

**MFS REPORT****Name**

Johan Hedstrand

Year and term for exchange

2023 Spring 2023, Spring

Country for the project

Republiken Colombia Universidad de Rosario

Degree programme

Bachelor degree in Engineering Physics Engineering Physics

A Developmental Project with the Wayúu Tribe

Before departure

I've known about Minor Field Studies (MFS) for many years and realized this was more than an opportunity to get abroad, but to get to places unreachable without KTH's good name behind me. I embarked on a journey that took me first to Colombia and then to its most impoverished rural region where the Wayúu tribe resides. I had an amazing supervisor who clearly stated that my project had to be something of actual usefulness. Initially centred around rural electrification and anticipating an isolated, small village, I arrived with a predetermined plan. However, circumstances prompted a complete shift in my approach. Since the language is the local Wayúu language (Wayuniiki) at least speaking Spanish was a must. Contacts were required to find locals that would allow my visit. So, in preparation, I immersed myself in the captivating tunes of Shakira while diligently sending nearly a hundred emails.

Upon arrival

I arrived one week before my project to tourist the beautiful city of Medellin. I then got involved with my contact person at the University of Rosario in Bogotá where I lived and studied three weeks before going to the field study. I was at the location for about two weeks. Since they lacked potable water, my stay was limited to the water supply I brought with me. The Engineering Faculty at the University of Rosario is an amazing group. I was warmly welcomed, given office space and the possibility to speak to any professor for any subject always within a day's notice. My local contact, the director for the master of renewable energy Maria Fernanda Gallinda Gomes was beyond expectations in helping me. The host

university was helpful for both the experience and the academics. Immigration required a few steps, nonetheless, everything could be organized after arrival which allowed for a great time.

Goals

My goal in the field was to develop my bachelor's thesis. My thesis evaluate viable drought solutions for the indigenous communities, images below. However, I was also sent to places that had never been photographed before to supply these to my contact. Admittedly I was a little too interested in their engineering applications that I did not take enough photos of the beautiful community. Nonetheless, I took these and shared them as educational material with the contact university. Thereafter I held a workshop and attained a meeting to promote integration between domestic developmental projects and national engineering universities.

Financials

Colombia is cheap. Especially by making local friends and treating them to a drink they subsequently guide you to find local options and local prices. Fortunately, I have a small appetite, but considering the change in climate and generous portion sizes, I believe most Swedes would find satisfaction with only one or two serious meals per day. In the city centre, asking locals for recommendations helps you find large meals costing around 33 SEK. Don't hesitate to ask around for advice!

Accommodation

I arranged accommodation independently. Initially, I resided in a hostel with a shared workspace. It was enjoyable as Bogotá harbours a culture of digital nomads who became my de facto colleagues. Thereafter I learnt the lesson I keep repeating, ask for advice! I didn't and thereafter moved into a rough neighbourhood. However, speaking Spanish and having an agreeable attitude, it was quite epic and they were overjoyed having a "crazy gringo" around. Nonetheless, after 5 more days and due to the roughness, I moved again. By that point I had enough connections to find good deals and navigate the city with ease. On that note, I found my places through these contacts. In line with my advice, honestly send me a message if you need help finding accommodation in Bogotá. I'll put my e-mail at the bottom. In the field I lived like.. well see the images below - it was awesome!

It's worth noting that housing can be affordable if you blend in as a local, but it can be costly (similar to Stockholm) for foreigners. After living in a mud house in the desert with the indigenous community, I spent the ultimate month in an amazing colonial house, which I thoroughly enjoyed. All experiences held their own unique charms.

Country

The country is very diverse in cultures, accents, and appearances, which makes domestic travel rich. As the first foreigner in the Wayúu community I lived with, I found no problems whatsoever. They behaved the most Swedish out of everyone I met.

Bogotá was different from any other place. All minorities can expect to be stared at and treated as exotic animals. However, it is good-natured, there are a lot of people (about 8-10 million) in Bogotá and if you still manage to look different then that causes a lot of interest and excitement. While not always pleasant it was continuously important to represent both KTH, Sweden, and well – every other foreigner – by being agreeable. It took a while to find people who managed to look past the fact that I looked foreign and actually desired my company.

Leisure and social activities

For leisure, people were so excited to have a gringo around I could always keep myself busy. The university boasted a golf simulator, gaming rooms, and gyms which I could access. Near Bogotá is an incredible 100+ meter high cliff I visited twice to climb. Generally, there is everything over there – you won't get bored

Sustainability

It is prompted here to write about sustainability. With millions as their population and with huge cities you will always be able to find ways to live in a way you find pleasant.

In the tribe, life was as down to earth as possible so their climate on the impact was slim to none. Nonetheless, especially in the tribe, the push for hip new technology to be sustainable is primarily causing the destruction of their land and secondarily elevating child mortality. It was evident how politicians had voted for, and engineers accepted, the construction of useless trendy projects. Looking at the common causes of death it is evident that child mortality would have been alleviated if the sustainability discussion had not been as reality-detached.

My project evaluates water sources and ends with a recommendation focusing on their well-being. In my paper, I write about previous failed projects sponsored in the region. In the end, the only good options for human well-being are sustainable ones. However, these need to be well-executed. You can live as sustainably as your environment over there.

Other recommendations and observations

MFS can be a way to sneak money away from the Swedish government for a free study vacation. However, that mindset is stupid. This is an incredible opportunity. I spent three months perfecting my third language, helping and studying communities nobody has cared for, holding a workshop at a foreign university, helping students and natives with math, bridging the gap between the government and local universities in developmental projects, learning about incredible alien cultures while sharing amazing laughs over bad jokes with Colombians and Wayúus. It was incredibly exhausting at times. Still, I would do it again. MFS is an astounding opportunity.

Unforgettable and incredibly valuable, such can be an MFS project.

All the best,

Johan Hedstrand Welander; johanhedwel@gmail.com

The report and images will be published during the summer of 2023. These can be seen in the DIVA portal supposedly by searching my name.

My neighbour's house in one the Wayúu communities. I lived similarly while in the field. My accommodation in Bogotá was a normal colonial house, Google "Colonial House Colombia" for the gist of it.



More photos below

6

Images of three different types of wells of varying efficiency:





Wind-driven well (Aritaimana community)

Photos of me holding a workshop about my work at the University of Rosario:



