

# Imaginaries Of The Venezuelan Migrant From The Narratives Of A Border Community In Cúcuta, Colombia

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## Abstract

This text addresses the phenomenon of migration of the Venezuelan population to Colombia from the narratives of inhabitants of the border area of the Corregimiento de la Parada, located in the city of Cúcuta. Through these narratives the researchers show the atavistic imaginaries about the Venezuelan migrant through five categories: "the borders", "friend/enemy", "good/bad", "scapegoat", "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". An interpretative methodology is used, taking symbolic interactionism as a reference, insofar as it allows us to understand the process of creation and assignment of meanings by the residents of this area. The results show violence as a method to justify xenophobic attitudes against Venezuelan migrants.

**Keywords:** Migration, imaginaries, border contexts, narratives.

## Introduction

Of the 2200 kilometres of border shared by Colombia and Venezuela, 441 kilometres correspond to the Department of Norte de Santander. Thus, this area constitutes a strategic centre for the development of trade, culture and politics between the two nations, as well as the permanent transit of people. According to research by Martínez (2015) and Álvarez (2007), in the last century an increasing number of Colombians have settled in Venezuela, taking into account various factors associated with the socio-political reality between the two countries (Bedoya, 2020; Farné & Sanín, 2020; Ramos et al., 2019).

On the one hand, the escalation of the armed conflict in Colombia forced many coterráneos to seek refuge in the neighbouring country, and on the other, the "exchange rate differential of the time, in which the bolivar was quoted at ten times the value of the Colombian peso" (Bayona et al., 2022, p. 13), was an incentive to migrate to Venezuela in search of employment and better living conditions (World Bank, 2018). These factors were compounded by the Venezuelan oil bonanza of the 1970s (Barrero & Richard, 2020).

In the local context, residents of the city of Cúcuta (Col) have experienced this directly. At the end of the 20th century, Cúcuteños found in Venezuela not only favourable sources of employment, but also the possibility of accessing the products of the family basket at a better price than in Colombia. This permanent interaction between the two countries has allowed for an intertwined interaction of goods and services, shared cultural manifestations and not a few vicissitudes in the field of politics. One of these stems from the constant flow of people between the two countries, depending on the socio-economic circumstances on either side of the border. An example of this is the growing migration of Venezuelans to Colombia since 2015. According to *Migración Colombia* (2022), more than 2,477,000 Venezuelan citizens are currently living in Colombia, of which Cúcuta, with 190,000, is currently the third largest receiving city, after Bogotá and Medellín.

As a border city, Cúcuta is an obligatory passage for Venezuelans to other cities in Colombia or to other Latin American countries, generating a series of social problems, insecurity and unemployment. This phenomenon has an impact on the perception of the inhabitants of our country towards Venezuelan migrants, which can be defined as xenophobia. Bouza (2002) defines this phenomenon as "the rejection and/or discrimination of those who come from outside the group to which they belong" (p. 2); making it clear how this concept frames the actions of non-acceptance of the other simply because they do not share common ties or traits. Likewise, Xenophobia is understood as the rejection of foreigners or as "...the phobia towards different ethnic groups or towards people whose social, cultural and political physiognomy is unknown" (De la Garza, 2011, p. 1).

In addition to the above, studies by Alvarado et al. (2021) and Hernández et al. (2022) describe situations of rejection and discrimination against migrants in different territories in the Americas, in which violent actions towards this type of population stand out. Most of them are disguised as hate speeches that are in turn naturalised by sources of power through new technologies and representation groups from different spheres that feed the culture of hatred towards the other, justifying xenophobic behaviour towards people who arrive from a strange and different territory. In this sense, these discourses could be the expeditious vehicle for the dissemination of the relevance and opacity (Pintos, 2003) of these imaginaries on which this violent culture against migrants is based.

In the development of the research that gave rise to this text, the fieldwork focused on a Corregimiento La Parada located on the border between Colombia and Venezuela; In particular, we took into account the stories of Colombians who live in this town about the imaginaries they have about the Venezuelan migrant, assuming the culture not from a monolithic conception, but as an inter-subjective construction through constructions of the past rooted in the current culture, These atavistic imaginaries, which, according to the findings of this study, are reproduced on the border between Tachira and nortesantandereana Tachirenses, and from there the justification of the violent actions of the inhabitants of the village of La Parada towards the migrant population coming from Venezuela.

According to the census conducted by the National Department of Statistics (DANE, 2018), a total of 93,550 inhabitants lived in the municipality of Villa del Rosario. Of these, 91,031 live in the municipal capital, 1,630 in the town centre and 889 in the rural area. La Parada is located in the town centre, specifically in the area bordering the municipality of San Antonio del Táchira. The Simón Bolívar international bridge is located in its territory, historically known because it is the largest migratory flow in history between Colombia and Venezuela, and is considered the "most dynamic border in Latin America and the one with the greatest movement of people and goods between the two countries" (Sánchez, 2011, p. 63)

La Parada seems to be a land without an owner. Currently there is no census that allows us to account for the number of inhabitants of this township belonging to social stratum 1 and 2; however, in a report by the newspaper *La Opinión* in August 2019, it is reported that it has grown from 2,500 inhabitants to 38,000 who converge daily in its geographic space. Within its social dynamics, the informal trade of residents and migrants who find in this border crossing a way out of the current economic situation stands out. This is compounded by security problems through informal or unofficial access routes, known as 'trochas', which are the easy way out to access the neighbouring country of

Venezuela, given the pedestrian and vehicular closure decreed by the Venezuelan government since August 2015. Although on 22 September, the governments of Colombia and Venezuela announced the reopening of the Colombian-Venezuelan border, it seems that time has stood still since 2015 and this measure did not have the expected impact.

The corregimiento of La Parada serves as the focus of this research because its history is divided into two moments: before and after the border closure. As described in Bayona et al. (2022), this area has been characterised as a commercial epicentre between Colombia and Venezuela. In the past, La Parada was privileged for its strategic location, being the preferred space for commerce, lodging, and the foreign exchange system. However, this dynamic has now changed as it has become the epicentre of informal vendors and illegal groups that fight over the smuggling business; it is also the space from which controls and aid to migrants from Venezuela have been focused.

Taking into account this problematic context between the two countries, and based on these theoretical assumptions, this text shows the results of the research on the atavistic imaginaries (Martínez, 2015) of the residents of the Corregimiento de la Parada, constituted as elements of social cohesion, but in many cases as justification for violent attitudes and acts against the migrant population: "borders", "friend/enemy", "good/bad", "scapegoat", "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". Through them, the article shows how the narratives of the inhabitants of a town located on the banks of the Táchira River, the river that delimits the borders between the two countries, can identify and analyse these imaginaries in the sense proposed by Ricoeur (2000): as an exercise in reconstructing the internal dynamics of the texts and as a restitution of the capacity of the story "to project itself to the outside world through the representation of a habitable world" (p. 205).

Understanding atavistic imaginaries implies understanding that they are constructed and deconstructed in the midst of the hegemonic culture that prevails in current contexts. Culture, as Martínez (2015) refers, is "the set of historical and social constructions that have enabled the survival of our race, that is, they are not eternal, and their continuity depends on their ability to enable and facilitate life" (p. 37). The above, shows that culture is the result of human interactions, or as Guerrero (2002) refers "product of dialogic interactions with the other" (p.51), in specific times, but transcendent throughout life from one generation to another.

According to these authors, culture cannot be conceived as a merely subjective and individual construction. On the contrary, from its very conceptualisation, it is defined as a consolidation of meanings which is precisely what sustains it, as Castoriadis (1986, 1998) refers, an interpretation of reality that is constructed through imaginaries, "society is a system of interpretation of the world (...). Society is a construction, a constitution, a creation of the world, of its own world. Its identity is nothing other than this system of interpretation, this world that it creates" (p. 6).

Now, cultural identity, as mentioned by Bayona, M, Bayona, T. & Urbina, J. (2022) "has been constructed on the basis of imaginaries that become real to justify our behaviour towards the other". (p. 41). A position that coincides with Martínez (2015), when he states that culture is not eternal and its "continuity depends on its capacity to allow and facilitate life" (p. 37). (p. 37). Imaginaries stand as the backbone that sustains culture, constituting a loom from which actions are executed and justified based on the readings that are made of reality itself,

The meaning of our actions and the readings we make of reality, to the point of confusing these readings with reality itself, are only transformed by the social certainty that some of them threaten and/or are incapable of sustaining life, in the midst of this crisis of civilisation. (Martínez, 2015, p. 19)

In this way, imaginaries are constituted as "collective learning (...) that are transmitted or inherited unconsciously and are maintained in a recurrent manner" (p. 5). This idea ratifies the approach of Pintos (2005), when he states that imaginaries "are socially constructed schemes that allow us to perceive, explain and intervene in what each differentiated social system considers to be reality" (p. 42).

Understood in this way, imaginaries are not static, they move people to action and constitute mechanisms of social cohesion incorporated into a narrative that marks a historical traceability, within the customs and traditions of a community, thereby generating atavistic imaginaries:

They are those that arose and were legitimised in direct relation to the protection of life. They are collective learnings which, according to the dictionary definitions of atavism, are transmitted or inherited unconsciously and are maintained in a recurrent way. They are the basis of the deepest meanings of social life, which define the logics of relationships between human beings and between human beings and nature, which provide the necessary certainty of survival. All this makes them unquestionable truths in the individual and social spheres. They are the backdrop and backbone of culture and transcend social rationality. (Martínez, 2015, p. 38)

Etymologically, the word atavistic comes from the Latin "atavus", which means ancestor, ancestor; referring to any aspect or feature of the past that is adopted in the customs of human beings. For its part, the Royal Spanish Academy defines atavism as the behaviour that makes ideas or ways of life of the ancestors survive. From this meaning arises the concept of atavistic imaginary related to the learning that has been built in the past but which continues to be rooted in the present, within what is known as hegemonic culture.

## Methodology

The methodological approach of the research corresponds to the theory of social imaginaries from an interpretative perspective inspired by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1982). The imaginary is understood as a scheme of social intelligibility (D'Agostino (2014), and as scenarios of social plausibility, taking into account that human beings "orient their discourses, representations and actions to give them social validity, that is, to make them credible" (Murcia et al., 2009, p. 66). (Murcia et al, 2009, p. 66). From this general framework, and in accordance with Martínez (2015) and Bayona, Bayona & Urbina (2022), this article shows atavistic imaginaries about "borders", "friend/enemy", "good/bad", "scapegoat", "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". For this purpose, narrative is used as a methodological strategy and narrative analysis is used as a methodological strategy. In this sense, the techniques of semi-structured interviews and participant observation were used.

The collection and analysis of the information takes place in three stages:

- First moment. Preconfiguration: approach to the cultural reality of the Corregimiento de la Parada in order to focus the research problem. Instrument used: observation protocols. The structure of the observation protocol was based on the approaches set out from the theoretical positions of violence by Galtung (2016), Atavistic Imaginaries by Martínez (2015) and Nonviolence from the contributions of López Martínez (2012). In order to delve into the reality of the village of La Parada. This protocol also made it possible to record the relevant events that frame the daily life of the residents of La Parada, but also to evidence the actions that denote violent attitudes towards the migrant population.
- Second moment. Configuration. Consists of a systematic and rigorous fieldwork. Instrument 1: Observation protocols and semi-structured interviews with five (5) inhabitants of the Corregimiento La Parada.

In order to carry out the interviews, we start from the deductive categories established in the theoretical framework, seeking answers to the objectives set out in order to define the behaviours that trigger violent actions, the imaginaries from which these actions are constructed and the sources of power that replicate them in the hegemonic culture. To this end, the phases established by Martínez M. (1998) are followed.

The interviews were conducted with five key informants who converge in the village of La Parada. Their selection was intentional, based on specific characteristics that allowed for the identification of relevant information for the development of the research.

For this purpose, residents dedicated to the commerce sector and living in the sector were selected in order to highlight the values or attitudes they have towards migrants, the ways in which they address them or how they treat them, that is, the practices or actions, atavistic imaginaries that determine these values, and the sources of power from which they construct or deconstruct the imaginary that is held of the Venezuelan migrant. It should be noted that, due to the nature of the research, it was necessary to change the names of the key informants in order to provide security to the people and allow them to have greater freedom to express situations, actions and other relevant aspects in order to respond to the established objectives. In the following image, the informants are described based on the characteristics that define their selection..

In the results chapter, key informants' accounts or voices will be cited with the assigned name and number from 1 to 5 as specified in the table above.

- Third moment. Reconfiguration: the socio-cultural structure is resized or relativised, relating theoretical elements, ethnographic data and the researcher's interpretations (Murcia & Jaramillo, 2000). Instruments: analytical matrix to categorise and classify the information.

In this third moment it is pertinent to point out the importance of unravelling the imaginaries from the meanings that the research participants assign to them in their narratives. Ricoeur (1982, p. 493) points out that, finally, the understanding of the narratives consists in "restoring the capacity of the work to project itself to the outside world through the representation of a habitable world"; that is to say, the exercise of reconfiguration allows the understanding of these atavistic imaginaries about Venezuelan migrants by the inhabitants of the Corregimiento de la Parada in Colombia, taking into account that this phenomenon of violence inserted in the imaginaries is reproduced to the extent that it is part of the narrative of a habitable world constituted by the inhabitants of this border population.

## Results

Atavistic imaginaries, as referred to in the introduction to this article, are constituted in the learnings reproduced from our ancestors, which remain rooted and are those that sustain the current culture. Through these, actions towards the other are constructed; but at the same time, they legitimise behaviours and discourses, and in the case of this research, they are configured as the story that justifies the rejection of Venezuelan migrants by the inhabitants of border areas, as in the case of the village of La Parada.

### The deconstruction of territory. The emergence of borders

Historically, territories have been constituted as living places where social dynamics converge. In sedentary times, this was a space to provide the resources necessary for survival. In view of this, it was not conceived as a niche or settlement, but as a territory that sporadically allowed survival, "nomadic culture has always been linked to survival (...) they have always moved seasonally in search of resources, and when these ran out they moved to the next location" (Rodríguez, 2022, p.). (Rodríguez, 2022, p. 7). On the contrary, in sedentarism, territory changes its meaning. The pressing difficulties in obtaining the resources necessary for survival led populations to decide to settle in spaces that allowed them to continue their lives based on practices based on the domestication of animals and agriculture.

These new practices ceased to see territory as something inert and became what Causse (2009) interprets as unbounded geographical spaces where social and psychological aspects are interwoven. That is to say, the territory loses its vision of being open to demarcate limits, within what Martínez (2015) relates as the emergence of the atavistic imaginary of "borders",

We begin to need them to define reality, personal and collective identities, beliefs, senses of belonging, masculinity and femininity, as well as the separation between good and evil and, in particular, sovereignty, i.e. the space in which rules, ways of living, believing and thinking govern. The universe of survival is circumscribed to the group of people and relationships within precise boundaries. Borders began to shape dichotomous or dualistic thinking, as a characteristic way of reading the reality of sedentary culture. (p. 32)

The geographical space which, at the time of the oil bonanza in the 1970s, considered Venezuela to be the Arabia of America due to its oil reserves, made borders invisible on the Táchira border in northeastern Táchira, a shared territory in which the Simón Bolívar Bridge was not a symbol of separation but rather of the union of sister countries. This is what Bayona, Bayona and Urbina (2022) refer to when they mention that the inhabitants of this border area saw the territory of Táchira State as a way out of the economic, political and social problems of the time.,

In the neighbouring country we found the machine that fulfilled our desires, those that we saw in this land more and more distant every day; our knowledge had value and our labour was necessary to transform, like King Midas, the colour black into gold. (p. 55)

This meant that the borders between the village of La Parada and the municipalities of Táchira State disappeared. With this, the limits were deconstructed, creating a space where it was not conceivable to think of the Táchira River as a means of separation, but of union, "it was everyone's neighbourhood" (María, 2018). (María, 2018). This new configuration of the territory deconstructs the idea of the border, making the limits more visible and with them the dualisms, because it is here where what Martínez (2015) identifies as, "the neighbourhood of all", is determined.

Define the reality of personal and collective identities, beliefs, senses of belonging, masculinity and femininity, as well as the separation between good and evil and, in particular, sovereignty, i.e. the space in which norms, ways of living, believing and thinking govern. (p. 32)

The atavistic imaginary of borders caused territories to begin to define their limits, going from scenarios of mutual cooperation and free encounters to become spaces where what was constituted as common began to be delimited. It is here where other imaginaries emerge, such as good/bad, inside/outside, friend/enemy, equal/different, among others, which legitimise rejection, discrimination and the naturalisation of the migrant simply because the limits marked by borders begin to see the other as the other, the different, the bad, the outsider, the one who must be destroyed by all means.

## **We are no longer panas. The construction of the friend/enemy imaginary in border areas**

The social and historical dynamics that feed the hegemonic culture in the border zone are changing. This has been ratified in the framework of the narratives presented and which feed the atavistic imaginaries in the corregimiento of La Parada. In the midst of these dynamics, the friend/enemy imaginary emerges, perhaps the most present imaginary in the power relations experienced in this border zone. In the past, although this imaginary was presented in the same way, it was the Venezuelan who arrived as the friend who was the saviour of the situations presented, especially at the economic level, "Before, long before there was also trade because they came to buy here". (Luisa, 2018); "it was completely different, very calm and uncluttered, you understand what I mean, there were not so many street vendors, no strange people. Trade was very active, Venezuelans came a lot to buy products here". In this way, Venezuelans were allowed to move freely through Colombian territory, because their economic condition did not visualise limits, let alone borders, instead of creating borders as walls, as Martínez (2015) argues: "we have dedicated ourselves to

creating and strengthening borders and erecting walls that separate us and, consequently, define us and divide friends from enemies" (p. 89).

The current situation has turned a culture characterised by sharing not only a territory, but also language, traditions, customs and affections, into an antagonistic and exclusionary culture: "these Venezuelans believe that this is their country, they come to us to support them as if the government here had an obligation to them, they should go and demand that Maduro, it is our fault that they are so gross to elect that donkey again". (Rosa, 2018). This shows how the border crisis made them stop seeing the Venezuelan as a friend, the "pana", and became the other, the different one, the enemy that should be rejected, and the walls were put up again, because this is the only way to show who is the owner of the territory, who is in control, and therefore the others are not welcome (Martínez, 2015, p. 76-78).

This leads to the labelling of the other, the foreigner, the migrant, regardless of the reasons that forced them to cross the border, because their presence, according to the accounts of the participants in this research, constitutes a threat to the stability of the territory, "since that madman closed the border, this has been filled with everything bad, what was useless came here to make disasters, they should close that f... at once and the problem would be over" (informal interview conducted in the observation protocol).

That is why punishment is required to demonstrate control of the territory, but above all to show that it is the stranger, the one who is not welcome and therefore will always be considered an enemy, "Every time they catch someone stealing or who killed a person, at once people say they are Venezuelan and woe betide them, because they give them the "paloterapia" and not even the police can take them away". (Pedro, 2018)

This atavistic imaginary of friend/enemy is reproduced in all scenarios in which people interact in border contexts, regardless of the generational group with which they share. This is evident in educational spaces when Venezuelans are rejected because of their language, cultural knowledge and ways of acting.

### **The good one is inside, the bad one is outside**

As mentioned in the previous imaginary, the borders constructed in the border area between La Parada (Colombia) and the municipality of San Antonio del Táchira (Venezuela) have strengthened the dualism of good/bad; perhaps the atavistic imaginary that most legitimises violent actions towards Venezuelan migrants. It is in this context that the fact of being Venezuelan and Colombian is highlighted the most, because those who used to be considered "panas" are now simply "the bad guys". This dynamic is not only evident today after the closure of the border. The testimonies given denote that the economy became a reference to measure who was accepted and who should be rejected, "the person who went from here to Colombia to work there was very discriminated against by the Venezuelan, because they said that it was the Colombian who was starving, that the Colombian who had nothing to do, who went there was going to do the worst" (Pedro, 2018); "if we went there, yes, the Colombians, in the past, for example, 20 or 30 years ago, the people who went there who were workers, they martyred them, they punished them, they made them work and then they took them out (...)" (Luisa, 2018).

This dynamic changed with the border closure in form, but not in substance. After the crisis in Venezuela, thousands of Venezuelan men and women migrated to other territories, with La Parada being the preferred place to settle, perhaps in the hope that the current situation would change and it would be quicker to return to their geographical space. In this problematic context, Venezuelans are perceived as the bad guys, because they come from outside to invade our own spaces, taking over what does not belong to them, what is ours and therefore they have no right to receive, "The migrants dedicate themselves, some to beg, others to steal, others to bother people" (Luisa, 2018); "They came to invade our territory, especially trade" (Rosa, 2018)

These imaginaries began to deconstruct the image of the other as the ally, the one who comes to contribute to the common good; therefore, the borders are reaffirmed from which the outsider is constituted as the bad guy, the one who

must be expelled no matter what means are used since "evil must be destroyed without any qualms" (Martínez, 2015, p. 100), because as evidenced in the narratives, the Venezuelan is the one who comes to damage the prevailing "tranquillity". 100), because as evidenced in the narratives, the Venezuelan is the one who comes to damage the prevailing "tranquillity", "we have been affected by the number of Venezuelans who have arrived and they all bring something to sell to subsist and...so many people, the city is already beginning to be harassed, as if without breathing; more for the affected merchants and also for the employees because the labour force is beginning to fall because the Venezuelan is offering it at half price" (Pedro, 2018). In this way, the Venezuelan is labelled as the bad guy and therefore violent actions are justified, this being the best mechanism of social control "is that it is the only way for them to learn" (María, 2018), because it is the only way to show them that they have passed the limit, that which demarcates the border that today makes them look like enemies.

### **The scapegoat as an atavistic imaginary that builds violent culture**

The scapegoat, as stated by Girard (1986) cited by Martínez (2015), is a "cultural construction that aimed to purge an inadequate social situation through the sacrifice of a victim, in whom the collective guilt was placed, thereby achieving, once again, social equilibrium". (p. 101). Therefore, every negative action must have a culprit, which is the only way to justify it. The socio-economic situation in which the village of La Parada is immersed, requires finding, as Martinez (2015) refers, a culprit to bear the collective guilt and thus justify the situation of precariousness and deterioration,

The migrant is blamed for the insecurity, the inefficiency of civil, military and police institutions or service providers such as health, education, etc., or simply for the lack of a sense of belonging of the inhabitants of Cúcuta for their territory, because we forget that this is not just a piece of land, on the contrary, it is the place where our life project is built. (Bayona et al., 2022, p. 47)

In this hostile environment, it is the Venezuelan who generates the problems that permeate the village of La Parada and transcends to other local contexts, and is therefore responsible for the social crisis, "We have seen a lot of failure, disorder, delinquency and much.... here by my house they pass by every 15 minutes, you are busy and they knock and knock selling anything and you see a lot of need for them, but you also get annoyed" (Rosa, 2018); added to the economic crisis, "Venezuelans for us have been a reason for a lot of competition, a lot of disorder, a lot of illness, a lot of discomfort" (Luisa, 2018); health care problems, "You can't even get sick anymore, because you go to the hospital and it's full of Venezuelans and you have to wait for them to be treated first, as if you don't pay" (Rosa, 2018); they are even blamed for socio-environmental problems, "What it does is to foment a lot of disorder, a lot of noise. In that part we are very affected" (María, 2018). Desconociendo con ello que, son problemáticas que visibilizan el abandono histórico por parte del Estado Colombiano.

### **An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth: the atavistic imaginary that sustains violent culture**

In the midst of the hegemonic culture, perhaps one of the cruelest atavistic imaginaries arises, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". The Hammurabi code arose in Babylon in 1700 BC. This code established in its legal provisions an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth as a mechanism of social control. Despite the fact that this sentence was defined millions of years ago, its approach is still valid in today's culture, being the "inspirational source of all retributive justice, which seeks to impose a punishment proportional to the evil committed. And this is the prevailing logic that still survives in the so-called most advanced societies of the 21st century" (Martínez, 2015, p. 71).

This form of justice, as stated in the Law of Talion, is evident in the sector of La Parada in each of the actions that denote violence, but which also legitimise these behaviours because it is the only way to respond to the treatment received in the past by Venezuelans, as the narratives collected refer, "Always very humiliated and the fear that at least the guard would arrest us.... I personally went with a lot of fear to Rubio, to San Cristóbal, as if I was expecting them to tell me anything, because the Colombian was always humiliated there in Venezuela" (Rosa, 2018); "the person who went from here to Colombia to work there was very discriminated against by the Venezuelan, because they said that it



was the Colombian who was starving, the Colombian who had nothing to do, who went there to do the worst" (Pedro, 2018).

The migratory crisis has been strengthened from this atavistic imaginary, to justify current behaviours, "Now, one sees them as very humiliated by the same situation, because they needed to come, they came to invade our territory, especially trade" (Rosa, 2018); "one who went to Venezuela realised that the Colombian was mistreated and there what they had him for was for that, to lend his labour, which was well qualified; and the Colombian, it was practically up to him to humiliate himself, because when he arrived and collected the money there and brought it here in exchange, it was very profitable, but look how life is, now they are the ones who are living that situation and even worse." (Pedro, 2018). "If we went there, yes, the Colombians, in the past, 20 or 30 years ago, for example, the people who went there who were workers, they were martyred, they punished them, they made them work and then they took them out and now if they come to ask for help here, after they were treated badly" (Luisa, 2018).

Therefore, this atavistic imaginary of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, is undoubtedly one of those that generates the most fear because it constitutes "the inspiration of retributive justice, or justice based on exemplary punishment as a means to inhibit behaviours considered socially inappropriate" (Martínez, 2015, p. 74). (Martínez, 2015, p. 74). This imaginary, which is gaining more strength every day, legitimises violence as a method within its constructs; the latter being another learning that is rooted in the current culture, because it is sustained in the legitimate defence that allows any type of treatment in order to preserve peace of mind.

## Discussion of results

Analysing the narratives of the inhabitants of the village of La Parada goes beyond identifying the behaviours that trigger violent actions towards the migrant population. Its interpretation requires investigating those aspects from which these actions are constructed and which become important in this research to the extent that it understands violence more than as a genetic action, a social and historical learning reproduced through atavistic imaginaries, inherited from generation to generation, which precisely sustain the violent culture in border territories.

However, by remaining only in the identification of situations reflected in direct violence as Galtung (2016) refers, the mechanisms of social transformation are not established in order to deconstruct this violent culture in search of total peace. However, just like actions, atavistic imaginaries have become naturalised and with them the actions that are generated from their reproduction. This research unveils a reality that has been reproduced over the years in the border territories, causing culture to destroy life, rather than being a construction to preserve it, through the dynamics it causes. However, Martínez (2015) highlights the fact that culture is constructed and deconstructed, thus giving rise to the need to break the bowl as the author describes it and create other possible worlds in which these imaginaries do not have the possibility of reproduction..

Deconstructing them requires understanding their dynamics of reproduction. Atavistic imaginaries sustain the current culture, which governs human actions in different contexts. Borders are not only physical, as shown in the results, they are constructed in symbolic spaces such as human relations, thus allowing other imaginaries such as friend/enemy, good/bad, scapegoat and an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, to continue to permeate violent situations that strengthen the dualisms of feminine/masculine, man/nature, among others. Dualisms that need to be broken in order to be able to think of other possible worlds.

However, these imaginaries are reproduced by sources of power such as the economy, which has marked the dynamics in this border area. It is in this context that the prevailing reality in the corregimiento of La Parada is interpreted, where upon analysing the narratives it is concluded that xenophobia is blurred because the other is not rejected for belonging to another territory, but for their condition of being poor, thus understanding what Adela Cortina (2017) proclaimed when considering that Apophobia is what is really evident,

An expression which, I believe, does not exist in other languages, nor am I sure that it is the best way to construct it. But there is no doubt that it is urgent to give a name to the rejection of the poor, the underprivileged, because this activity has a force in social life that is all the greater precisely because it acts from anonymity. (p. 24)

This has attracted the attention of the researchers because the village of La Parada has been characterised by economic exchange and this is the scenario in which there has been discrimination and rejection of the other, whether Colombian, in the past, or Venezuelan, as is the case today. This need to delve deeper into atavistic imaginaries arises to the extent that situations change because they revolve around the economy, and therefore can present a radical turn, with the background that there are already precedents of violence and these can be strengthened if the culture is not deconstructed, which today shows us a situation in which the actors are the same, although the scenario changes.

## Conclusions

This research allowed us to delve deeper into the situation of the migrant population in the context of the Colombian-Venezuelan border, specifically in the border area of the village of La Parada, a sector located in the municipality of Villa del Rosario in the department of Norte de Santander. In this sense, and based on the information provided by direct sources or through participant observation, atavistic imaginaries that nourish the violent culture in this territory were identified, including "borders", "good, bad", friend/enemy", scapegoat" and "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth", which continue in permanence in life..

These narratives made it possible to make visible the way in which these imaginaries naturalise situations that denote discrimination and rejection of the migrant population and that they blur their true meaning, mimicking a xenophobia that in reality denotes aspects related to aporophobia, because their discourses reflect the rejection of others because of their condition as poor rather than because of their reality as foreigners. These imaginaries permeate other contexts which, although today they are visible from border spaces, have also led to actions such as homophobia, gender-based violence, destruction of nature, among others, in which violent actions are normalised, because violence is simply the mechanism of social control par excellence.

To conclude, it is necessary to reflect on the cultural construction through these atavistic imaginaries in order to establish real strategies for social transformation, understanding once again that culture as a social and historical construction is deconstructed from the very imaginaries that sustain it, making it necessary to break the mould and create other forms that root nonviolence as a philosophy of life; Only in this way can we destroy the walls that more than physical are symbolic structures that make us see ourselves as different and reject otherness as a possibility of seeing ourselves as friends, those who can join forces to create other possible worlds without this sounding like utopia.

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