has facilitated the identification of processes that lead to the impoverishment of people and failed projects (Cernea and McDowell, 2000⁷; Scudder, 2005⁸; Oliver-Smith, 2009⁹; Bennett & McDowell, 2012[¹⁰Bennett & McDowell, 2012]). Despite this impressive body of knowledge, there have been only slight improvements in resettlement projects. The vast majority of outcomes remain poor, as most projects continue to impoverish and disempower resettled people. This failure is of great concern to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners—particularly since resettlement is increasingly seen as a viable option for disaster risk reduction, and displacement due to natural hazard-induced disasters is increasingly intensified by climate change.

Nevertheless, while the need for the resettlement option for climate change affected communities is becoming more recognized, most of the literature continues to focus on the displacement process and much less on actual resettlement. The lack of attention to resettlement from climate change has been noted most actively by Bronen (2011), who has faulted governments for not moving more quickly to establish legal protections and procedures

for people facing displacement from climate change. The failure of governments to address resettlement is compounded by an approach that frames post-disaster and climate change-driven resettlement as basically a set of material transfers that disregard the profoundly socio-cultural challenges that these processes represent.

While the analysis of our data is still very much in a preliminary stage—it is far too early to draw definitive conclusions—we believe our project in Gramalote will generate findings that will be significant for future projects and policies regarding disaster- and climate change-driven displacement. To suggest a few tentative examples at this point, we can posit that family advisor teams can play an important role in assisting resettled people in adjusting to the social and economic realities of their new environment. In addition, our preliminary assessments indicate that housing distribution be allocated—as much as possible—to reconstitute prior social networks for greater social integration. Further, our data suggest that having at least basic public services in place prior to or simultaneous with the occupation of new settlements will also prove important in facilitating adjustment to the new community.

Given that climate change-triggered disasters are now considered by national governments and national and international agencies to have high potential for displacing whole communities, documenting and assessing an actual resettlement process has proven to be highly relevant to improving our understanding of this increasingly frequent outcome of disasters.

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2. Oliver-Smith, Anthony. 1991. "Success and Failures in Post Disaster Resettlement." *Disasters*, 15: 12-24. ↩
3. Subsequently, we learned that unfortunately, our bigger project did not receive funding from the NSF. The NHC decided to continue its support to collect the perishable data in Gramalote. ↩
4. de Wet, Chris. 2006. "Risk, Complexity and Local Initiative in Involuntary Resettlement Outcomes. In *Development induced Displacement: Problems, Policies and People*, edited by C. de Wet, 180-202. Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books. ↩
5. A total of five interviews were done by phone after our visit to Colombia. They included the interviews with local officials and with current and former personnel at Fondo Adaptación. The phone interviews lasted on average one hour. ↩
6. During our time in Gramalote, we rented a house on the main plaza. We were considered temporary honorary residents, and as a result we were invited to attend that first meeting. The organizers shared empanadas and hot chocolate with everyone attending the meeting that were provided and distributed by a recently established combination convenience store/restaurant. ↩
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