

Introduction and Research Questions

Enforced disappearance begins with an abduction. Unlike kidnapping, family members receive no information, there is no ransom request, and the hostage's fate remains unknown in perpetuity. Victims typically belong to groups opposing the key actors in the Colombian conflict. The spatial dimensions of enforced disappearance raise questions about changes in patterns of violence in the conflict. These include:

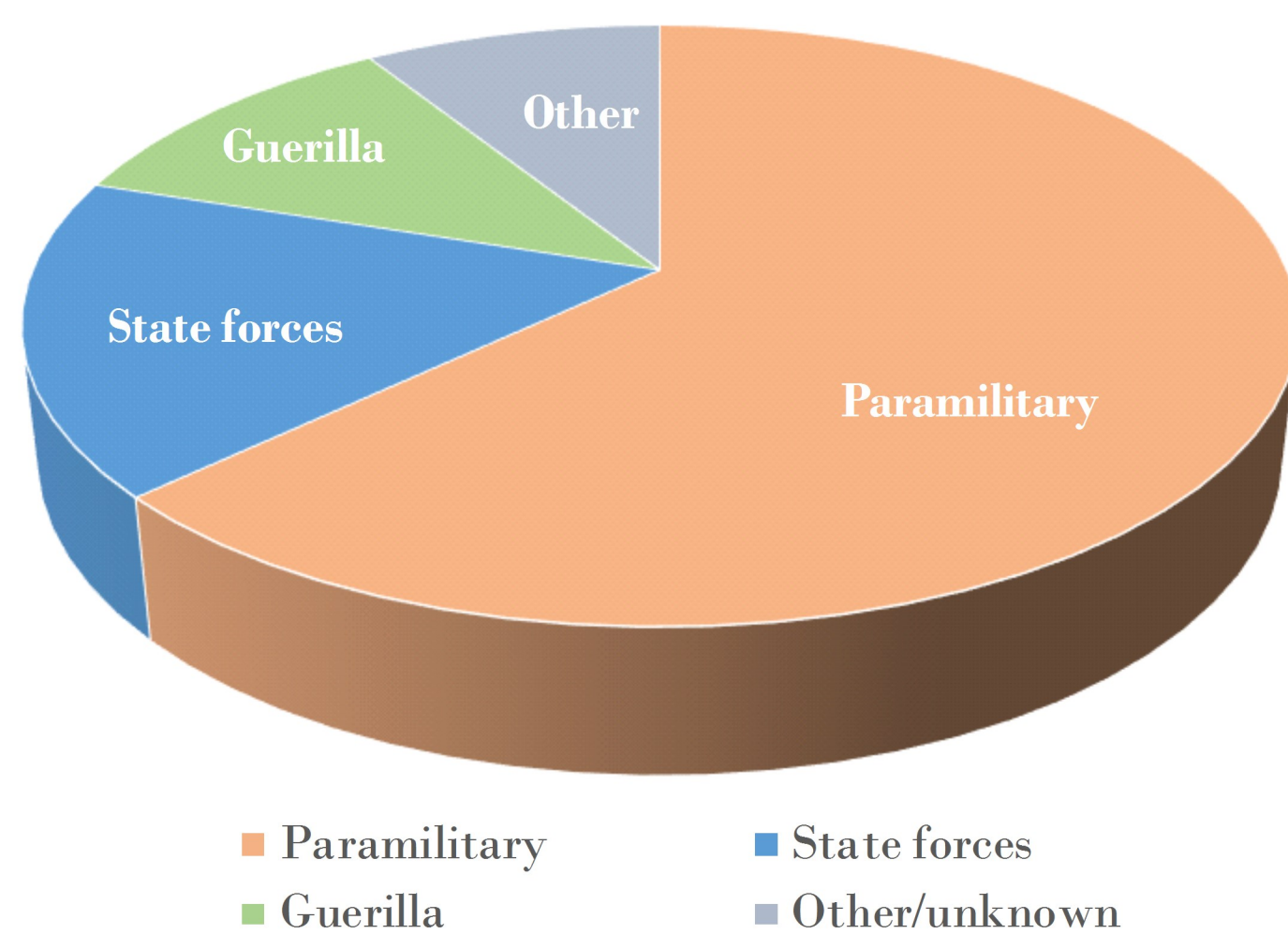
- ♦ **Changes in spatial patterns of the crime over time:** Which municipalities have seen significant increases and decreases in enforced disappearance over the past decade?
- ♦ **Geographic distribution of possible perpetrators:** Which of Colombia's multiple armed actors are present in the municipalities with the highest rates of disappearances?
- ♦ **Vulnerability to enforced disappearance in different settings:** In which types of settings—such as agrarian, jungle, coastal, or urban—are individuals disappeared?

Disappearance Rates by Armed Actor

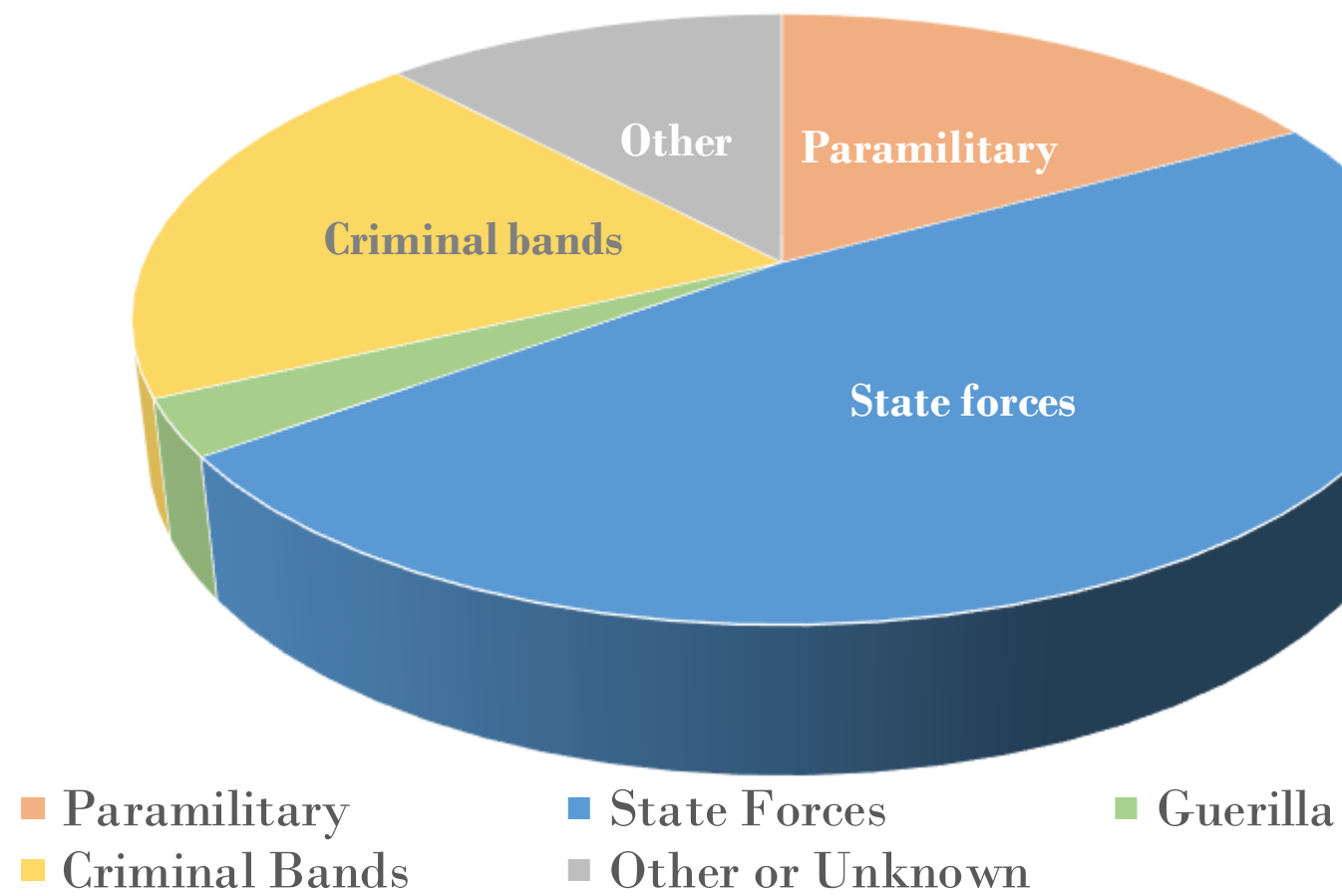
Over 65 armed groups have participated in the Colombian armed conflict. They fall into four major categories: guerillas, paramilitaries, state forces, and criminal bands. This section asks which armed actors have a high presence in areas with the highest rates of enforced disappearance according to the methodology below.

1. Normalize disappearances by population at municipality level.
2. Reclassify actor presence data into Low, Moderate, or High for each actor, based on number of fighters and weighted number of reported incidents of violence attributed to them per municipality.
3. Join actor presence data and rates of disappearance.
4. Select by attribute to identify the 100 municipalities with the highest rate of enforced disappearance. Then identify actors with a high presence in each municipality.

Actors with high presence in municipalities with the highest rate of disappearances in 2004

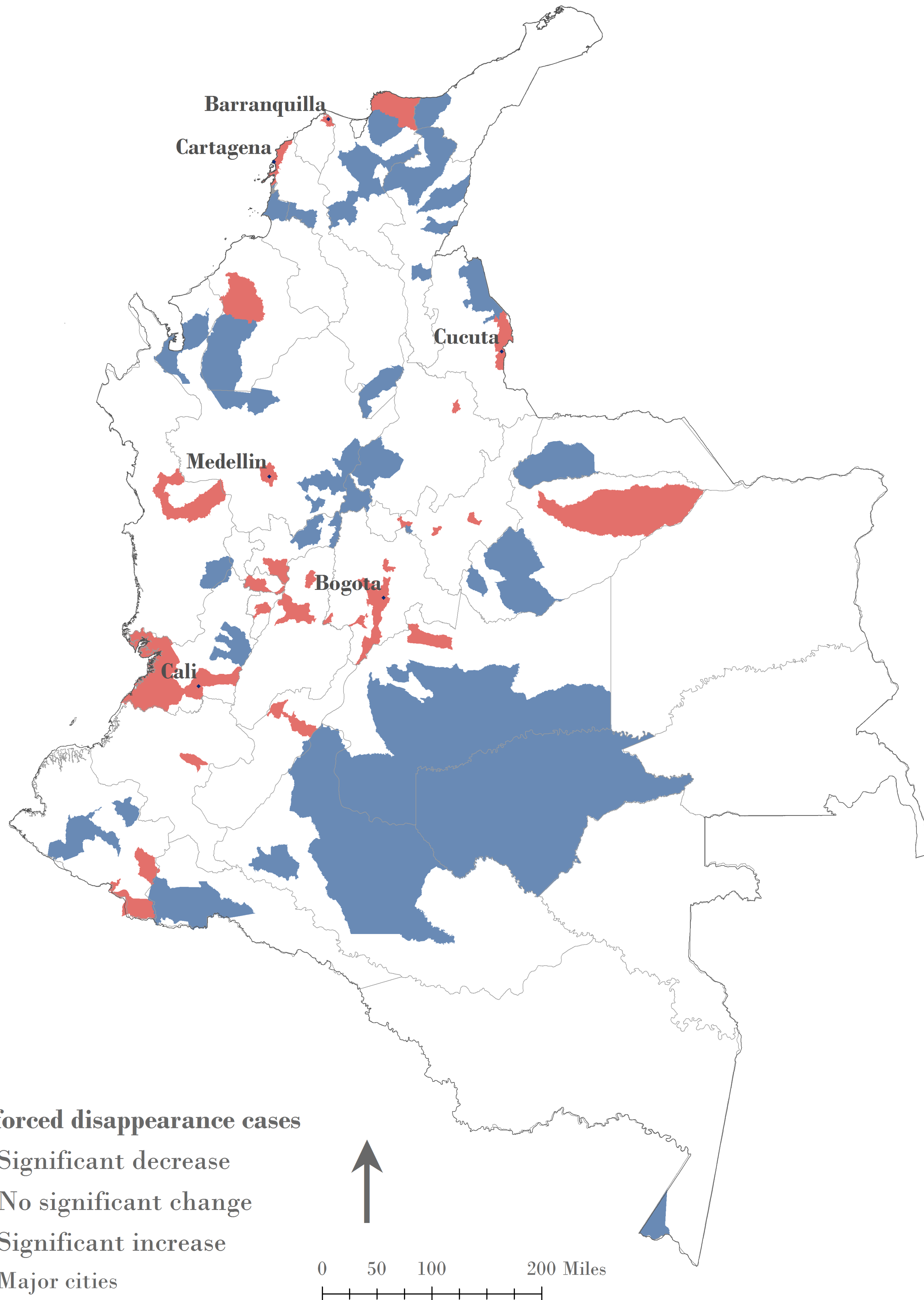


Actors with high presence in municipalities with the highest rate of disappearances in 2013



Mapping the Missing: Enforced Disappearance in Colombia

Areas in Colombia with most significant changes in disappearances between 2004 and 2013



Disappearance Rates by Setting

Exploring the settings of enforced disappearance highlights possible patterns in vulnerability, as well as changes in the evolution of this crime over time. These questions are explored through the following steps:

1. Subset global landcover dataset to the Colombia country level.
2. Reclassify dataset into five landcover types: Coastal, Urban and Peri-urban, Agrarian, Jungle, and Andean.
3. Using Zonal Statistics, transfer landcover types into municipalities.
4. Assess rates of enforced disappearance relative to each landcover type.

Setting of disappearance	Percentage of disappearances per year	
	2004	2013
Urban & Peri-urban	24	54
Agrarian	48	17
Coastal	13	20
Jungle	5	2
Andean	10	7

Conclusions

- ♦ Despite the narratives that the Colombian armed conflict is winding down, **there are municipalities that have experienced significant increases** in enforced disappearance in recent years. Violence persists and transforms over time.
- ♦ **A high presence of paramilitary actors in a municipality has tracked over time with high rates of enforced disappearance** – though it is impossible to draw a causal link that attributes enforced disappearance directly to the armed actors with a high presence in that area. As paramilitaries demobilized and many of them reconfigured into neo-paramilitary criminal bands, rates of enforced disappearance track with BACRIM presence.
- ♦ **The settings in which rates of enforced disappearance are the highest have shifted as the conflict has changed over time.** In 2004, when clashes between the government and guerilla were at a peak, enforced disappearance rates were highest in agrarian areas – likely because much of the violence associated with the conflict took place in coffee and coca farms. In 2013, the highest rates of enforced disappearance are reported in urban settings, which have attracted both many demobilized former combatants and many displaced persons over the years.

Limitations

Biases in reporting affect this study in two ways: Family members under-report enforced disappearance because of concerns that reporting the crime would threaten their or the missing person's life. As the reporting mechanisms and awareness campaigns changed over the years, it is possible that what appear to be increases in the crime are increases in reporting. Further limitations arise from the difficulty of linking the presence of particular actors in an area with the prevalence of certain types of violence. To mitigate these biases, and as part of a wider research project on enforced disappearance in Colombia, qualitative interviews have complemented this poster.

Sources: Instituto Geografico Agustin Codazzi (IGAC, 2013), SIGOT (2014), DANE Colombia (Censo 2005), Tufts M: Drive (2014), GeoData @Tufts (2014), UN OCHA (2004-2014), GADM (2009), as well as data collected by the cartographer during her qualitative research in Colombia (2013-present).
Coordinate System: Bogota_UTM_Zone_18N, Transverse Mercator Projection.
Cartography and Poster Creation by Roxanne Krystalli, May 2014.