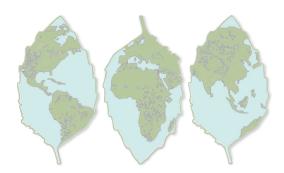
Living Beyond Water: Pathways to Surviving Precarious Waterscapes



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Stemming from the Greek meaning "living a double life" or "having two modes of existence," amphibians spend their lives both in water and on land. Social and cultural life in the riverine depression in Caribbean Colombia revolves around the rhythmic swelling and waning of water channels, during rainy seasons and droughts. According to Colombian Sociologist, Orlando Fals Borda, populations living in these intricate bends of rivers and swamps have created a double life, or what he refers to as "amphibian culture," to adapt to such rhythms. This double life is more than simply an adaptive strategy to fluctuating climatic patterns. It is a complex system of "behaviors, beliefs and practices related to management of the natural environmental, technology (productive forces) and the norms of agriculture, fishing and hunting."

In the town of Carreto, climate change and poor land titling practices are driving the rapid disappearance of Sábalo marsh and fueling conflicts among community residents. With an identity so strongly tied to water and water-related livelihood activities, a disappearing waterscape is shifting relationships not only with the water and land, but with each other as well. The people of Carreto now face two daunting questions: "Who are we?" and "What will we become?" The possible answers lie in connecting to their black past. But to retrieve those answers requires creativity and education—reconnecting with ancestral ties through folkloric traditions, and even creating new ones. In this paper, I explore the various pathways these amphibious beings in Carreto learn in order to survive without water.

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Department of Anthropology

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