Lessons Learned Paper: Local Level Peacebuilding in Colombia

[RODDY BRETT]
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Colombia

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1. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not reflect the institutional position of the United Nations Development Programme.
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Building peace from the regions

The international experience shows that there are two complementary facets of the peace processes:

- The first one is the *peace making* dimension which consists of promoting efforts for a negotiated solution to the conflict: this process directly involves the government and the illegal armed groups and is primarily oriented to the cessation of the armed confrontation. In other words it is aimed to the termination of the armed conflict and of the *direct violence*. This concept has been termed as *negative peace*.

- The second one is the *peacebuilding* dimension, more dedicated to facing the structural causes and historic roots of the conflict, looking for durable solutions in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres. In this case the aim is to reach a *positive peace*, understood as conflict transformation and overcoming of the direct, structural and *cultural dimensions of violence*.

Colombia is facing an historic moment where, for the first time, it is possible to imagine a lasting peace for the future generations after more than 50 years of protracted and costly armed conflict: the negotiations between the government and the FARC guerrilla, started in 2012, are progressing as never before and it appears possible to reach a Peace Accord in the near future.

Many observers consider that the peace implementation phase will need a strong territorial approach to be successful.

The armed conflict has strongly affected specific regions, characterized by the absence or weakness of the State and conditions of vulnerability, and it is in these regions that it is necessary to build an institutional, economic and social infrastructure for peace.

One of the most impacting characteristics of the Colombian reality is the capacity of resilience demonstrated by civil society and local institutions in the most affected regions. Territorial initiatives for peace, social networks representing women, ethnic populations, youth groups and victims have grown in the middle of the conflict and have opened opportunities and hope for thousands of people.

UNDP has accompanied for 10 years, since 2004, local capacities for peace and has implemented an innovative model of *local level peacebuilding*. In this study the author will analyze the impact of this
model and the role of the United Nations in supporting territorial peace initiatives. Based on his deep knowledge of different peace processes in Latin America, Professor Roddy Brett proposes challenging insights and critical approaches that can be extremely useful to orient the peace implementation process in Colombia.

We consider that this research can help refine and further develop the model of a territorial peacebuilding process and can potentially be applicable to different conflict situations around the world.

As the Secretary General of United Nations has stated, “First and foremost, we know that peacebuilding is a national challenge and responsibility. Only national actors can address their society’s needs and goals in a sustainable way”. The central message of this study is that national ownership should start from the regions most affected by the conflict: local capacities for peace, civil society networks and territorial institutions at a local level should be the real protagonists of a sustainable peace. Peace cannot be imposed from above but should be built from below.

UNDP Colombia

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Introduction
Introduction

After over four decades of armed conflict between the government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), and systematic failure to bring an end to Colombia’s conflict through negotiations or military operations, talks between the warring parties were initiated formally once more in November 2012 with the aim of bringing a definitive end to the conflict. The present peace process with the FARC is the first such effort since the failure of the Caguan process in 2002 and, until now, has been carried out in Havana, Cuba, with the Cuban and Norwegian governments acting as guarantors.

Negotiations between the parties to the conflict have imposed themselves on the national and international imaginary, understandably provoking a broad spectrum of reactions ranging from outright rejection and support, to trepidation and cautious optimism. However, far less emphasis has been placed upon those ongoing struggles to build peace led by civil society actors at regional level principally carried out until now as independent of the formal negotiations. It is these forms of informal, everyday peacebuilding that are the focus of this paper.

Whilst a series of mechanisms have been established since 2012 aimed, in theory, at facilitating the inclusion of civil society proposals within the present peace process, links between the negotiating table and wider local level peacebuilding efforts remain, as yet, informal and unconsolidated. The ‘General Agreement for the End of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable, Durable Peace’, signed in Havana on 26th August 2012, anticipated a role for civil society in the building of peace. The framework agreement demarcated three general spheres for the participation of civil society: electronic mechanisms for receiving proposals for the negotiation table, direct collective consultations and consultations with experts. Mechanisms have also been established to facilitate the input of the non-civil society realm into the negotiations, in this case mayors and governors. Of significance here, have been the forums supported principally by the United Nations in Colombia, through coordination with the National University of Colombia. The forums held thus far have focused on three consecutive points of the negotiation agenda, agrarian development, political participation and illegal drugs, held in December 2012, April 2013 and September-October 2013, respectively.

The UN has also played a key role in the organisation of consultations with civil society and regional actors in nine regions of Colombia, in collaboration with the Congressional Peace Commission. The recommendations that resulted from these processes were presented to the Norwegian and Cuban ambassadors – framed as the voice of the regions – and subsequently submitted for the consideration of the parties to negotiation.

In spite of these mechanisms, in the Colombian case, the effective composition of the negotiating table and its mandate replicate those of previous peace processes in other regions, such as Central America. The principally male-dominated negotiations carried out exclusively between the armed actors have excluded civil society, in particular regional actors, from the process, raising questions concerning the degree to which talks, and their outcome, may be representative of Colombian society. At the same time, it has been made clear repeatedly that engagement with the structural causal factors of the conflict is to be restricted; as President Santos has stated on various occasions, neither Colombia’s economic model, nor its political system are open to negotiation.

In this regard, Colombia’s peace process partially presumes the logic of other similar peace processes, such as those in Guatemala and El Salvador, leaving it vulnerable to the convincing critiques of scholars such as Richmond, Jabri and MacGinty that the peace it will bring is likely to remain fragile and unstable, reflecting the interests of Colombian and global northern elites and is thus unlikely to generate conditions for sustainable peace. Whether under these conditions the peace process may yield enduring and
equitable peace or whether it represents yet another instance of ‘flat-packed’ Liberal Peace becomes then a central question to be discussed in this paper.

Despite the evident shortcomings of the present peace process, over the last decade, actors at the regional level have sought to build peace in the midst of armed conflict through emphatically bottom-up processes that aim to empower citizens to construct and enact visions of State, society and government that respond directly to their self-defined and differential needs, priorities and cultural values. Often supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), these mobilisations have taken place independently of formal peace talks, neither replacing them, nor replicating their logic. In particular, mobilisations have rarely involved direct interlocution with illegal armed actors, focusing instead on the generation of conditions that seek to redress the causes and consequences of the armed conflict within civil society and local government spheres. These informal processes have faced important challenges, including the lack of articulation between them and, in this case, the formal peace-making efforts in Havana, an issue emphasised by President Santos’ insistence that only the government is authorised to carry out peace-making initiatives.

In this regard, a further critical question emerges; in short, whether, without recognition from and support by the state, impact precipitated by local level peacebuilding efforts at regional level may remain quarantined and fragile, ultimately undermining their legitimacy and sustainability. Significantly, the Colombian government, in particular under the leadership of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Sergio Jaramillo, has itself proposed a model of peacebuilding based on a regional/territorial focus. If this proposal were to be followed through, there exists the likelihood that the voice and platforms of the Colombian regions, and of civil society at the territorial level, will be manifest in the post-agreement peacebuilding phase. The aforementioned challenges notwithstanding, local level peacebuilding and civil resistance politics may posit an alternative to the Liberal Peace, representing an inclusive, potentially emancipatory and tenable peacebuilding.

This paper sets out to construct a framework through which to situate and comprehend further the tensions and potential complementarities between centralised, formal peace-making and local level peacebuilding processes, referring to the Colombia case as a means of engaging with wider debates concerning the pertinence, efficacy and ethics of Liberal and local level peacebuilding. It begins by situating the critiques of the Liberal Peace within their relevant historical framework. Secondly, the paper explores questions relating to civil society inclusion in peacebuilding. The paper then turns to an analysis of local level peacebuilding, situating this discussion within the framework of the emerging academic literature on the subject. The central idea in the latter part of the paper is to develop a rigorous analysis of the impact of local level peacebuilding initiatives supported by the UNDP in those regions of Colombia where it has consolidated an institutional presence over the last eight years. By constructing a clear analysis of local level peacebuilding initiatives over time in Colombia’s regions, the paper will explore and illustrate how alternatives to the Liberal Peace have evolved and wielded impact in conflict zones, even in spite of the absence of formal peace-making interventions.
Chapter One.
Conceptual Framework
The United Nations and Peacebuilding

In 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the then Secretary General of the United Nations, launched the United Nations Agenda for Peace. This document aimed to construct a clear and decisive agenda to address and shape interventions and initiatives oriented towards engagement with armed conflicts in the post-Cold War era. The Agenda proposed four main thematic areas and defined differentiated stages of intervention in conflict: (i) preventive diplomacy, which sought to "resolve disputes before violence breaks out"; (ii) peace-making, i.e. measures to ensure agreements between hostile parties; (iii) peace-keeping – processes aimed at preserving and maintaining peace once it has been achieved; and (iv) post-conflict peacebuilding, i.e. measures to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a resumption of conflict.2

Interventions framed within and defined by the Agenda for Peace were subsequently implemented in a number of country contexts and decisively influenced those processes that put an end to some of the most protracted conflicts of the second half of the twentieth century, including the internal armed conflicts and civil wars in Central America.

The concept of peacebuilding contemplated within the Agenda for Peace was oriented towards the post-conflict period and at the level of inter-state conflict, representing a mechanism for post-conflict reconstruction, usually articulated through a framework for implementing peace agreements between countries. Herein, the concept of peacebuilding was focused upon building peace between nations that had been at war, rather than as applicable for contexts affected by civil war or internal armed conflict, in short, intra-state conflict. The limited perspective of peacebuilding from above and between nations incorporated into the Agenda for Peace was supplemented and broadened three years later to include a conceptualisation of post-conflict peace-building within nations. In the Supplement to the Agenda for Peace (1995), peacebuilding practices were amplified to address more effectively the growing incidence of internal armed / intra-state conflict and accompanying humanitarian crisis, an increasingly evident pattern of conflict in the wake of the Cold War.3 In this context, United Nations’ practices demonstrated a resolute evolution from those limited peace-keeping missions that had defined them during the Cold War,4 towards multidimensional missions that incorporated a wide spectrum of activities and sought to engineer state-building in transitional and post-conflict contexts.5

Within this framework, United Nations’ peace support thinking and practice demonstrated an institutional approach that, according to the UN Department of Public Information, increasingly recognised the complex factors shaping conflict and subsequent peace support initiatives. The perspective aimed, moreover, to take into account the possible impact of non-military factors, such as economic, social, humanitarian and ecological aspects in the generation and perpetuation of conflict, and in the mechanisms oriented toward its transformation.6 In this regard, UN practices have since increasingly defined themselves as being undergirded by an integral and multidimensional approach to building peace.

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5. The Supplement to the Agenda for Peace stressed the need to work with new functions and instruments within the context of intra-State internal armed conflict, the need to reform and strengthen the humanitarian dimensions of the UN’s work and to consolidate those new thematic areas fundamental for the success of peace processes and post-conflict peacebuilding.
6. These changes in the UN peace support practice were consolidated in a series of documents, including the UN Agendas for Peace and Security, the UN Agenda for Development and Human Rights, the Brahimi Report (2003) and the reports of United Nations’ Secretary-General Kofi Annan on Conflict Prevention (2001, 2006).
However, despite what appears to be growing innovation within its institutional framework and practices, the United Nations and its conflict, peacebuilding and post-conflict operations remains subject to systematic criticism, given that UN peace support interventions represent a cornerstone of Liberal Peace politics. MacGinty has described the Liberal Peace as ‘the dominant form of peacemaking and peacebuilding favoured by leading states, international organisations and international financial institutions’. Liberal Peace politics may incorporate ‘the ideology of peacemaking, the socio-cultural norms of peace-making, the structural factors that enable and constrain it, its principal actors and clients, and its manifestations’. However, perhaps one of the most central criticisms is the observation that interventions wielded herein ultimately ‘reflect the interests, norms and values of the global north, imposed through the exercise of power relations that may include individual rights, pluralism, the protection of individual property (not collective title to land), the rule of law and the free market’. In this regard, for Roberts, the priority placed upon institutionalisation and liberalisation through liberal peacebuilding interventions sidelines systematically any focus upon locally identified needs, undermining then the possibility of legitimacy: ‘Vulnerable people will necessarily prioritise solutions to poverty, joblessness and poor health above liberal institutionalisation located in a distant, and disconnected, metropolis’. Moreover, and significantly, interventions imposed through Liberal Peace politics have tended to eschew engagement with structural causes of armed conflict, ultimately limiting their enduring impact, as Pearce has convincingly argued for the case of Central America.

Scholars have defined the constituent elements of the Liberal Peace as including democratisation (through electoral democracy and democratic governance), the construction of the effective rule of law, the promotion and guarantee of human rights (principally of individual and universal, civil and political rights), economic liberalisation and neo-liberal development. For Oliver Richmond, the United Nations system represents a key constituency of the collective of ‘norm entrepreneurs’ within the international system engaged directly in the formulation and implementation of the Liberal Peace. Other key actors that have carried out and supported widespread Liberal Peace interventions have included the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation of American States, the European Commission, and governments and their overseas aid agencies, including North America, Spain, Norway and Sweden.

MacGinty has argued that internationally led peacebuilding is characterised by its top-down, technocratic nature, where deals are often forged in private and imposed by institutions modelled on corporate culture, whose focus tends to reflect the primacy of the individual. Processes are often imposed top-down through institutions staffed by external personnel, financed by external material resources and undergirded by external values, ideas and moral frameworks.

In practice, Liberal Peace interventions in Latin America have been less the result of a ‘crude external north-south imposition’, and rather, have been the consequence of ‘the convergence of the force of donor

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Chapter One. Conceptual Framework

financial conditionality for peace support interventions, the recognition by national elites of the strategic importance of such initiatives and mutual self-interest of international and national elites. In contexts shaped by peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, donors have, at best, suggested, and, at worst, imposed agendas following simultaneous liberalisation in the political and economic spheres. Within this framework, political democratisation is accompanied by neo-liberal economic policy reform, and seeks to guarantee the exercise of individual / universal rights, whilst alleviating poverty via economic stabilisation and modernisation.

Rather than an over-deterministic vision of internationally led and imposed processes, MacGinty has coherently argued for an understanding of peacebuilding as ‘hybrid politics’. He posits that Liberal Peace actors have become increasingly engaged with and promoted indigenous forms of peacemaking—through both rhetorical and material support, a transformation based upon four principal premises: indigenous forms of peacebuilding do not rely on costly external resources; they connect with the cultural expectations and norms of local communities; they offer the advantage of an exit strategy for international interveners as responsibility is passed down to local actors; and they represent more bottom-up and people-centric processes, permitting international actors to fend off criticism for the externally imposed nature of their interventions.

MacGinty has argued that hybrid politics is a useful conceptual framework that permits us to revise previously one-dimensional ideas about the omnipotence and hegemonic nature of the Liberal Peace. By understanding that peacebuilding may represent a nexus where international, national and local agencies and structures coalesce, scholars may develop a rigorous and multi-dimensional critique of the liberal peace, reappraise visions of traditional and indigenous peacemaking that have erred toward the romantic, whilst still interrogating ‘the nature of contemporary peace and the political, economic, social and cultural orders that it fashions’.

For MacGinty, the hybrid peace model includes four components: the ability of liberal peace actors, structures and networks to impose their version of peacemaking; the ability of liberal peace actors, structures and networks to incentivise local actors to cooperate with the liberal peace; the ability of local actors, structures and networks to negotiate with, subvert, exploit, and resist the liberal peace; and the ability of local actors, structures and networks to create and maintain alternatives to the liberal peace.

In this regard, hybrid politics becomes meaningful because it evidences a process of evolution and adaption by the broad array of national and international actors that the peacebuilding enterprise affects: national and international, elite and non-elite. In MacGinty’s words ‘it is often a gradualist, everyday process, whereby entities (actors, structures, norms) negotiate and renegotiate their own place in the social, political and economic spheres’.

In the context of the research presented in this article, the concept of hybrid politics is germane given that we are seeking to comprehend the tensions and potential complementarities between centralised, formal top-down peace-making, involving national and international elites, and local level peacebuilding processes, very often financed by the latter. In particular, we are interested in the role in the peacbuilding process that civil society has assumed in Colombia and the degree to which this is shaped by, challenges or subverts and resists Liberal Peace interventions, in this case those supported by the UNDP. Consequently, we now turn to a brief discussion of civil society and peacebuilding.

Civil Society and Peacebuilding

As previously mentioned, since August 2012 negotiations have been taking place between the national government and the FARC, leading initially to the ‘General Agreement on ending the conflict and building a stable and lasting peace’. Said agreement set the negotiations agenda and, despite a series of difficulties, arrangements concerning agricultural development and participation in politics have been established. At the request of the negotiating parties, the UNDP contributed to the construction of proposals from civil society organisations. UNDP facilitated a process whereby 9652 people from over 4617 organisations submitted more than 3000 proposals to the negotiating table. According to civil society and the negotiating teams, these proposals helped shape the two partial agreements. This process was built upon eight years of work by the UNDP that sought to consolidate peacebuilding initiatives at the local level by mobilising 125 networks that bring together 800 civil society organizations. Recent interviews carried out by UNDP staff with civil society suggest that 71% of local actors consider that their own work shaped the two partial agreements already signed. Other actors interviewed by the author of this paper, for example in the Montes de Maria region in 2013, suggested that the process facilitated by the UNDP that brought together diverse and numerous civil society organisations ultimately had very little impact upon the peace accords signed. In particular, actors were deeply skeptical of the peace talks in Havana and felt alienated by the fact that they had not been given any formal seat at or role in the negotiations.

Historically, participation in formal peace processes, Track One Diplomacy, has been restricted to the parties to the conflict, including state and government, military forces and guerrilla or paramilitary forces. However, as a consequence of the demands of civil society organisations, including those groups predominantly affected by the conflict, an increasingly visible component of peace processes after 1994 has been the inclusion of civil society, either formally - through secondary inclusion mechanisms - or informally in the negotiations. So-called Track Two initiatives have represented a critical component of peacebuilding efforts over the last decades; however, the role of civil society organisations more directly, including transnational advocacy networks, has gained relevance and visibility over the last decade, potentially representing a third track of diplomacy.23 A paradigmatic case in this regard was the peace process in Guatemala (1987-1996), during which, after 1994, the role of civil society was formalised through the establishment of the Civil Society Assembly (CSA). The CSA was mandated to send, albeit non-binding, proposals for the content of the peace agreements to the negotiating parties. Ultimately, the CSA shaped a series of the accords, particularly the Agreement Concerning the Rights and Identity of Indigenous People.24 Logically, the participation of civil society actors in the negotiation process challenges the conventional dynamics through which negotiations have been framed, where the only actors perceived as legitimate negotiators by the state and the international community have been precisely those actors that took up arms during the conflict.

Debate has continued to intensify regarding how, in general, to guarantee the integrity and agency of local actors in peacebuilding efforts,25 and, specifically, whether the participation of civil society in peace processes may strengthen the legitimacy of the negotiations by moulding them to include broader issues arising out of citizens’ self-identified agendas. To borrow from Richmond, the question would become how we might assure ‘meaningful agency in terms of preserving the integrity of the local actor in their everyday contexts’.26 As Bush has similarly argued,

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peacebuilding is not about the imposition of solutions, it is about the creation of opportunities. The challenge is to identify and nurture the political, economic, and social space within which indigenous participants can identify, develop, and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, prosperous, and just society'.

While the weight of the visibility and voice of civil society actors has become increasingly evident in the context of formal negotiation processes, in many countries experiencing armed conflict, civil society also assumes a key informal role during the conflict, on the streets through civil resistance and social mobilisations and through ritualised actions such as strikes. Said mobilisations tend emerge within the context imposed by peace negotiations, as actors seek both to take advantage of the relative space afforded by negotiations and to influence the trajectory and, ultimately, the content of the peace dialogues. Until now, most scholarship on this issue has been framed within the social movements discipline, rather than analysed through the lens of peacebuilding.

Collective action demanding an end to political violence, human rights violations and the causes and consequences of conflict, has been of significant importance in exercising pressure towards a negotiated settlement in Latin American countries that have undergone intra-state conflict. In Guatemala and Colombia, for example, civil society organisations have mobilised systemically, seeking to generate a series of transformative dynamics during armed conflict and negotiations. During the peace process in the Caguan in Colombia (1999-2002), civil society sought to combine informal expressions on the streets, in short, the politics of protest, with a series of political expression articulated through formal political channels provided during the process, through the politics of proposal.

Odendaal has posited that the role of civil society in peacebuilding, specifically through diverse mechanisms including local peace committees for example, may be of significant importance. Firstly, civil society representatives possess the potential to offer alternative perspectives, other than those imposed by the warring factions. The inclusion of a broad series of sectors at the level of local peace committees for example, including religious, gender, cultural, business representatives and labour movements may broaden the issues debated given that organisations have ‘a stake in securing a meaningful and just peace’. As the author posits, given the proclivity of society toward polarisation in contexts of conflict, civil society mobilisation or inclusion is unlikely to lessen polarisation as such. However, its incorporation will, at the very least, ‘broaden the spectrum of voices’. Odendaal argues further that a potential benefit of civil society inclusion may be that of bolstering coordination between informal and formal peace support initiatives.

Perhaps the clearest justification for greater emphasis upon and incorporation of civil society in peace support initiatives, including in peace processes, can be derived from the work of Lederach. Lederach’s concept of ‘peace architectures’ or ‘peace infrastructures’ refers to those networks established, over time, throughout and between state and society, which empower individuals and collective groups to propose effective alternatives to transform conflict, build peace and precipitate reconciliation. In the words of Lederach, ‘building peace in today’s conflicts calls for long-term commitment to establishing an infrastructure across levels of a society, an infrastructure that would empower the resources for reconciliation from within that society and maximize the contribution from outside’.

networks retains the potential to play a key role in constructing peace from below and articulating informal initiatives with formal, state-led initiatives, rather than depending upon external solutions imposed by actors peripheral to the local context.

The concept of peace infrastructures goes beyond the practices of traditional statist diplomacy. According to Lederach, the establishment of networks within civil society and between civil society and the state forge a “spider’s web”, intersecting and surpassing traditional sectorial or class divisions and thus establishing certain key conditions for lasting peace. By weaving anew the social fabric torn apart by armed conflict, it is possible that actors at local, regional and national levels may edify social relationships based upon trust between citizens and the state, echoing the words of Odendaal that “the transformation of social relations is a central objective of building peace”.31

However, whilst it would be difficult to contest convincingly the supposition that local actors should assume responsibility for building their own peace, it remains to be seen as to how an effective peace infrastructure could in practice articulate formal and informal peacebuilding interventions. A key challenge in this regard would be that relating to how to institutionalise a process through which populations affected by armed conflict and violence could be transformed from their status of victims into actively participating and decisive citizens determining the path of peace and shaping democratic governance at regional level and national levels. In the following section, we will turn to an analysis of local level peacebuilding, asking whether it is indeed at the local level that the possibility of an emancipatory peacebuilding may be more viable, or whether the ethical imperatives show little regard for practical issues shaped by power embedded within centralised political systems and the Liberal Peace.

Local Level Peacebuilding

As Ramsbotham et al. have pointed out, states continue to remain both the principal actor at the international level and the key framework towards and through which citizens orient their demands. The state represents then, at least in theory, the chief satisfier of human needs and is charged with guaranteeing those obligations deriving from the international and national normative framework relative to human rights and international humanitarian law.32 Whilst the principal site of violent conflict since the end of the Cold War has indeed shifted from the inter-state to the intra-state level, the state is far from absent in contemporary patterns of conflict. Rather, within intra-state conflict, the state and control over it and its resources is often the key locus of struggle; in short, it is the ultimate prize. At the same time, state actors either directly, or through proxies, have remained central actors in the perpetration of violent actors in the post-Cold War era. In this regard, a likely factor that has bolstered and perpetuated the perceived uncontested historical predominance of Liberal Peace politics has been its location within the parameters of the Westphalian system and its coincident emphatic focus upon the state in all its dimensions, including the role of the state in generating those conditions that precipitated conflict in the first place and in transforming and overcoming said conditions. The question arises then, as to whether and to what degree innovative forms of conflict transformation focused at the sub-state level, including local level peacebuilding interventions, might be expected to wield profound impact upon the causes and consequences of violent conflict, in particular when violence is characterised by crimes against humanity and other mass atrocities.

Over the last decade, academic scholarship and practitioner thinking have increasingly adopted a vision of peacebuilding and conflict transformation that argues for a multi-layered and multidimensional approach.
approach, including in the analysis and comprehension of the causes of conflict and in the formulation and implementation of multi-level interventions to transform them. As Adane Ghebremeskel and Richard Smith have signalled,

‘the imperative to connect peacebuilding efforts at different levels is an approach that has been identified in forums of practitioners, and by some scholars, for several years now. Local peace initiatives need to be understood as one element within the complex transformational response that is required in an engagement with a complex conflict system’.

In this regard, perhaps with the exception of formal peace processes, Liberal Peace interventions, including those orchestrated and supported by the United Nations, have progressively eschewed an approach that would focus exclusively upon the state level. Rather, internationally led long-term initiatives aimed at addressing and redressing the causes and consequences of violent conflict have gradually sought to complement their historical emphasis upon supporting (and imposing) top-down processes with interventions focused upon state, government and civil society at the regional and local level. How then might we appreciate the significance of local level peacebuilding and the dilemmas that it poses?

An important body of scholarship has emerged that counterbalances the historical prominence of the Liberal Peace literature, whilst reappraising prior scholarship on local level peacebuilding - including of traditional and indigenous peacemaking - that hitherto erred toward the romanticisation of the local. For MacGinty in fact, indigenous norms and practices, whilst drawing on local resources, need not be traditional as such. Nevertheless, and significantly, indigenous and traditional approaches can be acutely conservative, reinforcing the role and position of (traditional) local power-holders, embedding inequitable gender relations and, as MacGinty posits, tending towards containment rather than a rigorous engagement with structural transformation.

For MaGinty, indigenous peace-making has, in general, tended to rest on the moral authority of elders, increasing the likelihood that it may be perceived of as legitimate and thus enjoy a degree of local anchoring and embeddedness. MacGinty further characterises indigenous peacebuilding as being undergirded by storytelling, relying on local resources, and emphasising local relationships. Consequently, it may connect with ‘cultural memory banks’ and remain intuitive to local culture, precipitating public understanding and acceptance. At the same time, there is a tendency for said processes to forefront dialogue and consensus decision-making and restorative as opposed to punitive justice. In the words of Richmond, ‘localised processes create meaning and capacity in everyday life, maintaining social and political order, creating local legitimacy, and also responding to needs issues and offering informal public services that the state often cannot provide or refuses to offer’.

What is of important relevance in the context of this article, however, is the proposition that indigenous peacebuilding at the local level may have the capacity to remedy some of the principal weaknesses and deficits of Liberal Peace interventions, ‘especially in terms of social justice and the recognition of diverse identities, cultures, and custom’. As local level actors resist and modify the Liberal Peace through hybrid political initiatives, Richmond sees the evolution of a post-liberal politics of peacebuilding that, reflecting Lederach’s concept of peace architectures, generates the conditions ‘in which everyday local agencies, rights, needs, culture, custom and kinship are recognised as webs of meaning’. According to Richmond,
this ‘Peacebuilding-as-resistance prioritises self-determination, autonomy, justice, community, democracy and responses to needs, often in infrapolitical registers- relating to context, histories, society, and forms of resistant agency’. Whilst it remains as yet unclear as to the long-term transformative capacity of said resistance, Richmond’s hidden transcript or infra-politics of peacebuilding ‘amount to meaningful agency… and a critique of power which might add up to a platform for transformation of the self and the other…of conflict dynamics and of the liberal peace’.39

Scholarship on local level peacebuilding has tended to focus upon the potential role and impact played by Local Peace Committees (LPCs). Whilst networks of informal civil society organisations, rather than formal LPCs, remain the focus of this article, scholarship on LPCs may elucidate a series of key questions relating to local level peacebuilding in Colombia. Andries Odendaal and Paul Van Tongeren have written extensively on LPCs, debating the factors that may decisively shape their impact in contexts of ongoing conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.40 For Odendaal, An LPC is an ‘inclusive committee operating at sub-national level (a district, municipality, town or village). It includes the different community sections in conflict, and has the task of promoting peace within its own context’.41 The fundamental achievement of LPCs has been that they create opportunities for dialogue and that, by so doing, possess the potential to wield broader, more significant impact. Odendaal refers to a series of key examples, including those in Kenya and South Africa, arguing that LPCs may enable communication between current or former protagonists to overcome fears and mistrust; prevent violence by carrying out joint exercises; and facilitate negotiations between parties in conflict. LPCs might also play a critical role in facilitating local peacemaking initiatives that could lead to local peace agreements, whilst also mediating disputes. In the field of political culture, LPC-facilitated dialogue may strengthen social cohesion and facilitate reconciliation and, significantly, enable local and national information flow leading to the dissemination of critical communication between the local and national level.42

Reflecting the thinking of John Paul Lederach, Odendaal has posited that LPCs are most effective where some of their membership is middle range civil society actors, acting as peacemakers, conciliators or mediators. In short, individuals represent ‘insider-partials’, and as such are respected, trusted and perceived of as possessing the personal integrity to lead the peacebuilding process. Middle-range actors are local people who mediate or provide leadership from a position of ‘connectedness’ and belonging to the community, and must live with the consequences of their work, unlike those external actors who might reside temporarily in the conflict zone or otherwise in the nearest metropolitan area.43 Significantly, middle range actors may enjoy the legitimacy that permits them to generate further the sense of ownership of the process within the local community, in short to guarantee ‘buy-in’, given, in particular, their potentially augmented capacity to understand the nuances and sensibilities of local conflict. Enhancing legitimacy from within the context of the local may potentially address the ‘legitimacy vacuna’ enjoyed by externally imposed orthodox Liberal Peace interventions, as Roberts has termed it. In the words of Roberts, ‘Maintenance and enhancement of ‘the everyday’ provides an alternative focus for the development of legitimacy, which in turn underpins stability and thence local peace. There can be no inter- national liberal peace without national, local peace’.44 People, presumably then, will likely only assume ownership over those processes that were shaped by them and not exclusively by outside actors.

40. Odendaal (2010) argues that LPCs have been established where there is systematic polarisation within communities and the ongoing threat of violence. Moreover, they are likely to be established where incipient national and local political will exists to prevent conflict and build peace. For Odendaal, such conditions may arise where state illegitimacy or lack of capacity impedes effectiveness of institution and Paul van Tongeren, ‘Potential cornerstone of infrastructures for peace? How local peace committees can make a difference’, Peacebuilding, Vol 1, No. 1, 2013, 39-60.
44. Roberts, 2011: 419.
For the purpose of this article, we would argue that local level peacebuilding wielded through more informal collective mobilisations or networks of organisations that articulate with local government possesses the potential to replicate the impact framework of LPCs.

However, and significantly, we must be aware that the processes of local level peacebuilding taking place in Colombia are likely to be vulnerable to the series of challenges and limits that we set out above. In short, the asymmetry of power relations may ultimately limit the capacity of local level initiatives to wield enduring and wideranging impact in building peace. In this regard, whilst local level initiatives may tend to retain an important degree of autonomy in terms of the agenda proposed by actors, it is precisely this autonomy, which brings with it the lack of perceived legitimacy from within the state and society more generally, that may restrict the impact of said initiatives. The problematic then may also extend to the limitation of resources that local level initiatives not tied to the state may enjoy, an issue that may also tend to limit the impact they may engender. Finally, when evaluating the potential limit of local level interventions, it may be important to bear in mind the generic limitations that have been faced in other contexts, as Odendaal and other scholars have pointed out: local level interventions, without state sanction, will be unlikely to transform embedded structures of power, to change the attitudes of armed actors and to override national imperatives.

We would identify the potential for the measurable impact of local level peacebuilding initiatives within three interrelated spheres. It will be these specific realms that upon which we will focus our analysis in this report; in short, we identify the following spheres as the critical areas of local level peacebuilding interventions in the six regions of Colombia where the UNDP has an institutional presence:

(i) the construction of a peace architecture or infrastructure. Here, we would argue specifically that local level mobilisations may construct a network or framework of individuals and organisations equipped with capacities and knowledge that may be critical in building peace at the local level and articulating local level experiences with national, formal peacebuilding actors. This hybrid politics and critical nexus – between the local, national and international – represents one of the most complex characteristics of peacebuilding at the sub-state level;
(ii) the realm of political culture (knowledge of rights, exercise of rights, social relationships); and finally (iv) attitudes and behaviour of state and non-state (legal and illegal) armed actors;45
(iii) the politico-institutional realm (impact upon public policy, legislation, institutional arrangements, local government);
(iv) the realm of economic alternatives.

Consequently, in this paper, we will seek to analyse the degree to which local level peacebuilding initiatives supported by the UNDP have wielded an enduring impact upon the aforementioned spaces, the nature of that impact and the degree to which it might be discernible from that of Liberal Peace politics.

The Challenges of Local Level Peacebuilding

In the context of Colombia, and in other cases such as Kenya and South Africa, local level peacebuilding has assumed a series of ambitious goals, some of which appear to reflect the objectives of top-down peacebuilding. Initiatives have sought to transform (i) the local and regional conditions framing conflict; (ii) the economic, political, social and cultural determinants of conflict; and (iii) the beliefs and behaviour of local actors involved in and affected by the conflict. Unsurprisingly, the sub-national orientation of local level peacebuilding initiatives brings with it a series of fundamental challenges, not least in those

45. Social movement scholarship identifies a similar framework through which to classify the impact for social movements. See Brett, 2008 (chapter one).
contexts, such as Colombia, where armed conflict is constituted by a series of interrelated local and regional conflicts, shaped and driven by broader patterns common to the national conflict. Local conflict dynamics should not be treated solely as extensions of the national conflict. Thus, they will warrant a contextualised response oriented towards local specificities, actors and social formations, which is articulated towards broader national level processes, as we shall discuss.

In his scholarship on LPCs, Odendaal has challenged the presumption of Liberal Peace politics that ‘local participants deserve to be only objects of humanitarian relief instead of active ‘architects’ of building their own peace’.46 Whilst the moral imperative to guarantee a central role for local actors in building peace in the face of the violent conflicts to which they are subject is undeniable, the political and practical obstacles faced therein, and the sheer perceived legitimacy, power and resources of the Liberal Peace project, present profound hurdles to its realisation. In other words, the asymmetrical power relationship between internationally supported national level initiatives and local peacebuilding immediately places the latter at a disadvantage. This would be the case not only because of the limited material and financial resources available at the local level, but also because of the capacity of state-centric Liberal Peace politics to impose itself and construct the perception of its own legitimacy through its omnipresence in the media, academic debate and other spaces. The consequence here has been the invisibility of local processes and their secondary position vis-à-vis and subjection to the former.

In a recent article on peace infrastructures in the first issue of MacGinty and Richmond’s seminal new journal Peacebuilding, van Tongeren details a series of challenges, including the lack of a formal legal/policy framework, unstable resources, the complicated operating environment, the lack of leverage local level peacebuilding actors may wield over higher level decision makers and an inability to manage conflict dynamics derived from tensions between local actors and national systems and from a lack of higher level political experience.47 In direct response to van Tongeren, scholars and practitioners alike have posited a series of further key challenges. Citing Chris Mitchell and Landon Hancock, Odendaal details a critical contribution:

‘They (Mitchell and Hancock) concluded that the complementarity between elites and grassroots in peacebuilding efforts is predominantly one-way (top –down) and not two-way. In fact, the question as to the necessity or desirability for complementary action remains contentious, especially in the view of those in government.’48

In this regard, perhaps the first potential pitfall of sub-national peacebuilding resides in its relative independence from national formal processes. Significantly, autonomy from national led processes has been recognised by both van Tongeren and Odendaal as one of the key strengths of local level peacebuilding and LPCs. Autonomy may permit local actors to maintain an agenda that reflects their self-identified interests and contextual sensibilities, is independent of formal political actors and government and is not determined by the attempts of elite actors to take advantage of political opportunities. For van Tongeren, informality also means that local actors may be less indebted to political actors and thus are less likely to be co-opted by them.49

However, Odendaal has correctly argued that the autonomy question represents the Achilles’ heal of local peace initiatives, and thus evidences both its principal strength and weakness.50 Informality may signify that initiatives lack the clout and perceived legitimacy enjoyed by elite interventions, ultimately limiting

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47. Van Tongeren, 2013.
49. Van Tongeren, 2013.
the ability of local peacemakers to exercise decisive and enduring impact. The distance between local peacebuilders and government may provoke, and in the case of Colombia has enhanced dependence on international external actors, potentially becoming a factor that may reduce prospects for long term sustainability and appropriation. Overdependence upon an externally driven agenda then marginalises expression of locally driven and identified needs. The dilemma becomes whether local peacebuilding interventions ultimately aim to engage with elite formal actors and require them to confer legitimacy upon them; do the local and the national require interdependence, and if so, for what reasons? Whilst recognition would in itself bring local level actors into the formal arena, it would simultaneously strip them of their most powerful asset and replicate the elitist orientation of Liberal peace politics; recognition is not synonymous to empowerment.

A related issue here lies in the localising and localised focus of sub-state peacebuilding initiatives. Countries are often characterised by the existence of established zones of systematic international intervention, in particular of support to municipal and civil society actors in areas with high incidence of conflict and violence, where state and local government institutions are often fragile. However, the challenge faced by peacebuilding actors in these contexts is to prevent the creation of quarantined islands of impact, particularly when initiatives lack articulation with state policy frameworks. As Mary Anderson has correctly indicated, ‘many good actions do not simply add up to peace’.51 The question arises then as to what degree a series of local level initiatives may have a cumulative effect upon the search for peace at the national level. The evidence from Colombia is not convincing, as we shall discuss. It is here then that, for Odendaal, the importance of establishing a peace infrastructure becomes evident: the very infrastructure may imply effective linkage between the local, regional, national and international.52 In short, as Anderson suggests, it is imperative to develop conscious links between local level initiatives and broader socio-political developments and that the former demonstrate their strategic relevance to the latter.

A final set of limitations derives from the expectations that may be thrust upon local level peacebuilding. Odendaal has argued that we should be cautious when evaluating the potential impact of LPCs, and in all likelihood, of local level peacebuilding more generally. He suggests that during armed conflict, impact will be restricted to limiting the damage caused to communities by the ongoing violence. As Brett has demonstrated for the case of Guatemalan civil society mobilisations,53 Odendaal argues that impact is likely to increase during negotiations or ‘when nationally agreed peace objectives exist and when a long-term peacebuilding strategy is being implemented’.54 However, as also evidenced by the Guatemalan case, the post-conflict scenario will precipitate a series of further challenges for local level peacebuilding.55

53. This discussion is beyond the scope of this article. See Brett, 2008: chapter two.
Similarly, Odendaal posits that LPCs, and in the framework of this article we would argue local level peacebuilding in general, is likely to encounter severe limitations in further three specific spheres: (i) they are not able to enforce peace, especially amongst groups intent on wielding violence; (ii) they are unable to redress structural root causes of conflict, ‘particularly when conflict is driven by national political, economic or cultural interests’; and (iii) they are incapable of overriding national political imperatives.56

The previous sections of this article have elaborated the theoretical framework through which local level peacebuilding initiatives in Colombia will subsequently be analysed. The remainder of this article will evaluate the impact of local level peacebuilding interventions in Colombia, supported by the UNDP. Of principal significance here will be a reflection upon the degree to which recent hybrid peacebuilding initiatives, characterised by the convergence of local, national and international actors and agendas, have the potential to represent a post-liberal, emancipatory politics of peacebuilding. In the words of Richmond

‘Increasingly, the question of how peacebuilding might lead to a state or polity built from the bottom-up and commensurate with both local and international understandings of peace has become central. In this discussion, civil society, local ownership, agency, and autonomy are crucial’.57

Chapter Two
The Context of Colombia’s Internal Armed Conflict
Colombia’s armed conflict has persisted for approximately five decades. The conflict is characterised by the interaction between national, regional and local level conflict dynamics. The roots of the conflict can be found in the so-called period of ‘la Violencia’, between 1948 and 1965.58 La Violencia was precipitated from within the capital city, Bogota, and evolved out of a bureaucratic and ideological dispute for control of the state between the country’s two principal historical political parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives.59 The rivalry between Liberals and Conservatives spread throughout the country, and was characterised by an internecine struggle for political power and over the control and ownership of rural lands. At the national level, from 1958 the ideological conflict was eventually managed by the installation of the National Front, an agreement between the parties to alternate political power that endured for sixteen years. At the regional level, however, political violence, social conflict and ideological polarisation persisted and acquired new logics.60

The onset of Colombia’s armed conflict has been identified as having been precipitated by the creation of the guerrilla organisations the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Army of National Liberation (ELN) in 1964, and of the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) in 1967. The guerrilla organisations essentially emerged in response to Colombia’s historically unjust system of land distribution and tenure, widespread extreme poverty and the lack of access to formal political channels. Said factors represented the principal original causes of the armed conflict between guerrilla factions and the Colombian armed forces, until it began to mutate in the late 1980s as a result of the changes precipitated with the end of the Cold War.

Significantly, the precarious presence of the state throughout a considerable part of the national territory has permitted illegal armed groups to maintain territorial and political control, particularly in rural areas. More recently, the growth and embeddedness of drug trafficking organisations and organised crime, often linked to illegal armed groups,61 has generated substantial economic resources and precipitated the establishment of powerful alliances between violent actors, including guerrillas, criminal organisations and paramilitary groups.62 At the same time, the internationalisation of the conflict, in particular with the involvement of systematic military and technical funding from the United States of America through Plan Patriota and Plan Colombia, brought a subsequent shift in the logic of the conflict, by conflating the war on drugs with the counterinsurgency struggle, culminating in Colombia’s war against terrorism. By framing the armed conflict in this way, former President Uribe (2002-2006; 2006-2010) garnered increasing economic, political and military external support, and contributed to the ever more profound complexities of Colombia’s enduring conflict.63

Paralleling the creation of guerrilla organisations, in the 1970s, a series of paramilitary organisations emerged in diverse regions of Colombia. Paramilitary organisations were characterised as legally recognised self-defence groups established by rural landowning elites to protect their property from the incipient guerrilla threat. In the 1990s, with the growth of paramilitary organisations, the Colombian government approved Decree 356 (1994), through which security cooperatives, or CONVIVIR, were created. The CONVIVIR were private organisations established with the aim of monitoring, reporting on and guaranteeing rural security and were designed to articulate cooperation between the rural landowning

58. The parameters adopted here are taken from Germán Guzmán Campos, Orlando Fals-Borda and Eduardo Umaña Luna, La Violencia en Colombia, Vol I (Bogota,Taurus) 2005. However, the period has been widely debated among Colombian scholars.
elite and the armed forces in the control of public order. Consequently, CONVIVIR strengthened the consolidation of the paramilitary project and were frequently involved in gross violations of human rights in collaboration with directly with military and police operations. Finally, in 1996, the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) were established, an illegal paramilitary organisation, albeit with broad operational and technical support provided by the high command of the Colombian state security forces (army and police) in the coastal department of Córdoba. Gradually, the activities and infrastructure of the AUC extended to other Colombian departments, orchestrating alliances with drug-trafficking organisations, landowning elites and local and national state and government officials. Under the government of President Uribe, the formal demobilisation of the AUC was negotiated through the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975), although the scope of its success is highly questioned, given that many groups have transformed into neo-paramilitaries or criminal bands (BACRIM).

Within this panorama, the Colombian internal armed conflict has been characterised by the extraordinary excess of use of force against the civilian population by all parties to the conflict, state, guerrilla, paramilitaries and drug-trafficking organisations, reflecting partially what Brett has identified in the case of the Guatemalan conflict as being ‘a war without battles’.

There is no precise official figure that would detail the violations and victims of Colombia’s armed conflict. However, in September 2012, the newly created Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparations to Victims of the Armed Conflict publicly signalled in their registry a statistic of 600,000 homicides committed during the armed conflict. The government of President Santos (2010-date) has placed on record that, between 1950 and June 2011, a total of 3,692,783 individuals were internally displaced within Colombia. Human rights organisations have presented alternative statistics: between 1964 and 2007, of an estimated total of 94,000 homicides attributed directly to the internal armed conflict, 54,000 were civilians; statistics for numbers of forcibly displaced persons are of 5,281,360 (1985-2011).

Regional Dynamics of Conflict

Since 2008, peacebuilding efforts at local level have been supported by the Programme Reconciliation and Development (REDES) in six regions of Colombia, characterised by distinct levels of deep-rooted and prolonged conflict: Nariño, Montes de María, Cesar, Meta, Huila and the Oriente Antioqueño. The following section briefly maps out the conditions of conflict that have shaped each region.

70. See http://noticias.univision.com/america-latina/colombia/article/2012-09-28/mas-cinco-millones-muertos-conflicto-armado-colombia#axzz2K7eW1o5s
Nariño\textsuperscript{74}

The department of Nariño is situated in the Southwest of Colombia, its southernmost municipalities located on the border with Ecuador. The department’s population represents approximately 1.6 million people, is ethnically diverse, including indigenous (10.8%), Afro-Colombian (18.8%) and ladino (70.4%), and is predominantly rural. In fact, the department has 67 indigenous reservations, including of the Pastos, Inga, Awá, Operaré-Siapidara, Cofán and Quillacingas peoples.\textsuperscript{75} Whilst the department had enjoyed a degree of relative peace and stability during the 1980s, Nariño has since come to represent one of the critical sites of Colombia’s armed conflict over the last decade.

The department is divided into 64 municipalities and three geographical regions: Pacific plains and coast; Andean region; and the Amazon slope to the East. The region is of acute strategic importance, given its location as a border zone naturally connected with the Andes, the Amazon and the Pacific. Moreover, it possesses important potential in the social, political, cultural, economic and environmental spheres, as well as being of significant ecological importance and a region of natural (exploitable) resources. Said characteristics may, in part, suggest why Nariño has, over the last seven years, become a crucial focus for international cooperation.

The department has suffered from severe statelessness, with minimal state presence in the majority of municipalities; where the state is represented, institutions, including the Human Rights Ombudsman and Procurator General, have been weak and ineffective. Nariñenses, in fact, share the perception that central government shows little interest in the region. The department has historically enjoyed very low levels of public investment, infrastructure is weak and principally focused upon Pasto, the departmental capital. Nariño demonstrates acutely high levels of poverty and extreme poverty: 65% of the population resides in conditions of poverty, whilst a further 30% live in conditions of indigence. Peasant farmers, in particular indigenous and Afro-Colombian, and rural women bear the burden of these conditions. In this context, opportunities for youth have remained scarce, precipitating, in part, the stigmatisation of male and female youth.\textsuperscript{76}

The impact of the armed conflict on Nariño began to be felt severely in the 1990s, despite the historical presence of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional (ELN) from the 1970s onwards. During the 1990s, the FARC began to consolidate its presence in the department through the Bloque Occidental, and the 2nd, 29th and 48th Fronts. In a similar process to other rural departments of Colombia, the presence of the insurgency provoked an intensification of paramilitary mobilisation in Nariño as self-defence groups sought to weaken FARC presence and disputed territorial control with them. Subsequently, from the 1990s, paramilitary organisations, including the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), were consolidated in the department through the Bloque de los Libertadores del Sur. The 1990s and early 2000s brought with it the critical spike in armed conflict in Nariño.

The AUC demobilised officially in a process supported by the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia of the Organisation of American States (MAPP-OEA) in July 2005.\textsuperscript{77} However, the process was principally a formal exercise, and did not lead to the fundamental transformation or disappearance of paramilitary organisations, but rather to their mutation into what the United Nations has defined as ‘neoparamilitary organisations’, and the Colombian government has termed Criminal Bands, or BACRIM.\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{74} See Nariño Análisis de la Conflictividad. Colombia. PNUD (2010).
\textsuperscript{75} See the General Census 2005, National Administrative Department Of Statistics, Bogota, Colombia
\textsuperscript{77} See the Sixth Quarterly Report of the Secretary General to the Permanent Council on the Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia (MAPP / OEA), presented in Washington on 1 March 2006.
\textsuperscript{78} See UNHCHR, 2012.
Out of this process, a series of key illegal armed actors have been consolidated in Nariño, including Los Rastrojos, Organización de Nueva Generación and the Águilas Negras. In this context, Nariño has increasingly become one of the key scenarios for Colombia’s armed conflict, as the broad range of illegal actors compete for territorial control, including for the cultivation of illicit crops and the control of strategic corridors. The most affected municipalities have been Samaniego, Policarpa, El Rosario, Cumbitara, Leiva, Los Andes Sotamayor and La Llanada.

The intensification of hostilities in the department was accompanied by a severe degradation in the nature of the armed conflict and accompanying violence, precipitating a humanitarian crisis in the region, characterised by systematic internal displacement (emphatically between 2001 and 2007) and flight across the border into Ecuador. Civilian victims of anti-personnel mines have grown exponentially since 2001, as has forced recruitment of youth and children by illegal armed groups.

However, and significantly, in this context, social mobilisation has historically been diverse, widespread and of significant importance, particularly over the last seven years. A broad range of movements has been sustained over the past three decades, including peasant organisations, including the Comité de Integración del Macizo Colombiano (CIMA), the Movimiento Social de la Cordillera y del Alto Patía, the Movimiento Social de la Cordillera and the Asociación para el Desarrollo Campesino (ADC). Indigenous and Afro-Colombian organisations have also established an important historical trajectory in the department, including the Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas del Norte del Cauca and the Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca (CRIC) and the Proceso de Comunidades Negras and the Red de Consejos Comunitarios del Pacífico Sur (RECOMPAS). Organisations working within the broad framework of human rights and culture have also been consolidated in the department, some with the support of national level coalitions such as REDEPAZ. These organisations include the Fundación para la Paz en el Sur de Colombia, Fondo Mixto de Cultura de Nariño and the Fundación Social. This historical trajectory sowed the seeds for an incipient peace infrastructure and has gradually come to represent the undergirding structure for the present peacebuilding processes in the department.

Oriente Antioqueño

The region of Oriente Antioqueño, in the department of Antioquia, is divided into 23 municipalities occupying an area of 7,021 km². The 23 municipalities are divided into four regions: Altiplano, Bosques, Páramo and Embalses. According to the 2005 Census the population is 522,819, of which 55% live in urban areas and 45% in rural areas. This zone is rich in biophysical diverse and rivers.

The Oriente Antioqueño has two distinct areas differentiated by their physical distance and cultural characteristics: the Near East and Far East. For several decades the Near East possessed two major centers of economic and political power: Marinilla and Rionegro. Both centres were influenced strongly by the Church, the Conservative Party and local elites that shaped a socially and politically cohesive society. Whilst Marinilla identified politically as conservative and Rionegro as liberal, both promoted the development of trade, industry and agriculture. The Far East was characterised by more dispersed settlement, which formed a social structure with lower levels of organisation and greater possibilities for independence.

80. General Census 2005, National Administrative Department Of Statistics, Bogota, Colombia
The Far East began to assume economic importance from the 1960s with the construction of the hydroelectric dams Guatapé, San Carlos, Jaguas and Calderas, the extension of power lines and the construction of the motorway between Medellin and Bogota. At present, the Oriente Antioqueño and the Department of Magdalena generate 25% of the country’s energy. However, the exclusionary use given to these projects has become a source of social conflict.\(^{82}\)

In the early 1980s, the FARC became active in the region. This sparked an era of conflict with the Colombian Army in the rural zones of the region. In the early 1990s, the ELN was present in the Embalses area, and from there spread to the Bosques area. Guerrilla activity was evidenced through murder, kidnapping, occupation of towns, enforced disappearances, land mines, forced displacement and illegal checkpoints on the motorway from Medellin to Bogota.\(^{83}\)

In 2000, guerrilla activity reached its highest peak due to the actions of the ELN, which prioritised attacks on electrical infrastructure in the areas of Embalses and Bosques. Reaction to this violence was characterised by a wave of massacres perpetrated by paramilitary groups, which, in turn, precipitated further guerrilla actions generating the displacement of hundreds of people to urban areas.\(^{84}\) In 2001, the presence of subversive groups began to decline under pressure from paramilitary groups. During this time, the region experienced social cleansing by groups that attacked young people, drug addicts, prostitutes and criminals. At his point in time, the ELN and FARC were diminished by paramilitary pressure and successful military actions, which forced them to retreat to strategic corridors in the region. In order to protect their traditional territories, the guerrilla increased its use of antipersonnel mines.\(^{85}\)

In 1994, the CONVIVIR were created in Antioquia. These were legal self-defense groups that were installed openly in municipalities, and subsequently dominated the population. These legal groups were the basis for the subsequent creation of paramilitary organisations in the region.\(^{86}\) In 1996, the Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio imposed their presence. Subsequently, the Cacique Nutibara arrived, with the objective of eliminating the other groups in the region and occupying territory. The Oriente suffered diverse forms of paramilitary violence, including massacres and selective killings, precipitating grave human rights violations. These groups maintained a presence in the urban areas of the region’s 23 municipalities, almost never becoming clandestine. Paramilitary organisations operated under three strategies: first, military, with the objective of clearing the way for subsequent political control through creating terror and executing criminal actions. Secondly, territorial as paramilitaries expropriated land from their enemies. Thirdly, the political strategy, with the objective of ensuring that political parties and individuals linked to their interests would consolidate public and electoral power.\(^{87}\)

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The Cacique Nutibara demobilised at the end of 2003, whilst, the Autodefensas Campesinas del Magdalena Medio demobilised in February 2006. Following these processes, said groups have rearmed as neoparamilitares or criminal gangs. Both the FARC, and paramilitary groups have developed practices in the cultivation, production and trafficking of drugs in the region. This enterprise has affected the social dynamics of the population. The cultivation of coca crops has led many peasants to live and work within a framework of illegality, which has destroyed social cohesion and undermined good governance.\(^{88}\)


\(^{85}\) León Valencia et al, “Parapolítica, La Ruta de la Expansión Paramilitar y los Acuerdos Políticos”, Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2007.


\(^{87}\) UNDP, Oriente Antioqueño, UNDP Colombia, June 2010.

In this context, the region has been characterised by the ongoing presence of civil society organisations that have struggled to claim those citizens’ rights violated by megaprojects. The presence of armed groups in the region has significantly increased violence against these movements, however, in particular against human rights defenders. Nevertheless, in spite of said violence, in recent years, social organisations and their impact have been consolidated, in particular with regard to the struggle for individual and collective rights. There now exist at least 11 networks, bringing together 115 civil society organisations, focusing primarily on victims and women’s rights. These networks are Mesa Rio Claro, mesa medios y comunicaciones del Oriente Antioqueño, Asociación Municipal de Mujeres del Municipio de Marinilla ASOMMA, Asociación de Victimas de San Francisco, Asociación Regional de Mujeres del Oriente Antioqueño AMOR, Mesa de desplazados, Agencia de Desarrollo Local del Oriente Antioqueño ADEPROA, Asenred, Asociación caminos de Esperanza madres de la candelaria, Asociación Regional de Víctimas Ciudadanos/As APROVIDA and Mesa de Derechos Humanos.

Montes de María

The subregion of Montes de María is composed of eight municipalities in the department of Bolivar and eight in the department of Sucre, located in the north of Colombia. Montes de María, which has an area of 6,466 km², has approximately 438,119 people, according to the 2005 census. However, as a consequence of the armed conflict, there has been massive mobilisation from rural to urban areas. According to the 2005 census, 55% of population of Montes de María lives in urban areas and 45% in rural areas.

The departments of Bolivar and Sucre possess human development indices below the national average, although in Sucre the situation is more precarious, where 59.7% of the population does not enjoy basic needs. According to the 2005 census, 22.8% of the region’s population is illiterate. Health coverage only reaches 76.3% of the total population. In the case of children, 25% of children under 5 years old suffer from acute malnutrition and another 20% are at risk of malnutrition. Only 12.8% of homes receive basic services of water, power and sewerage.

The region has been populated mainly by peasant families, and Afro-Colombian and indigenous peoples (the Zenú). In 1967, during the government of Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970), peasant families formed one of the Colombia’s strongest and most important social organisations: the ANUC (National Farmworkers Association), Sincelejo section. One of the main demands of ANUC was the need to redistribute land to small farmers and that fertile land would be used for agriculture rather than livestock. Similarly, other community organisations and trade unions were strengthened in the region and led important processes to claim collective rights. The national government of Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970), promoted a process of buying land from large landowners and selling it to farmers with agricultural credits. This process was accompanied by technical assistance for the commercialisation of agricultural products.

In the 1980s, the introduction of new seed technologies brought in from outside of Colombia that used chemicals that peasants were unable to obtain, and oil palm cultivation projects for the production of biofuels in Montes de María precipitated land sales. This process resulted in the increasing concentration of land and spiraling poverty for farm workers, a dramatic reversion of the gains previously achieved.

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90. See Montes de María Análisis de la Conflictividad. Colombia. PNUD (2011).
92. Carlos Caballero. “la impronta de Carlos Lleras Restrepo en la economía colombiana de los años sesenta del siglo xx”. revista de estudios sociales no. 32, pp. 91-102, 2009
the same time, in the region of Montes de María the FARC, ELN and ERP imposed their presence. During the processes to negotiate of demobilisation of these groups, the state agreed to create social investment programmes for those communities affected by the armed conflict. This agreement brought great hope for development and resulted in the consolidation of civil movements and the strengthening of leftist political parties, specifically, the Patriotic Union Party (UP). The UP subsequently came to occupy several positions in local government in the region. It was at this stage that paramilitary groups arrived.

With the paramilitary phenomenon, several of those farms that had been bought by the INCORA in the 1960s were usurped through armed threat. The paramilitaries attempted to co-opt indigenous authorities in order to capture financial resources, which were transferred to indigenous people from the central government. This situation has caused internal divisions that have weakened indigenous communities. In addition, threats and kidnappings of landowners by the guerrilla seriously aggravated the conflict and closed possibilities for peaceful resolution.

The departments of Bolívar and Sucre have been characterised by family clans anchored in politics. These families control local and regional governments, promoting a policy rooted in capitalism and in the defense and security of private property. Elites opposed popular organisation, in particular given that they perceived that these organisations supported the guerrilla, resulting in an ideological and class conflict in Montes de María.

In the 1990s drug trafficking and production and paramilitary organisations were consolidated in the region, as paramilitaries sought to articulate themselves with local social and political dynamics. However, elements of Montes de María society have exercised multiple acts of resistance that have prevented illegal groups from infiltrating society. There are at least nine networks of social organisations that bring together 397 organisations, mainly peasant organisations. The networks are Red de Jóvenes, Red de Comunicadores populares, Red de Artesanos, Mesa Regional de Derechos Humanos, PRIMMa, Red de Mujeres, Mesa Afro, Mesa Campesina and Mesa Indígena. The main feature of these networks has been the lack of links and interlocution with government institutions. The work has focused on strengthening the advocacy capacity of civil society to transform public policies.

After 1996, violence dramatically increased in the region as a result of the actions of paramilitary groups. Between 1997 and 2003, paramilitaries in the region displaced some 100,000 people and killed at least 115 people, including in massacres. This violence was justified through the establishment of a security system and the elimination of the guerrilla. However, their victims were primarily civilian population. The terror ultimately destroyed the important social networks that had previously been constructed by community organisations. Since this time, impunity has been systematic. Institutional weakness has facilitated the ability of paramilitaries to achieve territorial domination and infiltrate politics and culture in the region profoundly. This situation continues to this day, with the presence of all armed groups perpetuating forced displacement, evictions and land accumulation.

Cesar

The department of Cesar is located in the northeastern part of Colombia. Cesar has an area of 22,905 square kilometers and is divided into 25 municipalities. The department’s population represents

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approximately 1.1 million people, is ethnically diverse, including indigenous (4.9%), Afro-Colombian (11.9%) and ladino (83.2%). Significantly, 44.5% of the population suffers unsatisfied basic needs, representing almost double the national average (27.3%). This problem specially affects rural areas. According to the Colombian Census of 2005, 58.2% of the total population is poor and 14.8% live in extreme poverty.

The economy of Cesar, currently based on mining, especially of large coal holdings, has gone through periods of growth, a result of job creation and public resources from the exploitation of natural resources. However, these conditions have not generated improved living conditions for the majority of citizens, but rather have precipitated significant environmental degradation.

The guerrilla of the FARC and M-19 began to appear gradually in the 1960s and 1970s. However, it was from the 1980s, that the ELN would win greater presence and power in the region. Both guerrillas carried out social and political activity in Cesar related directly to poverty and exclusion. These political strategies were combined with kidnapping and extortion.

Given the impunity for the actions of the guerrilla and the weakness of the state to combat their activities, paramilitary organisations began to appear in Cesar during the early 1990s and began to force a broad sector of society to collaborate with their political and military project. Another part of Cesar’s elite willingly allied themselves to the paramilitaries as a means of guaranteeing political control and capital accumulation through illegal means, controlling illegal and legal businesses. This counter-violence led the guerrilla to lose control in Cesar and to the consolidation of paramilitary power by the end of the 1990s.

In July 2003, the process of negotiation between the AUC and the National Government began, with the explicit objective of the demobilisation of its members. In October 2005, the government reported the successful demobilisation of 16 structures of the northern block of the AUC; in January 2006, the Tayrona Resistance Front laid down their arms, and in March of that year, the entire northern block of the AUC demobilised.

Between 2003 and 2006, there was a major reduction in the number of homicides in the region. However, in 2006 and 2007 homicidal violence increased again. Initially, negotiations with the AUC had reduced violence. However, paramilitary groups began to rearm after forming an alliance with drug traffickers and common criminals. It is important to note that those municipalities where more homicides occurred between 2006 and 2007 were municipalities housing the largest open-cut coal mine in the country. At this point, the neoparamilitary organisation, the Black Eagles, Aguilas Negras, struggled to regain control of drug trafficking in the region. Civil society organisations argue that the Aguilas Negras are not limited to drug trafficking, however, and that their interests resemble those of the AUC.

Despite systematic violence, the region has at least 13 networks bringing together 230 social organisations. These networks are: the Network of Spokespersons of Valledupar, Impulse Commitee of Human Rights, Municipal Dialogue Space for displaced persons of Valledupar, Network for Victims of Cesar, Women’s Network of Cesar, Network of Indigenous Women Seymakan, Women’s iniciative for peace, Sons and daughters for Memory and the Human Rights Network of the Magdalena Medio.

100. UNDP. “Cesar, análisis de conflictividad”. UNDP Colombia. June 2010
102. Álvaro Rodríguez M. “de las armas a la desmovilización. el poder paramilitar en Colombia”. Revista Internacional de Sociología, Vol. 67, No 1, 2009.
103. Álvaro Rodríguez M. 2009
105. UNDP. “Cesar, análisis de conflictividad”. UNDP Colombia. June 2010
Meta\textsuperscript{106}

Meta is a department located in the central region of Colombia. The department has 29 municipalities, with 789,276 inhabitants, mainly mestizos, indigenous communities in 26 reserves and a minimal Afro-Colombian population. According to the 2005 Census, 1.26% of the population is indigenous, 2.51% are Afro-Colombian, 0.01% are native islanders and 94.68% are ladinos. Of these, 73.3% live in urban areas and 26.6% in rural areas.

Meta has a high percentage of poor population, settled mostly in rural areas. The department’s indigent population amounts to 11.2%. According to the 2005 census, the percentage of unsatisfied basic needs is 24.8% compared to 27.3% in the rest of the country. Public services are at a lower level in Meta, despite relatively high levels of public funds due to royalties.

Meta has historically been a department rich in livestock and agriculture. In recent decades the department has evidenced major differences between subsistence peasant economies and livestock and agro-industrial economies, defined by the concentration of land and power and the exploitation of natural resources through extractive models. Wealth in natural resources such as oil has helped to shape the economic character of the region and has also played a major role in providing significant areas for coca cultivation, as is the case in other departments.\textsuperscript{107}

It was in the eastern plains, or Llanos Orientales, where in the 1950s the Liberal Party decided to promote guerrilla groups to oppose the military power of the Conservative government. In this and other regions, irregular armed groups were created, some linked to the Conservative Party government and others to the Communist Party. The liberal and communist guerrilla began to advance and claim profound political and social transformation, demands that had emerged from the communities themselves. However, in the era of conservative hegemony and of the government of General Rojas Pinilla, little possibility for political pluralism and broad participation existed. The populations that felt excluded and that had been struggling for social, political and economic transformation perceived an opportunity for change when General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla attempted to initiate talks with guerrilla leaders, providing a guarantee for amnesty in exchange for social transformations.\textsuperscript{108}

Between June and November 1953, combatants in the Llanos, Antioquia and Santander laid down their arms on the basis of conditions that, according to the guerrilla, were never fulfilled. Significantly, some of the demobilised guerrillas were killed and, under these conditions, the communist guerrilla refused to disarm and continued its struggle. This would be the precursor to the formation of the FARC in 1966.\textsuperscript{109}

Since the 1960s, the guerrilla has been increasingly consolidated in the department, carrying out serious violations, forced displacement, killings, kidnappings, threats. In 1982, the General Amnesty Law was approved and the Government Security Statute was repealed under the government of Turbay Ayala (1978-1982). It was these developments that precipitated the possibility of a dialogue between the guerrilla and the government of Belisario Betancur (1982-1986), in La Uribe, Meta.\textsuperscript{110}

From the process in La Uribe a ceasefire agreement and truce were achieved, on March 28, 1984. In addition, the formation of the opposition movement, the Patriotic Union, was agreed upon. This party emerged in 1985 as a result of the demobilisation of some members of the FARC, as well as the political

\textsuperscript{106} See Meta Análisis de la Conflictividad. Colombia. PNUD (2011).
\textsuperscript{108} UNDP. “META. análisis de conflictividad”. UNDP Colombia. June 2010
\textsuperscript{109} Casas, U. De la guerrilla liberal a la guerrilla comunista. Librería América Latina. 1987
\textsuperscript{110} S Ramírez, S Ramírez, LA Restrepo, “Actores en conflicto por la paz: el proceso de paz durante el gobierno de Belisario Betancur (1982- 1986)” Siglo XXI. 1988
participation of trade unionists and social leaders. In 1986, the UP achieved significant results in the elections: 14 Congressional representatives and councilors throughout the country were elected. However, drug dealers, traditional political party factions, paramilitary groups and members of the military, led the political and physical extermination of the Patriotic Union at the national level.  

Meta experienced a boom in the illicit economy, which worsened in the 1970s and continued after the consolidation of drug trafficking in the 1980s. The leaders of drug trafficking organisations brought in the paramilitaries to address the threat posed by the FARC and by the Patriotic Union, which had been consolidated in the region. In this context, some large-scale livestock farmers and members of the private sector in the region began to finance the AUC as an instrument of political and armed struggle against the guerrilla and Patriotic Union in Meta.

After the 1980s, paramilitary organisations displaced the guerrilla, assumed control and appropriated areas of illicit crops and strategic corridors for their commercialisation. They developed their own projects in response to their economic interests and in order to control formal political channels and spaces. They utilised massacres, whose victims were accused of collaborating with the guerrilla, and the massive displacement of residents to appropriate lands. The paramilitaries exerted profound influence upon the political life of the region, especially in the offices of municipal mayors and councils. After the partial demobilisation of the AUC in 2005, paramilitary groups have established armed criminal structures dedicated to drug trafficking and organised crime.

Civil society in the region has continued to mobilise in the midst of armed conflict. The department has at least 13 human rights networks. These include: the Network of Social Organisation for a Humanitarian Agreement and Peace in Meta, the Departamental Dialogue Space Concerning Displacement, the Dialogue Space for Children and adolescents, the Date Base for Human Rights and Political Violence in Southeastern Colombia, the Dialogue Space for Youth, the Dialogue Space for Lands, as well as, Spaces that bring together indigenous and Afrocolombian organisations.

Huila y piedemonte amazónico

The department of Huila is located in the southeast of the country, in the Andean region. The department consists of 37 municipalities, and has a total population of 1,011,418 inhabitants, of which 59.5% are located in urban areas and 40.5% in rural areas, according to the 2005 census. With regards to ethnic diversity 1.05% of the population is indigenous, 1.17% is Afro-Colombian and 97.7% are ladinos.

In Huila the percentage of people below the poverty line stands at 59.7%. The index of unsatisfied basic needs is 32.5% in urban areas and 48.7% in rural areas, according to the 2005 census. Once more, this situation is striking bearing in mind that Huila receives high level of royalties from oil production.

This department, along with Tolima, was one of the main stages during the period of “La Violencia” (1946-1953). Liberal and Communist guerrillas and conservatives criminal gangs operated in these departments and disputed their territory. The confrontation escalated when some members of the guerrilla did not accept the amnesty offered by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla and, instead displaced to Huila. These groups represented the foundations for the creation of the FARC in the 1960s and whose presence continues to be a factor in the region.

112. UNDP “Meta, análisis de conflictividad”. UNDP Colombia. June 2010
114. Cavas, U. 1987
115. Anders Rudqvist, 1983
After the period of La Violencia, much of the flat and fertile lands along the Magdalena river became concentrated in very few hands. Farmers were evicted and expelled to the mountainous regions and jungles and many of them reached the foothills of Caquetá and Meta. After the creation of the FARC, the guerrilla imposed its presence in Huila. In 1967, the National Farmworkers Association (ANUC) was created, under President Carlos Lleras Restrepo, whose aim was to lead an agrarian reform in the region.

In the late 1970s, with the disintegration of the ANUC, the guerrilla gained ground. In the 1980s, both the FARC and ELN began to dispute the region for the territorial expansion of their organisations. Since then, the FARC has principally utilised the department as an area for strategic retreat and the expansion of its ranks, with the objective of gaining ultimate control over strategic corridors. In the 1990s, as in the other regions, paramilitary groups arrived in the region and the drug economy was consolidated.

The peace process between the national government and the FARC in Caquetá (1999-2002) signified that military forces in four municipalities in Meta and Caquetá were withdrawn. In this context, Huila became a strategic zone for the struggle of legal and illegal armed groups. At this time, a new paramilitary group was established, the Andaquies of the Central Bolivar Bloc. Increasing conflict was reflected in the spiraling level of killings, disappearances, massacres, displacement and threats against civilians. After the breakdown of the peace process, the intense military campaign brought escalated military operations that generated unstable government in Huila and increasing human rights violations and breaches of IHL.

Despite the reduction in the FARC’s capacity and territorial control in the region in recent years due to increasingly successful military actions, this guerrilla continues to maintain a permanent presence and represents an alternative power base in Huila. Moreover, the social base of the guerrilla in Huila and Caquetá remains consolidated. Significantly, paramilitary organisations were not able to achieve or impose a permanent presence here, as in other regions. Economically the region has been characterised principally by small and medium landowners and producers, signifying the lack of political capacity of large landowners and political parties to maintain control and local power. Today, after the partial demobilisation of paramilitary groups, however, emerging neoparamilitary criminal structures are beginning to exert power.

Civil society organisations continue to exist in Huila and the Piedemonte Amazónico. The region has at least nine networks working on human rights and peacebuilding. These networks include: the Departamental Human Rights Network, the National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (ONIC), The Dialogue Space for displaced persons, the Association of Traditional Authorities of the Indigenous Council of Huila, the New Hope Foundation, The Social Fundation for sustainable development and the Platform for Social Organisations.

117. UNDP. “Huila y Piedemonte Amazónico, análisis de conflictividad”. UNDP Colombia. June 2010
Chapter Three
Local Level
Peacebuilding
in Colombia
Local Level Peacebuilding in Colombia

In this chapter, we document and analyse the impact of local level peacebuilding in the departments of Nariño, Oriente Antioqueño, Montes de María, Cesar, Meta y Huila in Colombia, processes supported through the United Nations Development Programme, in particular through the Reconciliation and Development Project, or REDES.

As has been previously proposed, the framework through which to gauge the impact of peacebuilding processes adopted in this research takes into account four particular realms. Firstly, we explore the capacity of local actors to construct a peace infrastructure and the characteristics that said infrastructure has been able to impose. A second sphere of impact is in the degree to which peacebuilding at the local level has shaped changes in the realm of political culture, including, in particular, the knowledge and exercise of rights, and the degree to which these transformations have contributed to the construction of an effective citizenship. Thirdly, we evaluate the degree to which actors involved in building peace at the regional level have wielded impact within the politico-institutional realm. Here we seek to elucidate whether actors have exercised influence upon public policy and institutional arrangements at the municipal and departmental levels. Finally, we explore the degree to which peacebuilding at local level has contributed to the development and consolidation of economic alternatives within the regions.

Clearly, changes in these distinct realms are far from mutually exclusive, but rather are likely to reinforce one another. It is the resulting overall, cumulative and integral impact of interventions in each sphere that may ultimately contribute to a sustainable process of peacebuilding at the local level, although this does not guarantee that said transformations are likely to extend upwards to the national level. Impact within the politico-institutional sphere, for example through the establishment of new democratic institutions, inclusive public policy and progressive legislation at departmental level, in itself likely to be the consequence of social mobilisation and pressure from civil society, will provide new opportunities for citizens. In short, rights tend to be won through citizen struggles. By engaging with local level democratic institutions and demanding the guarantee of provisions consecrated in new legislation, actors may learn practices and engage with mechanisms through which to advance their own interests and exercise their rights, whilst at the same time potentially activating and legitimising the institutions themselves. Significantly, it has often been the case that social mobilisation precipitates demands for a broader normative framework, as recognition and exercise of minimum rights beget demands for broader rights of citizenship, such as economic, social and cultural rights. What remains of importance is that the generation of a rights culture from below begins to shape the nature and behaviour of local institutions, potentially edifying structures for deepening peace and democratic arrangements. It is to the evaluation of the impact of local level peacebuilding initiatives that we now turn, examining each sphere individually.

United Nations Peace Support Initiatives in Colombia

Odendaal (2010) has argued that the UNDP has a number of important strengths which imbue the agency with a key capacity and comparative advantage over other international actors in the framework of
support to peacebuilding processes. According to Onedaal, the continued long-term presence of the UNDP in a country context, combined with its global presence—giving UNDP functionaries access to important number of communities of practice—allow the agency to carry out its actions basing them on specific country knowledge and extensive global experience in peacekeeping and peace building, in short, they signify a key dual-centred approach.

A central axis of the UNDP’s initiatives in Colombia has been aimed at installing technical capabilities for national actors to construct peace, an aspect of successful peacebuilding according to Onedaal. By bringing together this central programmatic tenet with the UNDP’s strategy of combining ‘territorial operations, contact with non-governmental, national and positive relationships with national governments’, Odendaal argues that the agency ‘has the ability to support regional processes of peace building and peace infrastructures at the national level’. Here, the UNDP has demonstrated a unique ability to construct and activate dense networks between actors (governmental and non-governmental) in diverse regions of the country, in order to support peacebuilding processes. Consequently, the UNDP has sought to bridge a critical gap: to articulate peacebuilding processes at the local and regional levels, principally involving civil society and local government institutions, with those at the national level determined by elite level actors, including the central government.

A further important comparative advantage of the UNDP has been that, in the midst of conflict, the agency has promoted effective local efforts to build peace and support human development. Interestingly, according to Virginia Bouvier, these initiatives have challenged the traditional timeframe for the establishment of peacemaking—peace-keeping—peace building; the scheme that has historically framed the conventional conceptual view of the international community and academia concerning the transition from conflict to peace. UNDP initiatives demonstrate then how ‘Even before peace talks are successful, it is possible to promote social processes that weaken the structural conditions that favour violence and create an environment conducive to development and peace’. The impact of UNDP support to local level peacebuilding interventions has shown that the international community can be at its most effective by assuming a subsidiary and complementary role that supports and strengthens local, regional and national interventions, rather than imposing or leading the agenda for peace. This aspect of UNDP initiatives in Colombia has meant that interventions have fermented a degree of appropriation or ownership of peacebuilding processes within different sectors of Colombian society whilst conflict persists.

The methodology adopted by UNDP have been framed upon the ideas proposed by innovative thinkers such as John Paul Lederach, in particular, the concept of “peace architectures” or “peace infrastructures”. By supporting the building of dense networks, the UNDP in Colombia has sought to contribute to the reconstruction of the country’s social fabric and social relations, torn apart by decades of armed conflict and violence. By weaving anew the social fabric, regional actors, with the help of international cooperation, ultimately aim to edify social relationships based upon trust between citizens and the State.

Consequently, UNDP initiatives have moved beyond a conventional conflict transformation framework to focus instead on the design and implementation of innovative processes that support and, to a degree, engender local level peacebuilding in the midst of conflict. These processes aim to precipitate meaningful articulation between State institutions, civil society actors and international cooperation.

122. See Bouvier, 2009: 427.
The ART-REDES Initiative

The UNDP’s flagship initiative for peacebuilding in Colombia has been the Area for Peace, Development and Reconciliation and, in particular, its programme ART-REDES, established in 2004. The principal political allies and donors to ART-REDES during the entire operation of the programme have been the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), run out of the Swedish Embassy in Bogotá, and by the Spanish International Development Agency (AECID) and the United Nations Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), with headquarters in New York. The partnership with said actors went beyond their traditional role as donors towards both organisations enjoying direct involvement in the formulation of the programme’s country strategy. ART-REDES has orchestrated its multidimensional interventions throughout six regions of Colombia, using a gender and differential perspective and human rights and human development approach. The agency’s partners and counterparts have primarily been those historically less visible actors, women, indigenous and Afrocolombians, peasant farmers and youth, who have represented the principal victims of the armed conflict and political and social violence. Whilst these populations have historically lacked political space and been unable to make their voices heard within broader society, today their perceptions and experiences have shaped the trajectory of UNDP’s interventions in Colombia.

In this context then, the ART-REDES programme has focused on protecting vulnerable populations affected by conflict and social and political violence, while seeking to fulfill the fundamental goal and impact of strengthening their capacities as rights-holders to influence government and State institutions. UNDP interventions aim to accompany local mobilizations by strengthening their knowledge of rights and their subsequent ability to exercise effective agency. UNDP strategic initiatives have been undergirded by the consideration that conflict precipitates a differential impact on ethnic and demographically diverse populations. Conflict in Colombia has levelled a disproportionate impact on women, peasant farmers, Afrocolombians and indigenous peoples, populations which are also affected distinctly according to their own cultures, values, and worldviews. Peacebuilding interventions that have taken place in this context have been framed through a perspective that addresses localized historical conditions and grievances specifically and thus responds differentially to said grievances. This approach forms the backbone of initiatives that seek to generate the conditions required for an endogenous process of peacebuilding from below.

(i) Constructing a ‘peace infrastructure’

Methodologically, the construction of a peace infrastructure is of particular relevance in the case of those processes that seek to build peace from below and from a differential and regional perspective, as has been evidenced by local level actors in Colombia. The consolidation of ‘webs’ or structures that articulate individuals and collective groups across social classes and spheres (state, civil society, political society) establishes a potential framework from which to facilitate shared communication, collective learning, identification of diverse and, at times, contradictory needs and interests and to engender mutual support and recognition. Said networks then may come to represent the mechanism through which vulnerable civil society actors may interact with each other, and, significantly, with local government and the state, spheres from which they have been historically marginalised. This peace architecture then literally edifies a structure out of which peacebuilding initiatives emanate, logically representing the point from which local capacities initially develop and upon which local ownership of peacebuilding processes may be conceded.

Over the past seven years, in the six regions relevant to this paper, civil society and local governmental actors have been strengthened at departmental and municipal levels, evidencing the construction of a
series of incipient peace architectures at regional level. Ongoing political and financial support has been provided through three UNDP initiatives – the Reconciliation and Development Programme (REDES), and other UN programmes in certain regions. In this regard, the territorial focus adopted by the UN has been implemented as part of the broader United Nations’ Country Strategy as stipulated in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UN interventions in this respect are channelled through a series of diverse projects and programmes including the “Window for Peace” Programme (financed by the Spanish government), the “Growing Together” Programme (financed by the Canadian government), the Transitional Justice Fund (financed by various donors) and the programme Sustainable Solutions for the Displaced Population (financed by a series of donors and implemented in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR).

In Nariño, the region with perhaps the most consolidated peace infrastructure, building upon historical mobilisations of civil society in the region at the departmental level, 289 civil society organisations have participated in the design of a formal peacebuilding proposal that was finalised in 2011, with the collective approval of civil society, local government and state institutions. As a result of the proposal, eight permanent negotiation tables have been created that bring together the aforementioned actors, and include the security forces. These spaces address thematic issues identified by local actors, including human rights protection; integral attention to victims of the armed conflict; humanitarian assistance; women and gender; youth; local economic development; the environment; governance; and culture. Actors engaged in these spaces have participated in capacity-building and rights-training initiatives coordinated by Colombian and international actors. A key aim has been to guarantee coordination (civil society-local government-state) in the formulation of inclusive public policies and local development plans, as we shall see below. According to interviews, since the beginning of its implementation, a key success of this strategy has been the increasing visibility and participation of organisations representing traditionally excluded groups, particularly women, youth, indigenous and Afro-Colombians in political processes at the departmental level.

Similarly, in the department of Cesar, a series of networks that bring together civil society and local government institutions have been established with a mandate to debate and promote themes that are key to transforming conflict at the local and regional level. As a result, 76 social organizations that work on issues of human rights, IHL and peace building in the Caribbean region form part of the Departmental Promotion Committees and the “Route of the Caribbean”, as an articulated proposal in the region for building participatory process on human rights and IHL. This process has increased their capacity to shape and make dialogue with state and government institutions, other organizations and international cooperation through the Department Tripartite Committees.

As a result of training and capacity building with civil society organisations supported jointly by PNUD and UN Women, for example, the Network of Spokespersons for Valledupar, the departmental capital, was created. This network – composed of six governmental institutions, five academic institutions and 15 civil society organisations – promotes dialogue around the issue of gender-based violence, through the campaign ‘Put an End to this Now: Nothing Justifies Violence against Women’.

A series of formal mechanisms have also been established to address a series of issues linked directly to the armed conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Cesar. Civil society mobilisations supported by ART-REDES regularly engage with local government officials, including from the Office of the Governor, within

123. International funding oriented toward local government and civil society organisations in Nariño between 2007 and 2011 represented USD $28,950,000. Funds were framed through strategic peacebuilding and human development projects, the objective of which was the collective construction of a strategic territorial based peacebuilding project, designed and implemented by local government and civil society actors with the support of the UNDP. The territorial strategy designed and implemented in Nariño evidences a hybrid space in which the UNDP has sought to strengthen local capacities for peace. Local actors assume the principal role in identifying the principal challenges faced by them and designing and implementing strategic initiatives aimed at transforming said conditions. The UNDP strategy is undergirded by a vision that perceives local actors as the principal motor for peacebuilding and international actors as assuming a secondary role in this context.
the framework of the Departmental Technical Committee for Land and the Departmental Committee for Integral Attention of the Displaced Population (IDPs). These formal structures facilitate dialogue with and provide unprecedented access for civil society actors on key issues relating to peacebuilding, including land, returning IDPs, protection and prevention, socio-economic alternatives and humanitarian attention.

In the case of the Oriente Antioqueño, a region that has historically experienced egregious systematic human rights violations, a focus of the organisations that have established a peace infrastructure has logically become the issue of human rights and international humanitarian law. In this context, at least thirty civil society organisations and local governmental institutions, accompanied by agencies from the United Nations System, have created the Metropolitan Coordinating Table for Human Rights. The specific aim of this entity has been to create a platform through which to facilitate debate and dialogue over the human rights situation in Antioquia. Civil society actors have engaged on an equal footing with local government functionaries, elaborating a process to identify their needs and interests in this respect, and to recommend a series of specific, regionally oriented public policies to shape both local and national level discussions on human rights. These activities, similarly carried out in the other five regions relevant to this paper, feed in to the process to formulate the Joint Declaration on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law to be launched as public policy by the central government and supported by the United Nations System and international cooperation in Colombia.

The empowerment of communities in the Oriente Antioqueño has precipitated the creation of multiple spaces. A Regional Human Rights Dialogue Space exists, with the participation of local organisations and institutions to discuss environmental, social and economic issues, as well as other megaprojects. Eighteen organizations participated actively in the construction of the report “Local Capacities for Peace in Eastern Antioquia”. This report recognizes the capacity of organizations to respond to conflict in the region and the sustainability of such processes.

A metropolitan Dialogue Space for Human Rights has been created in Antioquia, linking 30 organizations, the United Nations System, and state and government institutions. This space now represents a platform for the development of the Joint Declaration of Human Rights and IHL.

The history of the department of Montes de María has similarly been shaped by grave violations of human rights, in particular, in recent decades, by the violence executed by paramilitary organisations. In this context, human rights defenders have faced systematic attacks, threats and killings. The network of civil society organisations, in particular of human rights defenders, and local government institutions that has been established over the past eight years in the region has demonstrated a crucial advance in the restoration of the social fabric torn apart by decades of armed conflict in the region. The peace infrastructure in Montes de María has played an instrumental role in rebuilding trust between citizens and institutions and establishing a regional agenda for peacebuilding in which context state institutions are gradually being re-activated and citizenship exercised. Two years ago, the network was consolidated with the establishment of the Sucre Dialogue Framework for Rights Guarantees. In this regard, another important space has been established with the objective of identifying and recognising Afrocolombian communities in Montes de María as an important political actor. The space involves ten municipal dialogue spaces, which developed an Etnoplan. The Etnoplan has become a tool to create inclusive public policies with a differential focus. This was a key tool for managing the inclusion of the interests and needs of Afrocolombian communities in Municipal Development Plans.

In the case of Meta, an incipient infrastructure for peace has been generated, constituted by a series of key civil society organisations and departmental level governmental institutions. Ten networks articulate at least fifty civil society organisations, leading to the increase in the capacity and incidence of dialogue
with the authorities and the introduction of the agenda of civil society into local politics. Consequently, civil society has become a legitimate actor, positioning its agenda and leaders around issues of public policy in gender equity and indigenous issues and the prevention of the recruitment of children and adolescents. These issues have now been included in the Departmental Development Plan. Civil society has also managed to articulate activity and mobilisations in the municipalities of Upper and Lower Ariari.

At the same time, victims’ organisations have played a significant role in the creation of the Regional Committee for the Attention to Victims. The Committee represents an unprecedented tripartite space for interlocution between victims, their organisations, six specific duty-bearing state and local government institutions and the United Nations System.

Finally, in the department of Huila and the accompanying zone of Piedemonte Amazónico, eight separate mechanisms have been established to bring together formal state and government institutions, including the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and civil society organisations. The overall objective has been to provide formal channels through which to promote dialogue over conflict transformation issues and mechanisms and to construct specific peacebuilding instruments, in particular with regard to IDPs, the guarantee of economic and social rights and the collective cultural rights of indigenous peoples. A further issue that has been prioritised on the local peacebuilding agenda in the region is the issue of transnational corporations and mega-projects, such as dams and resource extraction. Equally, indigenous communities (Anaconas, Guambianos and Nasas Paeces) have demonstrated the development of their capabilities to negotiate without violent means and reiterating its autonomy as indigenous peoples.

Another component of the infrastructure for peace in Huila has been the creation of new capabilities for mediation and nonviolent conflict transformation, international human rights law and the political and social rights of people in a situation of forced displacement. As a result, in 2011, 735 people (374 men and 361 women) were trained and replicated their experiences with other students. This was made possible through training initiatives developed with OHCHR, UNHCR, UN Women and the Accompaniment Program on Comprehensive Victim Intervention and the Internal Armed Conflict Unit in the Surcolombiana University. This process has allowed 18 Managers to obtain a diploma in Humanitarian Issues, enhancing their participation in local politics.

Peace infrastructures are neither evidenced nor consolidated by the quantity of organisations that constitute a network, but rather by its density, the effective articulation between the constituent parts of this ‘spider’s web’ and the degree to which social relationships are edified and transformed by the infrastructure. The mere existence of a peace infrastructure, in itself, does not signify successful impact in local level peacebuilding. On the contrary, it is likely that the coherent articulation of dense networks of social actors through a peace architecture will actually represent a critical minimal condition for peacebuilding processes at the local level to possess and realise the potential to precipitate social transformation. In short, without the establishment of a functional peace infrastructure that brings together a breadth of social actors from diverse sectors, including state and non-state actors, local level peacebuilding is unlikely to yield any significant impact. In the case of Colombia’s regions, the sheer diversity and number of actors represented in the incipient peace architecture has been accompanied and augmented by an emerging dynamic characterised by increasing interaction and deepening trust between social actors. This dynamic has strengthened the connections between actors and evidences an important and successful first step in building peace. However, we now turn to a more detailed examination of the actual impact of those local peacebuilding efforts in Colombia that stem from the established peace infrastructure. In short, we will explore whether the activities of social mobilisation, political participation and democratic dialogue articulated through incipient peace infrastructures have wielded enduring impact and built emancipatory peace.
(iii) Political Culture

The process through which rights are learnt, claimed and exercised by civil society, and their guarantee subsequently demanded from state institutions, is one of the most critical contributions of peacebuilding to socio-cultural and political transformation in post-conflict transitions. The significance of these changes has been demonstrated extensively in the context of Latin America, in particular with regard to the impact that social movements and civil resistance have wielded in the process of transition from authoritarian rule, although there has been less scholarship on this aspect of peacebuilding.\textsuperscript{124} Scholarship has demonstrated how a critical measure of change and its potential irreversibility is reached when, as a consequence of the process of learning rights through social mobilisation, citizens begin to interiorise a culture of rights that precipitates shifts in the norms and behaviour of state institutions and agents, as well as in their own capacities to exercise these rights. Foweraker has argued that, for this reason, social movements may be understood as ‘schools of rights’.\textsuperscript{125} A key impact that organisations amassed within the infrastructures for peace developed in the six regions of Colombia addressed in this document has been precisely that: to teach citizens their rights and to hold duty-bearers responsible through interlocution with the state and government institutions at the local level. Shifts within the politico-institutional sphere would be hard pressed without knowledge of the rights and duties of citizenship.

For example, this this regard, in numerical terms, 3,114 personas (60\% women and 40\% men) were involved in both formal (diplomas) and informal training programmes. Of these individuals, according to UN statistics, approximately 73\% of these individuals were members of those organisations supported by Art-Redes, whilst 27\% represented state or government institutions. In this regard, and significantly, training programmes were oriented above all to no-government and non-state actors.

The principal mechanism through which this incipient rights culture has been fostered in Nariño has been through popular education initiatives. Over the past three years, 27 Youth Leadership Schools were established in the department, enabling 800 young Nariñenses to develop leadership skills, comprehend normative frameworks relative to their rights and to acquire tools to map out conflict transformation strategies. Significantly, of the aforementioned candidates in the 2011 elections, over 60\% had participated in the Youth Leadership Schools. It was precisely these individuals who participated in the dialogues that eventually shaped the Public Policy on Youth approved in 2011. Similarly, seventeen Municipal Schools for Female Leaders were run over the last three years, in turn enabling 850 women to develop key leadership and advocacy skills. In 2012, UN statistics evidence that 142 women participated in the Departmental Dialogue Space for Women, a space that focused particularly on the formulation and execution of the public policy for gender and women at the level of the Department of Nariño.

As a result of the actions of those actors that constitute Nariño’s peace architecture, victims have begun to organize, demanding their rights from local government and state institutions, in particular pushing for collective cultural rights through a differential rights-based approach. Indigenous and Afro-Colombian actors, youth and women have played a crucial role here.

At the same time, victims’ organisations have assumed an increasingly visible role as they disseminate


the Law Concerning Victims and Land Restitution within a broad spectrum of municipalities. In this regard, victims have mobilised through the Platform for Social Organisations, Victims and the Defence of Human Rights in Nariño, which represents 90 social organisations.

The Inter-Institutional Committee for Victims, constituted by public officials and civil society organisations, has recently developed a work plan based around training and participation in public policy, the promotion and dissemination of human rights frameworks and the analysis of armed conflict. Consequently, those public officials that have received the training have augmented their knowledge of rights, and ultimately improved their ability to guarantee victims’ rights in the wake of the launch and implementation of Law 1448.

In the Oriente Antioqueño, the strategy relating to the sphere of political culture has similarly focused on strengthening the capacity of local organisations. In this regard, 200 leaders participated in the Legal School for Victims’ Training. The school taught organisations to improve their capacities relating to how to provide effective legal guidance to and identify roadmaps to guarantee access to justice for victims. Significantly, these leaders are currently replicating the training process with other civil society organisations in key municipalities, which has reached over 600 leaders of diverse victims’ organisations.

A further focus in this region has been to build important spaces through which communities (in the municipalities of Granada, San Francisco, Algeria and the Union) are able to begin processes to recover the historical memory fractured by the armed conflict. A series of initiatives have been developed in association with civil society organisations and local authorities, including the museum Never Again, in the municipality of Granada and the monument to victims in San Francisco.

In the words of Gloria Elsy Ramírez, from the organisation Asovida (Oriente Antioqueño), curator of the Museum Nunca Más (Never Again)

“With the learning that came out of the training processes we undertook, we created the Museum Never Again as a memory project. With this project, we seek a process of dignification, of non-repetition and awareness for the community to understand that war is not the way. The museum has changed people’s mentality. Now we think about restoring our rights, we think we are dignifying the Museum with our loved ones, we are clearing their names from suspicion and accusation, and we now possess spaces where families have contact with their loved ones. They can write the history of that person. The Hall of Remembrance, of Memory, has especially made me understand that it is not only my pain, but there are others who have experienced similar things. It is a collective pain, everyone’s pain, and this helps us live and process it.”

In Montes de María, similar processes have taken place, including the design and implementation of a regional strategy for reconstruction of historical memory by participants from five victims’ networks, aimed at recuperating truth and memory in the Montes de María region. This process brought the construction of the Mobile Museum for Memory, and five community commemorations in Mampuján, Las Brisas, Las Palmas, and Chengue Macayepo. Along similar lines, a similar network was established, the Dialogue Space for Interlocution with Victims was also established.

In Cesar, training women in the themes of gender equity and women’s rights has led to the implementation of a gender equity strategy from within civil society, aimed at local government and state institutions. The strategy has developed three specific components: strengthening the articulation between women’s organizations; the construction of programmes for transitional justice for female victims, including prevention and elimination of violence against women in Valledupar; and the shaping of public policies relating to gender equity. A key impact of this process was the inclusion of a specific chapter relative to

Similarly, 116 organisations, including of IDPs, human rights, women’s, youth, indigenous, Afrocolombian, peasant and church organisations, participated in training programmes relating to the knowledge and recognition of international and national normative frameworks relative to human rights and international humanitarian law. In particular, participants learnt the significance of those mechanisms established under Law 1448. Said programmes precipitated the formation of six municipal level Councils for Peace and Human Rights that have established key advances in the characterisation and identification of perpetrators and of those victims eligible for reparations. Knowledge concerning these mechanisms has been critical in strengthening the institutional capacity at the level of local institutions for the implementation of Law 1448, leading to a gradual improvement in local government response and integral assistance to victims of the armed conflict.

In Meta, the focus on reconstructing the social fabric and historical memory fractured during the internal armed conflict has prioritised more than 1,483 cases relating to victims. In this regard, a database documenting and analysing human rights violations in southeastern Colombia has been established. Complementing this initiative, civil society organisations, in collaboration with local authorities and ART-REDES have constructed municipal museums dedicated to historical memory. This strategy has led in turn to 300 victims receiving psychosocial and legal attention from the Human Rights Ombudsman concerning procedural stages relating to the Justice and Peace Law (Law 975). Training has also been carried out with over 150 civil servants in the themes of victims’ rights, the prevention of human rights violations, and the development of inclusive public policies.

In Huila, the exercise of rights has similarly begun with the recovery of victims’ memory. The processes to reconstruct truth concerning what has taken place during the armed conflict represents an integral part of the exercise and guarantee of rights and of peacebuilding. In order to visualise and monitor the grave human rights violations that have taken place in the departments of Huila and Caquetá, an Observatory for the Analysis of Human Rights and data record of violent acts have been created.

In Huila and the Piedemonte Amazónico, a course in The Political Constitution and the Culture of Peace was established at the University Surcolombiana. The course has been made a compulsory subject for all law students, with the aim of guaranteeing that law students, and later practising lawyers, would obtain a comprehensive view of the rights of victims and that the exercise of the profession would increasingly include this approach. Of further significance has been the process through which 173 victims of the internal armed conflict have been recipients of legal support and representation mechanisms relating directly to consultation, legal advice and representation, as well as permitting processes through which to document and recuperate historical memory. These processes, run by the Programme for the Accompaniment and Integral Intervention of Victims of the Armed Conflict at the University Surcolombiana and Caguan Lives have evidenced key advances in the guarantee of the rights of victims to justice, truth and reparation. Moreover, the initiatives have led to the creation of 478 legal consultations by victims, follow-up to three emblematic cases of extra-judicial executions in Huila, the recuperation of indigenous lands and the redefinition of the reporting of displacement as a crime in southern Colombia.

(ii) The Politico-Institutional Realm

Electoral process

In the run up to the 2011 municipal elections, organisations in Nariño followed a strategy that aimed to
extend civil society reach into the formal political arena by influencing the sphere of local government as a means of consolidating local level peacebuilding processes and deepening democratic quality. The coalition Nariño Alliance: Nariño Decides was established with the aim of assuring an inclusive electoral process and representative political party programmes. The mid-term objective of the coalition was to strengthen whichever political administration was subsequently elected, by guaranteeing that all parties formulated comprehensive political platforms. The Alliance carried out over 32 forums with candidates in over 25 municipalities in Nariño, reaching over 10,000 people. Within the framework of the elections, 97 civil society organisations in Nariño fielded a total of 114 candidates. Significantly, of the candidates, 29 were elected to mayoral and local counselor seats. Whilst the election of civil society actors to public office represents a success in itself, of more profound significance is the degree to which, as a consequence, the political and ideological spectrum within local politics was immediately broadened, as representation was extended to previously excluded social and political actors. As a result of these formal changes, the percentage of women elected to municipal office rose from 9% in 2003 to 12.5% in 2011. Of importance now will be the degree to which newly elected officials will be able to maintain their own agenda and influence the shape of public office and policies.

In Antioquia, civil society organisations lobbied candidates in the run-up to the 2011 municipal elections, focusing on a series of strategic themes that had represented an integral part of the platforms of those organisations that constitute the peace infrastructure. The themes prioritised were victims’ rights, Millennium Development Goals, children’s and women’s rights. The 283 candidates for election to public office in Eastern Antioquia received a diploma, taught to them by members of civil society organisations. Building upon this knowledge and understanding of a series of complex themes, candidates in 80% of the municipalities of Eastern Antioquia proposed programmes relating to gender equality and victims’ rights. Of particular importance was the work relating to women’s rights carried out by the Regional Women’s Association AMOR (“LOVE”). In the aftermath of the elections, civil society organisations prioritised five municipalities, and have carried out follow-up meetings with the elected officials with the aim of shaping Local Development Plans. The process of incorporating more diverse themes in the local political agenda has begun to transform the nature of public policy, incorporating new social actors and more complex political issues that respond to the needs and interests identified by social actors in the region. It might be said that democracy is being strengthened and transformed from below.

Similarly, in Montes de Maria, during 2010 and 2011, fifteen separate forums for debate and analysis were created by civil society organisations with the support of the UNDP regional office. Over fifty individual leaders from peasant organisations incorporated in the Regional Peasant Forum were involved in this initiative that ultimately sought to impose the themes of land and priorities for rural populations on to the electoral agenda.

In Meta, civil society organisations formed the Alliance for Territorial Democracy, Development and Peacebuilding, which developed an electoral strategy that was carried out in eighteen municipalities. Active in the Alliance were civil society organisations, professional bodies, local media and the private sector. As a result of lobbying by the Alliance, party candidates in all eighteen municipalities signed pacts that established a set of fundamental rules for political participation in the elections, rules based upon democratic principles and international human rights standards. Significantly, over 5,000 local residents attended the forums, with the opportunity to address the political candidates directly on their programmes. Moreover, and significantly, after fielding a broad range of their own candidates, including 21 female candidates, civil society organisations positioned seven women in leadership roles within public office across a range of municipalities. This was an unprecedented and crucial achievement. As was the case with Montes de Maria, the accompaniment and follow-up given by civil society organisations to the newly elected government has resulted in the incorporation of a series of key themes into Departmental and municipal development plans: peacebuilding; human rights; millennium goals; victims’ rights and territorial planning.
The electoral strategy followed by civil society organisations in the department of Cesar sought initially to promote dialogue and debate around issues crucial for the demographic and historical specificities of the coastal department. These issues included victims’ rights, women and gender equity, ethnic group diversity (indigenous and Afro Colombians), and land. In this context, forums were held with candidates to Mayoral office and the Governor’s Office, culminating in the signing of ten governance pacts by candidates for Mayor and four signed by candidates for the position of departmental Governor. Said pacts addressed the themes of women’s issues and gender equality, ethnic diversity, victims’ rights and land. A formal commitment was made by candidates to include the issues in municipal and departmental development plans.

As a specific component of the Electoral Strategy in the department of Cesar, women’s organizations in three municipalities conducted a series of forums with candidates and elaborated Governance Pacts signed with candidates for mayoral office. The pacts committed candidates to positions on a Women’s Agenda, including complying with the Law on Positive Discrimination (Quotas) in Public Office and the formulation of a Public Policy for Gender Equity. The Pacts also obliged candidates to commit in their proposed development plans to the establishment of a Department for Women and Gender Equality, the disposition of an effective and realistic budget for gender issues, the augmentation of levels of women’s participation at all levels of government, as well as training programmes for women.

A further notable achievement emerged from the advocacy efforts of those civil society organisations that formed an integral part of the infrastructure for peace. In 2011, in Valledupar, the Inter-institutional Framework for Gender Equality was established. A preliminary impact of this framework was the formulation of the draft Departmental Development Plan, which included a series of unprecedented topics. Local government committed to the creation of the High Council for Gender Equity, the training of women and men on gender rights issues; the training of public officials to ensure adequate prevention, protection and assistance to female victims of violence. Local government also agreed to strengthen alternative economic projects for female heads of households, support the development and implementation of the Bureau to Eradicate Gender-Based Violence and promote and conduct awareness campaigns for “a life free of violence”.

With regards to victims of the armed conflict, whose organisations had formed part of the peace architecture, local government also made a further series of commitments, including to formulate and implement the Plan for Prevention, Protection, Comprehensive Care and Reparation to Victims of Armed Conflict. Significantly, the plan was undergirded by a differential approach, treating actors according to their self-identified needs and based upon their distinct identities, in coordination with Transitional Justice Committees at municipal levels, guaranteeing the articulation of important institutions within local government. The Departmental Development Plan also committed to the implementation of a Regional Center for Integral Attention to Victims of the Armed Conflict, through collaboration between the government of Cesar and other agencies within the National System Attention and Reparation to Victims.

Finally, in the case of Huila, civil society organisations have sought to construct local political power through the empowerment of vulnerable populations. Eleven civil society organisations came together with the objective of consolidating a strategy through which to shape local politics in San Vicente del Caguán at the municipal level, forming the network UNIOS (United). A key goal in Huila was to guarantee the decisive political participation of community-based organisations that would, as a result, change the composition of local government, bringing in previously excluded populations into government, and thus change the very nature of the democratic project in San Vicente del Caguán. Numerically, 1280 people participated in twelve forums for the inclusion of issues relating to victims and victims’ rights, women, youth, media and culture in Development Plans, as well as the establishment of gender-sensitive budgets. As had been the case in the other departments mentioned above, a series of pacts were signed with...
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In the run-up to the 2011 elections, through collaboration with the existing network Huipaz (Huila-Peace), UNIDOS was able to guarantee effective observation of the electoral process in the department. A total of 34 women and 42 men, trained in the theme of electoral crimes, observed the elections that, significantly, led to the election as Mayor of a key representative of civil society, who had in fact participated in the peace infrastructure and been trained in different topics by organisations supported by the UNDP.

Influence upon Public Policy

In general, one of the key priorities for civil society organisations supported by the UNDP ART-REDES programme has been to shape public policy through a perspective of local level peacebuilding with the aim of creating regions with more democratic, responsive and representative public policy and, more generally, government. Consequently, even before the elections of 2011, civil society organisations were creating and taking advantage of a series of dialogue spaces established to permit effective articulation with local government institutions. As we have already mentioned, the decentralisation process in Colombia gradually consolidated the formalisation of departmental and municipal development plans. Consequently, a focus of civil society organisations has been to establish participatory processes that would allow citizens to shape public policy at this level. Across the six regions analysed in this paper, civil society organisations have utilised the dense networks created through peace infrastructures and connected with newly elected candidates (many of whom were previously part of the peace infrastructure) to precipitate important changes within public office and public policy, most significantly public policy oriented towards Colombia’s historically most vulnerable populations.

In the case of Nariño, for example, between 2008 and 2012, civil society organisations sought to support the participatory implementation of the Departmental Development Plan, as well as the plan for the municipality of Pasto, the departmental capital. A key achievement here was the creation of the Regional and Municipal Strategy for Development Cooperation and Peace, which has guaranteed the articulation of civil society, local government and sixteen cooperation agencies in Nariño.

Public Policies and Institutional Frameworks Relating to Ethnic Diversity

Nariño is a department with high levels of ethnic diversity, as is the case with other departments in Colombia, including Cesar, Huila and Meta. As part of the process to shape local government in the department, one specific region of Nariño has been designated as a Cabildo, where indigenous government is recognised as legitimate and autonomous: La Montaña, in the municipality of Samaniego. This achievement has been the result of indigenous struggles for autonomy. Significantly, with the support of the local Human Rights Committee and the UNDP, indigenous organisations have developed a Life Plan for the Cabildo, equivalent, to a degree, to a local level development plan, a process that was previously consolidated in Samaniego’s own Municipal Development Plan and negotiated with the municipal mayor.

According to Jorge Martinez, Indigenous Governor of La Montaña, Nariño

“In 2008, during six months, the National Army blocked the main access roads to our community. Subsequently, access to remittance income, fertilizers and other goods was limited and many of us were stigmatised. Our fundamental rights were violated. From this experience we learned that we had to guarantee our own food security and we that we should know more about the human rights issue. It was thus we started to ask for advice and training on the subject. Several agencies and organisations that were present in the territory accompanied us initially, but only UNDP remained. After further training processes, analysis and support, we developed a proposal involving 16 villages in the sector, called
Lessons Learned Paper: Local Level Peacebuilding in Colombia - Roddy Brett

Peace in the Territory and a Life of Dignity. In this way it was possible to establish ourselves as an indigenous reservation and carry out our Life Plan. The community is now able to see the results that came from our being organised. The knowledge of our rights and duties has allowed us to reduce conflicts in the community and legalise the indigenous reservation. Now, we feel cohesive as a community."

Similarly, in the case of the department of Cesar, indigenous communities have sought to shape local government, guarantee the exercise of their rights and to strengthen their autonomy in the Caribbean region. Indigenous peoples from Cesar and La Guajira, a neighbouring department, including the Wayúu and Arhuaco peoples, and Afrocolombians have constructed dialogue spaces with departmental government offices, in particular around the issue of the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention 169 for Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This article guarantees indigenous peoples the right to previous, free and informed consultation in cases where public polices, megaprojects projects and other legal and administrative measures are likely to impact transcendentally upon their communities. This process, aimed at consolidating the exercise of indigenous rights and the construction of a representative local government responsive to ethnic diversity, in which 290 indigenous authorities and leaders participated, has been supported by the UNDP and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia (UNHCHR).

Significantly, five years ago, conditions of armed conflict and embedded racism prevented civil society organisations from exercising these levels of participation and leverage in Cesar. However, with the gradual construction of the peace infrastructure in the region, a process that has precipitated the identification and subsequent articulation of common values and interests, indigenous and Afrocolombian communities are today able to engage in effective dialogue with state institutions. Interlocution spaces with local government have meant that indigenous and Afrocolombian leaders, themselves increasingly armed with knowledge of their rights and effective technical capacity to engage with local institutions, have been able to guarantee that their communities are seen and heard by public officials; in short, that local government begins to resemble and represent the ethnic diversity of Cesar and La Guajira. Moreover, local government is becoming more robust and legitimate in a context of ongoing armed conflict.

Similarly, in Meta, organisations that have constituted the networks that structure the department’s peace architecture have developed crucial skills in advocacy and knowledge of normative legal frameworks relative to indigenous peoples’ rights. Indigenous communities from the diverse indigenous reservations within the department have formed a dense and effective coalition, the result of which has been the establishment of a common proposal for departmental public policy in Meta. At the same time, the Afrocolombian population has mobilised around the issue of consultations, achieving a series of crucial rulings in this framework. This incremental process has brought with it the increasing participation of indigenous and Afrocolombian organisations in the formulation of Departmental and Municipal Development Plans and of more inclusive and representative public policies. In this regard, expression of the rights and values of an effective citizenship has been consolidated, as individuals and collective groups exercise their rights to participate in election for public office, take part in public debate relating to the role, duties and nature of local government and hold their local institutions to account. This crucial process, evident in the other regions addressed in this paper, evidences the increasing consolidation of an effective political citizenship as a result of local level peacebuilding, as citizens build democracy from below, forging government in their own image, a government increasingly responsive to values and their own, everyday needs and interests.

Finally, in Huila and the Piedemonte Amazónico, a series of spaces for interlocution between peasant and indigenous organisations and the Public Prosecutor’s Office have been established, with the aim of resolving local conflicts relating to land, displacement and megaprojects. These spaces have permitted civil society groups to demand action by local government and compliance by local state institutions
with obligations relative to the guarantee of collective, economic and social rights, at the same time as giving visibility and voice to indigenous peoples, for example in San Agustín and La Plata. Organisations have lobbied the state to reform a series of laws, respond effectively in situations of displacement, and to guarantee human rights, particularly in those cases where large scale projects, such as dams and resource extraction, have increased citizens’ vulnerability. A series of key impacts were achieved in this context, including the recognition of the right to demonstrate and, notably, the relocation of a military base built upon an indigenous reservation without the consent of the indigenous peoples living there. In this case, indigenous Anaconas, Guámbianos and Nasas Paéces effectively negotiated directly with state authorities (the military), ultimately precipitating the relocation of the military base, a process that has strengthened and reiterated indigenous autonomy in the region. Significantly, through their mobilisations, for the first time in 18 years, the Regional Indigenous Council of Huila (CRIHU) and indigenous peoples in Huila y Caquetá secured a process of consultation for the Departmental Development Plan prior to the Plan being implemented for the 2012 – 2015 period. At the same time, the CRIHU was able to guarantee the re-establishment of the Permanent Dialogue Space for Consultation for Indigenous Peoples in Huila. This space includes the departmental government and state institutions, including the Human Rights’ Ombudsman, as well as mayors from the region.

Public Policies and Institutional Frameworks Relating to Gender Equity

A focus of the platforms and strategies of regional civil society organisations in Colombia has also been the practices, public policies and normative frameworks relating to gender equity and violence against women through a strategic alliance with UN Women. In the case of Nariño, between 2008 and 2010, mobilisation around these themes contributed to the consolidation and extension of the infrastructure for peace, as a wide range of civil society organisations and public officials began to engage with and gradually prioritise the issue of gender equity. During this period, 160 experienced female leaders and 180 female youth leaders from civil society organisations actively participated in a series of dialogues with local government (at municipal and departmental levels) to design the Public Policy for Women and Gender Equity, subsequently adopted in 2010. This public policy and the process through which it was formulated have been used as a model by the national government in the design of the National Public Policy for Women and Gender Equity, signalling an important point of articulation between local level and national level peacebuilding processes.

Similarly, in the region of Montes de María, the network Women of Montes de María came together to elaborate an agenda relating to gender equity that was used as a key advocacy instrument in 15 municipalities of the region. The principal objective was to shape the development of a public policy at both departmental and municipal levels, a process that has not, as yet, been concluded successfully. Nevertheless, a roadmap directed at prevention of violence against women and attention and access to justice for victims has been developed in five key municipalities (Carmen de Bolívar, San Antonio de Palmito, San Jacinto, San Onofre, María la Baja). This roadmap was elaborated by and is being implemented with the participation of women’s organisations and public officials, supported by the cooperation framework between UN Women and the UN Population Fund.

According to Mayerlys Angarita. Asociación Narrar para vivir. Montes de María;

“We took a look at the situation in this region, and decided to carry out a participatory process to detect the problems here. We carried out a workshop for women, and this gave us a space in which we could narrate life stories, externalise our pain. That was the beginning of the association speaking to So We Can Live, where we work on the issue of memory. We want our communities to be clear about what happened and the pain it caused, so that we do not repeat painful moments.”
Throughout this process, a further central aim was to raise awareness of said issues amongst public functionaries, resulting, until now, in the training of 51 officials and 50 peasant leaders. A critical component of this activity has been to work with children and men, to raise awareness concerning gender-based violence, a form of violence that has been predominant during Colombia’s internal armed conflict, and is whose transformation is critical for the construction of enduring and sustainable peace. A crucial impact of this work has been that perceptions that gender-based violence is a theme that exclusively concerns women has gradually shifted, as men become increasingly aware of the importance of their role in the transformation of those conditions perpetuate this violence. In this context, with the support of ART-REDES, a group entitled Masculinities of Montes de María has been established. Significantly, said group has designed its own roadmap aimed at preventing gender-based violence.

In the department of Cesar, within the framework of the alliance between UNDP and UN Women, and as a result of training and awareness raising programmes led by the organisation Spokespersons of Valledupar, the Gender-Based Violence Network was established. This network has brought together six government agencies, academic institutions, and fifteen five local civil society organisations. The network has promoted further diffusion and awareness raising programmes relating to gender-based violence through the campaign Stop Gender-Based Violence now! Nothing Justifies Violence Against Women.

At the same time, the participation of a group of 700 women and their organisations led to the development of the Women’s Political Agenda for Cesar. This document, elaborated out of a series of sub-regional and locally based workshops, has become the baseline document for shaping development plans at departmental and municipal level in Cesar. Organisations remain focused on the elaboration and approval of public policies for gender equity for the region in the near future. However, a clear advance has been the improvement in relationships and interlocution between civil society, local government and political parties on the theme of gender equity and gender-based violence.

For the case of Meta, lobbying of civil society organisations, and the responsiveness of local government have led to the recognition of gender gaps relating to guarantees for the rights of victims. In particular, activities from within the peace infrastructure, involving both civil society and governmental actors, have focused on the recognition of gender crimes. Similarly, on 26 November 2012, the Public Policy for Gender Equity and Women was approved in Meta. This breakthrough has been achieved through training programmes carried out with more than 150 civil servants. Furthermore, and significantly, a departmental public policy, and public policies in four municipalities (Villavicencio, Puerto Lleras, Vista Hermosa, Granada) relating to gender equity have been elaborated, a significant advance. Similarly, institutional arrangements governing issues of gender equity have been strengthened with the creation of the Departmental Secretariat for Gender, Human Rights and Peace. In this regard, public institutions have assumed their role in positioning the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against women as central to public policy and state responsibility and, unequivocally, to successful peacebuilding.

In the words of Nidia Cortes, Counselor for the Municipality of Castilla and part of the Women’s Network of Meta,

“Fifteen years ago, I started my social work. It was linked to school-related activities in the municipality. In 2007, I joined the Women’s Network of Meta. At first it was difficult. My husband did not want me to work on this, but I insisted, I was part of the network, the subject fascinated me and made me grow as a person. Since joining I have resolutely supported all activities. A very important issue has been the empowerment of women. This has been vital for me. Because if we do not train ourselves, we will continue to live lives without opportunities.

After my training, I made it to the Council. With a group of women, I started doing political work. The central theme of my campaign proposal was the importance of the
In Huila, the strengthening of local capacities for peace has precipitated significant impacts within the institutional political sphere. From this perspective, networks of women’s organizations in the region have shaped the formulation of Government Plans and Regional Development Plans. In particular, organisations mobilised to guarantee the implementation of the Institutional Pact for the Prevention of and Attention to Violence Against Women in Huila. Agreements were also signed with the candidates for departmental governor, the mayor of Neiva and of Algeciras, obliging candidates to include a gender perspective in their Territorial Development Plans.

Furthermore, within Huila, the event “The Week for a Life Without Violence Against Women” has now been institutionalised as a space to shed light upon gender-based violence and to permit regular advocacy programs aimed towards the elimination of all forms of violence against women. The event, which will take place every year, has been made possible by the joint efforts of civil society organisations, government and state institutions, the private sector and the UN. Finally, as a result of the aforementioned processes, a total of 477 women have been involved directly in advocacy relating to women’s and gender issues, including through mobilisation within the framework of the National Public Policy for Women and Guidelines on Public Policy Advocacy. This process was developed through a key alliance between the House of Memory and UN Women.

**Public Policies and Institutional Frameworks for Youth**

In Nariño, and elsewhere, advances in gender related issues have been augmented by those pertaining directly to the representation of youth by local government. Of significant importance in the department has been the gradual elaboration of a range of public policies and local government development plans in this regard, formulated as a result of direct consultation with civil society, a process that appears to be unprecedented in Colombian regional politics. Through engagement with a series of participation mechanisms during a period of three years, organisations dedicated to local level peacebuilding have contributed to the formulation of the Departmental Public Policy for Youth, approved in 2010. Specifically, more than 4500 women and 3000 children met regularly through public forums in coordination with local government institutions (including the Colombian Family Welfare Institute) to design both the public policy and the Departmental Strategy for The Protection of the Rights of Children and Youth.

Similarly, in Montes de María, 30 youth leaders were trained with skills aimed at fostering a culture of peace and the prevention of forced recruitment in conflict-affected communities in the region. Training took place within the framework of a Diploma in Do No Harm and Peacebuilding, conducted jointly with Colombia’s National University. This diploma served as a baseline permitting youth from the Library Maria Mulata and Peace in the Caribbean to formulate a project focused upon Do No Harm in the communities of Higuerón and Macaján, in Montes de María. The project was inaugurated in 2012, and will be subject to close monitoring in the coming months.

In Huila, young people have participated in a series of crucial civil society organisations, eventually leading them to establish their own independent space, named the House of Memory. Through network that articulates 26 youth organisations, young people have carried out a participatory diagnosis on the state of public policies relative to the youth in Huila. Furthermore, organisations established the support network Conscientious Objection Campaign, focused on the theme of youth and the violence of the armed conflict. This support network articulates a further eighteen organizations, networks and agencies. In general, the cumulative effect of these mobilisations has been that young people in Huila have more and...
improved opportunities for joint organisational articulations and increasingly participate as active agents of their own development. In this regard, young people and their organisations have become key players in the scenario of local level peacebuilding. Currently, a series of important spaces have been generated, supported as they are by specific funding projects. These spaces include the Carnival for Peace, which, whilst being a cultural and artistic expression, also incorporates aspects such as human rights training.

In the words of Viviana Palacios, a youth leader from Meta

“You feel part of the process when you have a clear perception of what is happening in the municipality. That is when you decide to become a political subject. So you begin to understand reality and think ‘what I can do?’ And so you start to convene other young people to make them understand that change is everyone’s responsibility.”

Public Policies and Institutional Frameworks for Victims of Colombia’s Armed Conflict

In the Oriente Antioqueño, organisations incorporated in the peace infrastructure in the department have lobbied governmental institutions at departmental level, leading to the formulation of an institutional roadmap at local level for protecting victims of the conflict in general, as well as individuals and communities claiming land rights. A series of key institutions have adopted the roadmap, including the Ombudsman, the National Commission for Reconciliation and Reparation, the Police, the Public Prosecutor’s Office, and the Government of Antioquia.

Within this framework, interlocution and dialogue between civil society and government and state institutions have improved considerably. The growing articulation between citizens and increasingly responsive institutions has diminished the fear of being stigmatised felt in the past by individuals and entire communities for speaking out, participating in politics and presenting political proposals. Consequently, the torn social fabric has begun to heal, as community organisations begin to approach public institutions, activating and legitimating them in the process. Public entities are increasingly able to access previously inaccessible communities where dialogue had not been possible. The increasingly unhindered exercise of rights by communities then, and the recognition by the state and local government institutions of this legitimate action, is leading citizens to feel empowered.

In this respect, over the past three years, 7000 victims have been targeted to receive psychosocial and legal attention within the framework of workshops providing inter-institutional attention via mobile units within ten municipalities of Antioquia, an initiative led by the departmental Governor. Of the total of individuals that received support during these sessions, 300 have acquired the right to administrative reparations. This model, first implemented at the regional level, has now been replicated in five other municipalities outside of Eastern Antioquia, in coordination with the Government of Antioquia, and a series of state institutions such as Social Action.

In Cesar, a series of key interventions have taken place that provide technical assistance to governmental and state institutions mandated to protect victims, including displaced persons. Technical assistance has been framed through five thematic working spaces providing knowledge and skill sets on: land, returnees, protection and prevention, restoration of the socioeconomic situation and humanitarian assistance. Technical assistance has also been provided to the Department Dialogue Space for Returnees, to target intervention zones evidenced in the Plan for Returns (2011). Said intervention was framed through the formulation of the institutional Action Plan and the diagnostic study for the return of the population from the township of Casacará, in the municipality of Agustín Codazzi.

Significantly, in numerical terms, 727 female and 17 male participants were trained on issues pertaining to the Victims’ Law (Law 1448), gender justice, UN Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and
1960. Other critical components of the training courses were gender-based violence, communication from a gendered perspective, and the Constitutional Court Judgments T-025 and 092 (2008). As a result of this training process, the commemoration of the Month against Violence against Women has been institutionalised.

Finally, 76 civil society organisations mandated to work on issues of human rights, international humanitarian law, and peacebuilding from the Caribbean region have been integrated into the Departmental Promotion Committee. Said committee has contributed decisively to the elaboration of the Caribbean Roadmap, a proposal that has emerged out of the region with the aim of contributing directly to the participatory process aimed at formulating Public Policy on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in the context of the Joint Declaration of Human Rights, as mentioned above.

Similarly, in Montes de María 1,964 victims have received legal advice and psychosocial care and have been subsequently referred to the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office and received services through the public health system. Said services have been carried out through the framework of the Unit for Integral Attention to Victims, a unit created at the behest of the University CECAR. The objective of this unit has been to support civil society and academic institutions in the promotion of access to the judicial system. This initiative that originally emerged out of academia has been recognized as good practice by and served as a role model for governmental and state institutions.

Amid a climate of generalised distrust, human rights defenders and public institutions have been able to carry out discussions concerning the exercise of the defence of human rights with the idea of creating the so-called Sucre Dialogue Space for Guarantees. Through the good offices provided by the UNDP, three meetings took place with state institutions, and four separate meetings occurred with human rights defenders. Work to bring both parties together is being continued.

Organizations and institutions in the region perceive that access to justice for victims, and their participation in distinct processes, has improved radically, a transformation that plays an important role in the ultimate provision of institutional support for truth, justice and reparation initiatives, the rights central to victims. Consequently, victims’ organisations are gradually assuming the process of empowerment, organisational capacity building and effective advocacy in public policy, a process key to peacebuilding in the region.

In Meta, in coordination with and under the parameters of the Attorney General’s Office Delivery Protocol for Skeletal Remains, victims’ organisations have identified and handed over the skeletal remains of 160 victims of forced disappearance to their families.

Finally, in Huila, civil society organisations have collaborated with local government institutions to guarantee that victims have access to initiatives providing effective care and guidance for their specific cases. At the departmental level, the coalition PAVIP has developed key capacities to target and accompany victims in those process aimed at the restoration of rights. Simultaneously, PAVIP also represents a space for continuous training. At the municipal level in San Vicente del Caguan, a specialised unit for Attention to Victims and Displaced Peoples has been established.

According to Fernando Ivan Lopez, member of PAVIC

“ We seek, through research, to construct truthful, objective and timely information to articulate to the authorities and victims in such a way as to define an effective and precise public policy response that accurately addresses the reality of the context in which we live and allows victims to have plans through which to demand their rights.”
As a result of direct participation of 2,813 individual victims from 1,723 organisations and other sectors of civil society in the nine regional discussion forums on the theme of victims, approximately 4,000 proposals were brought together and subsequently sent to Havana. Whilst no agreement as yet been signed, the negotiating parties have agreed to receive the proposals.

At the national level, the UNDP also facilitated a protracted process over three years aimed at formulating a public policy in Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law. This process including the staging of 33 forums throughout Colombia, in which 19,000 peoples from 9,000 organisations participated. The UNDP has argued that the process that has led to the public policy has been key in pushing state and government institutions and actors to assume a human rights focus in their practices and discourses.

(iv) Economic Alternatives

The themes analysed until now have demonstrated how, with the support of the UNDP, in particular of ART-REDES, civil society organisations have sought to construct networks with local government and state officials, through which to engage decisively with some of the key motors of conflict, in short, political, social and legal exclusions and the vulnerabilities created by them. Consequently, what we have seen are a series of significant interventions, shaped from below, that ultimately transform public policy and local level institutional frameworks and arrangements, build a rights culture and influence the forging of an effective citizenship and vision of democracy built from below. In this regard, peace is being built and political arrangements forged in the image of local level actors. Said processes represent an alternative to Liberal Peace politics, as much as they evidence hybrid politics, melding the local and the international. Nevertheless, in the section on conceptual frameworks, we insisted how peace is unlikely to be constructed in the long-term without decisive engagement with and transformation of the economic structural causes of armed conflict. In this case, building citizenship and the changes in public policy that this precipitates will serve to mitigate certain levels of conflict and violence, but enduring peace can only be built upon strategies that engage with and transform the economic, embedded causes of armed conflict: land distribution and control, horizontal and inequalities, poverty. Persistent hunger and poverty in themselves ultimately limit how much citizenship can do to transform conditions of intractable conflict. The question remains, however, as to whether the peace infrastructure constructed in the regions, and the significant impacts this has yielded, have precipitated realistic and meaningful transformations in the economic sphere.

In the case of Nariño, the UNDP has collaborated with civil society organisations in the establishment of a key non-state entity, entitled the Local Economic Development Agency (ADEL). The activity of the ADEL, focused as it has been on the generation of economic alternatives for residents of the department, particularly in rural areas, has impacted upon 4000 direct and 300,000 indirect beneficiaries. The support of the UNDP to the ADEL has been focused upon promoting local economic development by strengthening the participation and impact of the ADEL in the Regional Commission for Competitiveness and in the Center for Research, Innovation and Technological Development for Nariño (CIIDET Nariño) and in the Binational Tourism Development Project between Colombia and Ecuador.

A further aspect of peacebuilding aimed at transforming socio-economic conditions has been to define guidelines and strategies for rural economic development with a territorial focus. In this regard, a series of strategic plans have emerged, including a plan oriented towards consolidating the production and commercialisation of coffee, market research relating to the sisal plant, a strategic commercialisation plan for fruit and vegetables, and a Binational Tourism strategy. Significantly, these plans shaped 2012 Development Plan and Rural Development Strategy of the Departmental Government of Nariño.

The ADELS in the region articulated through the Development and Peace Agency for the South Pacific of Nariño (ADEPAS) and Development and Peace Agency for in Southern Nariño (ADIFSUR) jointly formulated
nine projects. These projects include fishing and mariculture and the production and commercialisation of shrimp for Afrocolombian women. Notably, this process has generated income for 109 displaced families from the municipality of Cuasped. In turn, the project has strengthened human rights, democracy and governance along the Colombia-Ecuador border.

Furthermore, more than fifteen organisations of small producers and at least five Community Councils of Afrocolombian Communities have worked together to consolidate the Regional Cocoa Council. Within this institutional framework, a regional agreement for competitiveness for cocoa has been signed, an agreement that has permitted actions to be coordinated with public institutions, whilst strengthening the knowledge and capacities of local peasant farmers.

In the Oriente Antioqueño, 52 families of displaced farmers who have begun the process of returning to their lands in the municipality of San Francisco have begun to develop productive projects with technical support provided by the UNDP. Of these projects, 40 pertain to agricultural production and commercialisation, and twelve to fisheries. In collaboration with the Poverty Area of the UNDP, municipalities in the region have carried out a project to evaluate the degree of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. This diagnosis is being used to help design projects to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs by 2015.

Further activities by civil society organisations have been oriented towards coordinating sustainable spaces for dialogue, including the Regional Strategic Process (PER) and the Strategic Territorial Projects (PET). Within this process, a key impact has been the creation of the Bureau for Inter-Institutional Coordination (MAI), an entity with the aim of addressing the difficulties observed in the PER, in particular, the low level of participation by the business sector. Finally, a series of innovative projects have been formulated and subsequently implemented through the collaboration between civil society and local government in the region. Said projects are increasingly representing a source of income for excluded families, and include the European Union project Cocoa and Organizational Strengthening in the municipalities of San Luis, San Francisco, Cocorná, El Carmen de Viboral, Sonsón and Nariño. Through coordination with existing institutional initiatives, these projects will benefit a total of 517 displaced or returnee families, with the aim of improving their income.

In the Montes de María, an early recovery project for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in the community of Loma Central has been implemented. The UNDP has played a role here, providing technical assistance for the project. Of relevance here has been the component of the project aimed at the production and commercialisation of avocados, a product that has been traditionally grown in the region. This pilot project has benefitted 101 families. The idea here has been that the project be self-sustaining, replicable and that it evidence viable alternative economic models.

According to Osmir Peñalosa Jaraba, Rector of the High Mountain School, in Loma Central:

“The presence of UNDP in this region has been a great support. It was the first international cooperation organisation that came to this area and since then has strengthened rights protection and guarantee here… Initially the Local Action Committees (JAL) led these processes, but as a result of armed conflict, the leaders were killed or had to migrate to other regions for safety. The UNDP, as well as supporting infrastructure in our community, began to strengthen the our capacity to organise. Thanks to this, farmers have formed two grassroots organisations, bringing an institutional approach their rights’ claims and allowing us to initiate productive projects… Violence has generated an acute economic problem, and our crops were affected, with 6000 acres of avocado being destroyed. Following that a proposal was made to recover 100 hectares of this crop and improve the income of the inhabitants. The project is underway and the intention is that it can be implemented rapidly to help mitigate the problem of poverty in the area.”

Similarly, fifty members of the Regional Peasant Bureau representing fifteen municipalities of Montes de Maria received important training programmes based on building capacities to formulate projects and carry out land titling processes. This latter component has been key as an initial step prior to dialogue with public institutions relating to the access, use, control and restitution of lands. Within this framework, three workshops have been carried out with peasant farmers aimed at providing technical assistance in the Peasant Reserve Zone, and in the themes of rural development and the formalisation of rural property.

In the region of Cesar, 106 women, members of four civil society organisations in the municipalities of Valledupar, Augustin Codazzi and Manaure won a key project for rural women, administered by INCODER, the Ministry of Agriculture and International Organisation for Migration (IOM). In the context of this project, these women and their families have substantially improved their income as a result of the technical assistance for the preparation and implementation of the project, implemented from January 2012. As part of the Dialogue Space for Discussion on Land and the implementation of its subsequent strategic agenda, an agreement was established with INCODER to carry out studies aimed at the removal of an area of the Forestry Reserve Zone with the purpose of the formalisation of rural land for returning families. This agreement was signed in December 2011, its preliminary agenda is to empower peasant organisations from the region.

The Department of Land Technical Committee in Cesar designed and implemented the Strategic Agenda of the Departmental Dialogue Space Concerning Land, ultimately containing around six priority actions. These actions have included the provision of alternatives to formalise land ownership within the framework of the Forestry Reserve Areas, technical assistance to civil society organisations to guarantee their effective participation in project formulation and implementation, formalisation of 791 land plots within the forestry reserve, analysis of strategies for obtaining land titles for collective territories for Afrocolombian communities in Cesar and the implementation of a collective roadmap relating to the protection of lands in San Antonio and San Isidro.

In Meta, eighty public officials from the department’s Territorial Planning Councils received training programmes in local level peacebuilding initiatives, in turn, enhancing their capacity to formulate effective Land Management Plans and Territorial Strategies.

As part of the support offered to the women’s network in the department, 59 families from 12 municipalities have begun to participate in rural markets. This crucial transformation has brought increased income levels, as intermediaries are eliminated and profitability augmented. These markets, held in the departmental capital of Villavicencio, have emerged out of the alliance between the Villavicencio Chamber of Commerce, the UNILLANOS, the Women’s Network, Meta, ANUC and the UNDP.

A further key impact has been wielded in the context of IDPs. In this case, 49 families displaced from rural areas and 30 families displaced from urban Meta (from the municipality of El Castillo), affecting a total of 307 women, developed allotment gardens, ultimately precipitating an improvement in their living conditions as a food security strategy. These families have generated projects to respond to their basic needs through joint participatory exercises with the UNDP and UNHCR. These exercises also serve as protection and prevention strategy against further displacement. The findings of an evaluation of this strategy carried out in 2011, demonstrated how, in a context of 45% chronic malnutrition amongst girls aged between zero and five years, families no longer perceive food security as a principal concern. In this framework, the return or relocation of 729 IDPs in the municipality of El Castillo represents 42% of displaced people, signifying an important impact upon the stabilisation of acutely vulnerable populations.

In Huila and the Piedemonte Amazónico, 324 people in areas of high incidence of conflict have improved their ability to develop productive partner initiatives through training programmes developed in coordination with the ESAP and the National Learning Service (SENA). Training was given on issues of
sustainable economic development, management and public administration, environmental management systems and the improvement of coffee production.

Similarly, 447 individuals (44% women) living in areas of high incidence of the internal armed conflict have benefited from sustainable alternative economic development projects and economic recovery projects within the framework of the AMCOP-HUIPAZ initiatives. These projects have been designed to support, with micro grants, the planting of 122 acres of beans. A further element here has been the recovery of indigenous seeds and agricultural traditions, and the consolidation of projects for the production and commercialisation of poultry, fish, livestock and other small-scale productive proposals. Said processes have strengthened agriculture and agribusiness networks and markets.

Significantly, historically marginalised populations have developed collective political agendas that define concrete actions relating to the access to, use and control of land and the departmental public policy for security, food security. Said agendas have subsequently been coordinated with those of local government and state institutions. A series of entities have participated in these interlocution spaces, including representatives of the Departmental Agri-Food Network (constituted by nine organizations), and the National Association of Peasant Reserve Zones. As a consequence of this process, candidates for the position of Mayor of San Vicente del Caguán signed a pact for the development and sustainability of the Rural Peasant Reserve Zone in Pato Balsillas and the constitution of a zone in Lozada-Guayabero. The pact also institutionalised the creation and functional operation of the Municipal Council for Rural Development for San Vicente del Caguán and the incorporation of the proposals from Peasant Reserve Zones for their own local development plans into the Municipal Development Plan.

Finally, partnerships and accompanying agreements have been strengthened between the Municipal Association of Settlers in Pato (AMCOP) with local government institutions and the private sector. These agreements aim to formulate an effective territorial public policy, which would include a focus upon improving the conditions for coffee production and a commercialisation strategy for organised farmers from the El Pato zone in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán. The agreement has been signed by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government of Caquetá, the Mayor of San Vicente del Caguán and the National Federation of Coffee Growers. An agreement has also been made between AMCOP and ELECTROHUILA to initiate the process of expansion of the electrification project in the Balsillas Pato region. In this context, thirty families have benefited from the disbursement of Agricultural Bank loans.
Final Considerations
Building Peace from the Bottom Up
In regions where ART-REDES has supported national partners, the results of its interventions have been tangible. Impact is evident in the institutionalization of a series of crucial interrelated processes by which populations have asserted impact upon a series of interrelated spheres. This final section will analyse briefly the impact of local level peacebuilding initiatives supported by the United Nations Development Programme in Colombia, within the conceptual framework previously established pertaining to peacebuilding from the bottom up.

A first level of evident impact has been the construction of an incipient peace architecture in the six regions of Colombia where, principally through ART-REDES, the UNDP has supported those initiatives proposed initially by civil society, and subsequently by government and state actors, oriented towards building peace and transforming conflict. Of key importance to the initiatives of ART-REDES was to work in regions where, despite, or perhaps because of the violence of armed conflict, civil society organisations had maintained a trajectory of social and political mobilisation in the midst of armed conflict. Consequently, the peace infrastructure was not built out of or upon nothing, in short, there was no attempt to reinvent the wheel, but rather, to utilise existing experiences and local level political culture.

We have proposed that this phase of peacebuilding is of key importance, given that it establishes the structures upon and out of which actors may subsequently mobilise. In other words, the peace architecture embeds the roots necessary for those actions that seek to transform social and political values, norms and behaviour. Moreover, the peace infrastructure builds networks across sectors and classes with the aim of edifying mechanisms for inclusion and reconstructing the social fabric, social capital and trust and the social relationships torn apart by violent conflict. Consequently, it is through the very process of constructing the peace architecture and, later, operationalising it that individuals and collective groups begin to voice and articulate very often contradictory interests and values within spaces from which civil society has hitherto been excluded, and with actors that have hitherto experienced enmity and demonstrated antagonism against each other. The rebuilding of mutually dignifying and respectful relationships that begin increasingly to recognise the importance of resolving conflict through formal political means and share common values and goals becomes then a key objective in the building of a sustainable and enduring peace.

In this regard, each region has undergone a distinct experience, depending, above all, upon the pre-existing social, political, cultural and economic conditions therein, and, logically, upon the nature and impact of violent conflict in the respective region. It is likely that in those regions where civil society had historically been visible, vocal and active, such as Nariño and the Oriente Antioqueño, the construction of a peace infrastructure has been a less traumatic and protracted experience, signifying that the process has embedded its roots more rapidly. Nevertheless, as we also explained, the success of the peace infrastructure must go beyond its mere establishment, towards the construction and consolidation of fluid, effective and dense networks that, above all, facilitate the articulation of debate and the formulation of instruments through which to garner timely and meaningful transformations. As we have seen, those networks now installed throughout the six regions are increasingly complex and dense and have precipitated a series of significant changes.

The construction of a peace infrastructure has set the stage for transformations within the sphere of political culture. In this context, actors have undergone what might be defined as a process of empowerment, as they learn to recognise, acknowledge and struggle for their rights. The importance of this process for peacebuilding cannot be underestimated as former excluded, invisible populations become discerning and active citizens. The systematic violation of a broad spectrum of both individual and collective rights, including political, civil, social, economic and cultural, has been both a cause and a consequence of Colombia’s armed conflict. Consequently, the process of learning and demanding rights establishes a critical precedent in the process to construct a meaningful post-conflict phase, where both citizens, as rights-holders, and authorities, as duty-bearers, recognise the non-negotiable nature of
those national and international normative frameworks relative to human rights. In this regard, citizens learn their rights and duties, whilst states accept their fundamental obligations to protect these rights, the cumulative effect of which is the generation of a rights culture, based upon international standards. This culture cannot be imposed from above and from outside, but rather, must be learnt through trial and error and respond to the identified needs and differential cultural attributes that defined citizens in multi-cultural, pluri-ethnic and multi-lingual societies, such as Colombia.

Finally, in this regard, of crucial significance is that moment when, for citizens, victims, excluded populations, knowledge of their rights becomes irreversible. In short, once a society interiorises rights norms and values, their violation is likely, at the very least, to provoke serious response from within the respective society. Whilst it is the case in Colombia that, for civil society organisations such as those documented in this paper, the moment of irreversibility has been achieved, the same cannot, as yet, be said for those actors that have historically been responsible for grave human rights violations. In this regard, much work remains to be done with governmental and state authorities, the private sector, and, logically, with illegal armed actors. As Patrick Hayden has recognised, ‘rights claims remain politically irrelevant or ineffective if they are unheard and unseen by others who do not recognise the claimant as sufficiently human’. Consequently, a profound aspect of meaningful peacebuilding must be to achieve impact in the sphere of political culture, culminating in the non-negotiable acceptance by all Colombians of their mutual humanity, in particular in the case of historically excluded social actors and victims.

With regards to changes in the politico-institutional sphere, local level peacebuilding initiatives have begun to wield unprecedented episodes of impact at departmental, municipal and community levels. Said changes have been constructed upon the crucial emergence of a rights culture, upon the knowledge of rights that the aforementioned transformations in the sphere of political culture have wielded. In this regard, and significantly, the exercise of rights by citizens has precipitated the gradual activation and legitimation of local governmental and state institutions, a correlative impact of successful peacebuilding in the sphere of political culture.

Within the six regions analysed in this paper, local actors have contributed to the formulation of public policy, have shaped the development plans of local governments at the municipal and departmental levels and have exercised influence in the shaping of institutional arrangements. In all regions, key, unprecedented work has been carried out with regard to gender equity and women’s rights, as public policies have been forged and implemented in a participatory manner, in particular in Nariño, Oriente Antioqueño and Meta. Said policies have contributed to the process to establish a national public policy for gender equity. These processes have given voice to and made visible crucial social actors, historically excluded from doing politics formally. As newly recognised social actors, women have assumed key roles in local government, as visions of citizenship shift to incorporate the visions, needs, interests and agency of la mujer colombiana. Moreover, new perspectives of gender based violence, regarding patterns, motives, perpetrators and victims of GBV have emerged as critical components for building enduring peace, a peace that would be meaningful to women and not just reflect the interests of male, cosmopolitan, ladino elites.

A similar set of processes has been established within the framework of other important social and political actors, in particular, with regard to youth and victims. A series of public policies at municipal and departmental levels have been formulated in the regions covered in this paper, policies that not only seek to establish institutional parameters through which to respond to the differential and self-identified

needs of diverse social actors, but also that, gradually, begin to wear away the stigmatization that these social actors have suffered in Colombia. In this regard, women, youth, indigenous and Afrocolombian peoples, and victims have begun to position themselves as citizens active in the construction of a new Colombia. Consequently, the processes aimed at building peace that have been described in this paper also demonstrate an innovative and unprecedented process directed towards the reconfiguration of democracy and democratic governance at the departmental, municipal and local level. The reshaping of state and governmental institutions in the image and in response to the everyday needs of local populations engages with a series of the fundamental root causes of Colombia’s internal armed conflict, in particular, embedded and systematic social and political exclusion.

As we argued in previous chapters, peacebuilding will only be successful if the causes of armed conflict are engaged with and mechanisms for their transformation are institutionalised and given adequate budgetary provision. The causes of Colombia’s armed conflict have been multi-dimensional, and have transformed during the conflict’s protracted trajectory. Accordingly then, causal factors have included political factors, such as exclusion, closure of the formal democratic system to marginalized groups, amongst others. However, a profound and persistent causal factor herein has been economic, in short, the unjust distribution and control of land, capital, economic resources, by a restricted minority of elites at national, departmental, municipal and local levels. This state of affairs has been exacerbated by the links between legal elites and illicit armed actors. What then, can we say about the impact of UNDP-supported initiatives in the six regions addressed in this paper?

As has been detailed above, a series of UNDP-supported initiatives have precipitated the consolidation of income-generating interventions at local level, in particular with regard to the increasing ability of women to engender transformation in daily incomes as a result of their participation in the ADELs and in other productive projects. The establishment of a series of zones that are gradually more responsive to local markets has contributed then to the partial stabilization of specific and limited populations within regions historically blighted by acute poverty, inequity and horizontal inequalities. However, the profound structural transformation within the economic sphere and the deep-rooted consolidation of rural and urban development necessary to prevent reoccurrence of conflict have not been achieved, and are unlikely to be so, without dramatic changes taking place within the actions and perceptions of the economic elite and radical programmes from within government.

The Road Ahead: Can Local Level Peacebuilding Work in Colombia?

In a context where terror and fear have historically imposed invisibility and silence, women, Afrocolombians, indigenous people, peasants and youth have today recovered their voices and are wielding them with the objective of orchestrating lasting transformation. Throughout the regions where the UNDP has collaborated with its national partners, Colombian citizens are increasingly and decisively building the road to peace, whilst at the same time shaping innovative forms of democratic governance at regional level, a revolutionary process of constructing democracy from below. Said impact has taken root prior
to the end of armed conflict, unlike in Central America. If the lessons from local level peacebuilding are heeded and its legitimacy and capacity recognised, the process may sow the seeds for unprecedented enduring impact in a new paradigm of peacebuilding.

This paper has sought to elucidate a series of conceptual insights based upon the case of Colombia concerning sub-national peacebuilding, analysing the tensions and complementarities inherent within local level peacebuilding. The processes we have documented here demonstrate the crucial changes that peacebuilding thinking and practice have undergone since the Agenda for Peace was launched in 1992, in short the evolution of such thinking and practice. The principal argument has been that local level peacebuilding interventions, developed by actors in the respective territory or conflict zone and based upon their own socio-cultural and political perspectives and identities, is likely to embed more deeply a sense of ownership and wield a more enduring impact upon violent conflict, particularly if actors have constructed an effective peace architecture. However, when local level initiatives develop with no articulation with key national and international actors, interventions and frameworks, their sustainability may be limited and they are likely to suffer a ‘legitimacy vacuna’. As David Roberts has argued

For peacebuilding to be relevant, and therefore legitimate, the built peace must reflect the peaceful interests and preferences of the people, serving and reflecting the popular will. Knowledge of this cannot be generated externally and then imported into post-conflict spaces; it stems from within, in a more genuinely democratic exercise.'

Research on the context of local level peacebuilding in Colombia is still in its very initial stages. However, it would appear that the processes under investigation have begun to precipitate meaningful articulation between state and local government institutions, civil society actors and international cooperation. Said processes have occasioned diverse levels of impact in a series of interconnected spheres, as we have demonstrated, including the realm of political culture, the politico-institutional sphere and, albeit very much less so, in the economic sphere. No impact has been evident in the sphere of the behaviour of armed actors, however, a severe limitation that should be recognised.

The bolstering of departmental and municipal government and its increasing responsiveness, representatively and efficacy has occurred in parallel to the increasing visibility and protagonist, empowerment to use an outdated term, of Colombians, to promulgate visions of State, society and government from below. These visions respond directly to citizens’ own differential needs and priorities and their specific cultural values, contrasting with elite-led negotiations. The key aim of these processes has been to facilitate ownership of an innovative form of democratic governance and an enduring, positive peace, which moves beyond the mere silence of guns and the cessation of hostilities and establishes conditions to address the structural causes of conflict and prevent its future recurrence. However, given the acute weakness of local level peacebuilding to impact upon the actions of armed actors and in the economic sphere, and the absence of state recognition of said initiatives, both their sustainability and legitimacy are not guaranteed in the medium to long term. Post-conflict Colombia then, may not benefit from the key impacts that local level peacebuilding have hitherto wielded.

Can local level peacebuilding overcome its internal tensions and the limitations imposed upon it from outside? Local level peacebuilding is critical as a process through which to challenge and transform the weaknesses faced and imposed by Liberal Peace politics. We have seen in the context of Colombia, that peace is being forged from below, not by exclusively male, cosmopolitan, ladino actors, but rather by diverse social actors who, themselves, impose a distinct logic upon peacebuilding, one based upon the defense of their everyday needs, priorities and interests, and framed through their own differential practices and experiences. In this regard, whilst civil society continues to be excluded formally from

the current peace negotiations, the Colombia experience demonstrates a series of potential practices that might guarantee how civil society may play an integral role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction that goes beyond mere secondary positioning during peace dialogues. The implementation of territorially-focused peacebuilding interventions carried out by local actors in the regions with the support of the UN has been critical in demonstrating how a different understanding of peace can be envisioned, exercised and, ultimately, practised, leading to diverse, interrelated and mutually reinforcing impacts. Civil society actions have established a peace infrastructure and increasingly broadened the peace agenda in the six contexts addressed in this paper, leading to tangible changes within institutions and civil society.

Within the important and innovative frameworks proposed by MacGinty and Richmond, amongst others, we have been able to identify how local level peacebuilding in Colombia represents a hybrid process, a nexus where international, national and local agencies and structures coalesce. In this context, we have seen how, above all, there is an articulation between liberal peace actors, structures and networks who incentivise local actors to cooperate with the liberal peace and the ability of local actors, structures and networks to negotiate with, subvert, exploit, and resist the liberal peace, ultimately, developing alternatives to it. The Colombian context demonstrates then how local level peacebuilding evidences a process of evolution and adaption by a broad array of national and international actors. In MacGinty’s words ‘it is often a gradualist, everyday process, whereby entities (actors, structures, norms) negotiate and renegotiate their own place in the social, political and economic spheres’.128

Nevertheless, a series of critical questions remain unanswered in this context. Firstly, we should enquire whether the important and evident impact at local level in the regions analysed will remain just that, local level impact lacking broader and transcendental relevance and meaning in a country still plagued by the causes, consequences and actions of armed conflict. In short, does what happen in Nariño, stay in Nariño, or might its resulting impact be extended elsewhere? It is of crucial importance to develop processes and instruments through which impact at local level may be articulated with and spread to other regions and, significantly, with national level policy, given that, as Ramsbotham has argued, the state remains a key player in peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Secondly, we should explore how the asymmetrical power relations and, to a degree, the dependence upon the international community, that permit local level peacebuilders to maintain their own agenda and autonomy, whilst at the same time marginalising them from real decision-making processes, may be overcome? Are we in fact bound by the unthinkable irony that local level peacebuilding can only assert transcendental impact if and when it is recognised formally by the state, leading, in all likelihood, to the dilution of the autonomous agenda of local level actors?

In this regard, a final question arises as to whether, ultimately, it is only the state that is able effectively to negotiate with armed groups and thus precipitate their disarmament and demobilisation, consolidating a process akin to peacebuilding, but, that in all likelihood, lacks the profound social roots to build enduring peace. Without recognition of the central importance of local level peacebuilding, and of its symbiotic complementarity with national level processes, elite actors negotiating in Havana will continue to demonstrate disregard for regional actors in the elaboration of the peace agreements, most likely to their peril. In this context, the accords and the subsequent formal Liberal Peace are indeed likely to remain at best fragile, at worst unsustainable, resembling a tree, bereft of roots. However, as formal ‘flat-packed peace’ is imposed, civil resistance is likely to persist in local level, as actors forge meaning and shape the everyday from below, as they have done for decades. The question remaining in this conjuncture, therefore, is what, if anything, does the formal peace process mean to citizens who live the causes and consequences of armed conflict every day and construct meaning out of and resistance to it?
