Meier & Páez: Education for Reconciliation in the Local Context – Three Case Studies from Colombia
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Education for Reconciliation in the Local Context – Three Case Studies from Colombia

Abstract: *The Colombian Peace process has come to a formal end with the signing of the Treaty of Havanna in 2016. The article gives a short introduction of the developments since then, focusing on the plebiscite before reporting the results of our visits to three different municipalities, where we talked with victims and victimizers, carried out various pedagogical exercises and received a feed-back concerning measures implemented to compensate victims and reintegrate former victimizers.*
Keywords: *Colombia, peace education, field work, reintegration, compensation, Interlacing*

***概要** (Markus D. Meier & Manuel Páez: 在当地语境下的和解教育 – 哥伦比亚的三个案例研究)：随着2016年哈瓦那条约的签署，哥伦比亚和平进程正式结束。文章简要介绍了自那时起的一些发展状况，着眼于在汇报我们对三个不同直辖市的访问结果之前的全民公决，在那里我们与受害者和危害人进行了交谈，开展了各种教学活动，并收到了为补偿受害者以及曾经的危害人重新融入社会而采取措施的一些反馈。*
***关键词:** 哥伦比亚，和平教育，实地工作，重新融入，赔偿，联系*

***Abstract** (Markus D. Meier & Manuel Páez: Bildung zur Versöhnung im lokalen Kontext - drei Fallstudien aus Kolumbien): Der kolumbianische Friedensprozess ist mit der Unterzeichnung des Vertrags von Havanna im Jahr 2016 zu einem formalen Ende gekommen. Die Autoren geben eine kurze Einführung in die seitdem geschehenen Entwicklungen, wobei sie den Schwerpunkt auf die Volksabstimmung legen. Danach berichten sie über die Ergebnisse ihrer Besuche in drei verschiedenen Gemeinden, in welchen sie mit Opfern und Tätern gesprochen, verschiedene pädagogische Übungen durchgeführt haben und ein Feedback zu Maßnahmen zur Entschädigung von Opfern und zur Wiedereingliederung von Tätern erhalten haben.*
***Schlüsselwörter**: Kolumbien, Friedenserziehung, Feldforschung, Re-Integration, Entschädigung, Vernetzung*

***Резюме** (Маркус Д. Мейер и Мануэль Паец: Образование для примирения в локальном контексте - три практических примера из Колумбии): Колумбийский мирный процесс пришел к формальному окончанию с подписанием Гаванского Договора в 2016 году. Авторы дают краткое введение в произошедший с тех пор процесс развития, причем основной акцент они делают на общенародный референдум. Затем они сообщают о событиях их визитов в три разных общины, в которых они беседовали с жертвами и исполнителями преступлений, проводили различные педагогические занятия и получили отклик на мероприятия по компенсации жертвам и реабилитации исполнителей преступлений.*
***Ключевые слова:** Колумбия, воспитание к миру, полевое исследование, реинтеграция, компенсация, объединение*

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Abbreviations:

ACR – Colombian Agency for Reintegration (of the former illegal armed combatants)

AUC – United Self-Defense of Colombia, politically right-wing illegal paramilitary armed groups

AGC – Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia, a follow-up organization of the AUC

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Bacrim – *Ba*ndas *cri*minales, apolitical criminal gangs, mostly in the drug business and illegal mining

CONPES – National Council on Economic and Social Policies

DDR – disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

ELN – National Liberation Army, Marxist armed group

ERP – Revolutionary People´s Army, Marxist armed group

FARC – Revolutionary Colombian Armed Forces, Marxist armed group

IOM – International Organisation for Migration

OACP – High Commissioner for the Peace, Hightest Ranking Colombian official for the Peace process

ODIH – Observatory for the International Humanitarian Rights

Peace-making – the act of breaking military resistance

Peace-building – the act of transforming a society affected by armed conflict into a civil society

Peace-keeping – the act of securing the sustainability of peace

PPR – Person in the process of Reintegration (former combatants of the FARC)

UARIV – Unit for the attention and integral reparation of the *victims* of Colombia's armed conflict, counterpart to the ACR

Content

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There is no handy roadmap for reconciliation. There is no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating

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trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not – and cannot – happen again.   Desmond Tutu

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1. Introduction – background, aims, and scope of our study

In the summer of 2016 we published a theoretical, legal and historical framework for the understanding of the complex reconciliation process Colombia is undergoing after more than 50 years of armed conflict, focusing on *education* as a possible mediator between the extreme positions of "peace vs. justice" (http://www.ide-journal.org/article/education-between-peace-and-justice-in-times-of-armed-conflict-and-reconciliation-the-colombian-case/). We announced a follow-up that would describe in detail our experience during visits to three communities heavily affected by the conflict and report on their efforts to overcome it.

Colombia is making significant efforts to build peace and settle debts with victims. An internal conflict between many armed actors, more than 50 years old and with more disappeared civilians than in any of the South American dictatorships (see recently Bello Albarracín, Suarez & Márquez Ramírez, 2016), has left a mark difficult to erase. As a result, since 2003 many policies have been implemented in the country to facilitate the demobilization of combatants and the massive redress of atrocious crimes. For our historical overview of the conflict see Meier & Páez 2016, p. 92-97. We had concluded:

> pedagogical peace-building procedures for reconciliation must be seen in the Colombian context as mediating between two extremes, which permeate the civic society and will in fact be determined by *a nationwide plebiscite* soon: They can be labeled as "legalist" and "pragmatist" approaches to the question of how to deal with the atrocities and violations of numerous rights, laws and norms during the 50+ year Colombian conflict period. (Meier & Páez 2016, p. 97, *italics* added)

We can now say that this nationwide plebiscite showed the dilemma and the division of the country *in nuce*: Held in October 2016 with a voter turnout of only 37%, the peace agreements between government and FARC were *rejected* by the Colombian electorate extremely narrowly by 50,21% ("no") against 49,78% ("si") – against every single demoscopic prognosis (all data from here on taken from the official State Website Registraduría Nacional del Estado Civil, 2016). The issue had come down to a confrontation between President Santos, whose government had negotiated the agreement in order to stop bloodshed and terror, and his predecessor Uribe, who insinuated that the country was at the verge of surrendering to terrorists without need. What were their respective argumentations?

Apart from the longstanding divide between "liberals" and "conservatives" in Colombian history, apart from personal animosities and disillusions, apart from the "peace vs. justice"-debate (see Meier & Páez, 2016, p. 98), apart also from a lack of a strong, visible and convincing campaign on either side, analysts agreed that an issue seemingly absurdly remote from the actual confrontation had reversed the trend of the plebiscite: Protestant Churches ("cristianos" as opposed to the mainstream Catholics) had announced that they felt provoked by the extensive coverage of "gender-issues" (*asuntos de género*) in a political-military contract and viewed these as a modernized form of "social re-education", as formerly promoted by the Marxist *FARC*. By August 2016 "gender had become the battle-cry of the ´no´-campaign". (Semana, 2016). And in fact, the term "gender" appears 114 times in the 297 pages of the final document, the term "education" 26 times, "single-moms" 5 times, "family" – as referring to the dominant rural social micro-structure – not once (Gobierno

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Nacional & FARC-EP, 2016). The liberal daily newspaper *El Espectador* had welcomed the inclusion of a gender perspective, but had also warned early, that

(p)aradoxically, this gender perspective, which is one of the great successes of the agreement, is being used by those campaigning for the "No" in the plebiscite to confuse and polarize. Worse: some [Catholic] priests and [Protestant] pastors ask their parishioners from the pulpit to vote "No", because the agreement includes the "gender ideology" that the FARC wants to "impose". (…) This message was taken advantage of by Senator [and ex-president] Uribe, a fisherman in muddy rivers, who affirmed that "the ideology of gender, included in the peace agreements, will enter – without further debates – to be part of our constitutional order". (Ruiz-Navarro, 2016, translation MDM)

President Santos stood with his back to the wall after his defeat in the plebiscite, only receiving the Peace Nobel Price five days later and an invitation by the Queen to a State Visit to England ensured his political survival and gave free way for Congress, dominated by Santos´ coalition, to approve the agreement anyway – despite of the narrow rejection by the very plebiscite.

The post-conflict process and reconciliation thus starts with a dissonance. Especially the negotiated reduction of punishment for crimes committed for many *FARC* members in the context of "transitional justice" and its unclear perspective for the future of rural Colombia lacked broad majority public support, save enthusiasm, from the beginning. Society is everything but unanimous about how it should deal with its past and how it should envision its future – even less so are communities in the afflicted rural areas. (The big cities had voted slightly in favor – 50,57% "si" –, the countryside slightly against – 50,98% "no" – the peace agreement.)

In the recent nationwide elections in March 2018, Colombian voters left no doubt that even a "si" for the Peace Process had by no means indicated any sympathy for the Marxist guerrilla, the newly registered follow-up political party FARC (now: *fuerza alternativa revolutionaria del común*) received only 0.3% of the total votes.

We cover this historic continuation *in extensu*, because it elucidates that a post-conflict period may mean very different, even contradictory things to different actors. It sheds light on the deep ambiguity the Colombian voting public obviously feels about the post-conflict period and the way, the country should head, and also the wide and diverse scope of directions that different regional, national, and international advisors, but also religious, academic, political and social leaders would like to prescribe and announce for the future. It also makes clear, that times of uncertainty and new beginnings are crucial for future developments, and different parties keep a watchful eye on each other conspicuously in their efforts to head into the future of a post-conflict society:

- Does peace mean the "status-quo-ante", a "pre-conflict" Colombia of the 1960´s with a strong clerical influence, strong family ties, with a weak civil society and weak state institutions – "back to the good old days"?
- Does peace mean the "status-quo", a truce between "pacified and modernized modernizers" and evermore-conspicuous conservatives – Colombian "business as usual"?
- Does peace mean a catching-up with the international developments of individualization, hedonism and an economically and socially atomized society – the Social State of "making money" between "women´s rights" and "environmental protection"?
- More abstractly: What balance should be struck between the interests of local, regional, national and international actors and their different agendas?
- More concretely and controversially: What economic perspectives can the Colombian countryside develop in a globalized agro-industrial market, if any? Which alternatives

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could e.g. realistically und sustainably replace its illegal, but flourishing and very lucrative drug business and illegal mining industry?

- In general: How "globalized" should and could Colombia become, and how much local and regional patina can and shall remain?

All these questions were also subordinated to the misleading prescriptions of the plebiscite. These unclear perspectives have to be born in mind when we now turn to the local context.

2. Methodology – Our focus groups and how they worked

In 2014 the Presidency of the Republic commissioned the OACP to carry out activities that sought to "build a culture of peace and reconciliation". (Presidencia de la Republica, 2014, p. 13). To this end the OACP issued numerous programs and guidelines, all with the aim to educate for a "territorial peace".

The normative framework of these programs is based on *Law 1448* of 2011 (Presidencia de la Republica, 2011), also known as the Victims' Law (*Ley de las víctimas*), and strategies for community reintegration of members of illegal armed groups adopted by the CONPES. (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social, 2008).

According to OACP, each territory must weave its own culture of peace and set specific guidelines that will guide the construction of coexistence according to their needs, which will allow the parties involved to reach more pertinent and lasting policies, created by the local actors such as citizens, governments, social organizations, the private economic sector, the churches and academia. Thus, territorial peace can be seen as an educational process that aims to "implement a participatory planning campaign so that the authorities and communities can think about the characteristics and needs of the territory, the responses to those needs, and in a methodically concerted way plan to transform those territories." (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, n.d., p. 4-5)

In an exploratory project, our group - psychologists, pedagogues, lawyers and ACR and UARIV officials – visited three communities and met separately, two times each, with three affected groups in *focus groups*: 1. The victims, 2. the PPR and 3. the community. The ACR had advised us to consult the PPR anonymously, as many of them lived without revealing their true identity to their communities in order not to threaten the public order. The *focus groups* met at the beginning of 2016, each meeting lasted about five hours.

Municipality	Victims attending	PPR attending
Carmen de Bolívar	30	9
Tulapas	20	5
El Palmar	85	15

Table 1: Number of attendees / municipality

The meetings with the *victims* and the *PPR* were held separately, but the agendas overlapped partially:

(1) Socialization of the project and hearing expectations of the exercise.

(2) Exercise called *My territory*. Construction of a diagnosis of the region, through a relaxed activity around a map, in which the assistants drew or wrote symbols related to relevant socio-economic characteristics of their environment.

(3) Exercise *The vehicle of local reconciliation* (see below).

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(4) Exercise *Perceptions of reconciliation*. Assessing the participants' perceptions, opinions and expectations of the process of reconciliation

(5) Exercise *Reconcili-action* (reconcili-acción). Stimulating the formulation of viable and sustainable reconciliation proposals, highlighting the need for active participation.

(6) Validation of recommendations for the diagnosis of IOM routes

We employed several pedagogical tools:

The vehicle of local reconciliation was an imaginary local *colectivo*, the typical Colombian public transportation bus. The "movement" metaphor was intended to symbolize the process nature of reconciliation, the "collective" metaphor was supposed to symbolize the need to agree on a common goal, the "technical" metaphor referred to the possibilities and the need to "get things together". The meetings were accordingly guided by questions such as:

- Who is driving? Who are the passengers? When can they get on/off the vehicle? How would they stimulate the others to get on/off the vehicle? How are the passengers perceived by non-passengers?
- What or who is the engine? What is the fuel? Which actors could serve as tires/brakes/lights etc.?
- How is the route defined, and by whom? What obstacles does the vehicle face on the road? Where should it stop or accelerate?
- Is there a definite end to the journey? If so, where is it? If not, how and why keep moving anyway?

Perceptions of reconciliation was aimed at reconstructing the visions (*imaginarios*) of the affected population concerning reconciliation, to *not* impose external administrative procedures that did not meet their needs. It was thus also an exercise in clarifying and articulating inner representations.

Reconcili-action was a play on words that stressed the need for all group members to actively work for reconciliation, aimed at preventing conceptions of passive and assistentialist attitudes all too often associated with the issue.

In all three communities visited the UARIV had implemented the *Entrelazando* (Interlacing) program: (Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Victimas, 2015), consisting of participatory activities revolving around five thematic axes – Learning, Feeling, Doing, Transforming and Reflecting:

(1) Social Pedagogy or "Learning", i.e. cognitively carrying out analyses of violence and developing possible alternatives for the protection of human rights. Its end is to stimulate reflection on the forms of violence suffered by individuals formally recognized as victims, it is *not* extended to other members of the community, or the PPR, although many of these experienced painful events during their transit into illegality themselves (see Meier & Páez, 2016 pp. 104-106, for details). The perspective is psychologically strictly limited to the victim itself, to prevent any relativization of his or her experience and excluding (ambivalent and undesired) feelings of "victim´s guilt". Nevertheless, becoming aware of this reality may help develop empathy and lay the ground for potential points of encounter with the PPR. "Understanding the 'why' and 'how' of the victimizer´s actions is not the same as exculpating them, but it is a precondition for any policy of reconciliation. The diversity of their guilt, their motives and their crimes require that the politics of reconciliation reflect a similarly diverse approach to the subject." (Instituto Internacional para la Democracia y la Asistencia Electoral, 2003, p. 8)

(2) Collective Pain or "Feeling and Elaborating", i.e. exercises that facilitate the collective expression of suffering. The idea in the focus group with the victims to permit the expression of pain and

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overcome the feeling of isolation and "guilt" that may accompany the experiences and give way and room for a feeling of "group-solidarity" and strength. However, in order to lend this exercise a truly reconciling nature, we consider it necessary to show courage, respect and recognition for the pain of other members of the community (and that means: including the PPR), and not to focus exclusively on registered victims. Only in this way will any individual be allowed to consider himself part of a broader social group (again), characterized by a geographical region, in which different ways of understanding *la violencia* (the violence) coexist.

(3) Social Practices or "Doing", i.e. recovering, rebuilding, and innovating common customs in order to promote the restoration of trust among others. The aim to restore the trust of the victims in their community is meant to get them out of the isolation often associated with their victimization, sometimes called "second victimization" in criminology. We agree with the approach. However, recovering local trust needs a collective vision of the community, in which joint actions are carried out among *all* its members, including the PPR, but also populations often stigmatized by latent prejudices and stereotypes in the community (such as LGBT, the poor, leftists, afros, indigenous etc.)

(4) Transformation of Local Scenarios or "Transforming By Remembering", i.e. reassigning symbolic values to the experienced "scenarios of terror". The resignification of the region should respond to the needs of the recognized victim specifically, but to those of the community in general, too. Also including the PPRs into the symbolic reconstruction of space would be desirable, we think, so that it would become a democratic experience whereby *Places of pain* become starting points for the reconstruction of citizenship (see the example of El Palmar below).

(5) Collective Perception or "Reflecting", i.e. seeking to reduce the prejudices and social stereotypes associated with violence. This dimension should be oriented towards the recognition of the otherness of others (following the *theory of social recognition*); Honneth, 1994), reconfiguring the common perceptions of "others". Thus, it can include a reflection on the functioning of the community as a whole, not only those who carried weapons.

To conclude and summarize, we tried to encourage new ways of perceiving and acting around reconciliation, and also addressed the recognition of institutions and institutional paradigms and popular beliefs about them, relying on our previous experiences in numerous field studies and some helpful practical literature that inspired us and provided valuable tools. (Fondo de Justicia Transicional, 2012; López-Martínez, 2009; Montoya Salamanca & Fernández Guarín, 2006; Vela Mantilla, Rodríguez Fernández, Rodríguez Puentes, & García Muñoz, 2011) Our theoretical approach was inspired by contemporary reflections on the evaluation of reconciliation policies with the direct participation of communities in conflict zones, e.g. the works of Kenneth Bush (for practical details see K. Bush & Salamanca, 2016; for pedagogical, epistemological and methodological questions see K. Bush & Duggan, 2013).

3. Experiences in local contexts

The three cases to be studied were *Alta Montaña* communities in the municipality of Carmen de Bolívar (*departamento* Bolivar), the community of San Pablo de Tulapas in the municipality of Turbo (*departamento* Antioquia), and the community of El Palmar in the municipality of Leiva (*departamento* Nariño). Some criteria for choosing these communities were:
- the existence of a *collective subject* of reparation (referring to the community as a whole – not just some individuals – being affected by the *violencia*)
- the occurrence of *multiple and diverse* severe violations of Human Rights in the area,

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- the representation of *three different geographic regions* of the country (coastal, tropical, Andean)
- the presence of *different armed actors*,
- the existence of people in the process of reintegration (PPR).

Illustration 1: Geographical location of the three communities evaluated (©Meier, 2017)

The three communities under investigation have similar socio-economic characteristics. All have been victims of armed violence and state abandonment, which is why most of the inhabitants are experiencing multidimensional poverty and/or lack of resources.

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3.1. Alta Montaña, municipio de Carmen de Bolívar (Bolívar)

Photo 1: Carmen de Bolívar, "AGC" are associated with the paramilitary AUC (© Paéz, 2016)

Carmen de Bolívar is located on one side of the *Montes de María* valley, in the center of the department of Bolívar, 114 km southeast of Cartagena. With an extension of 954 km2, by the year 2015 the community had about 75,000 inhabitants, out of which about 60,000 lived within the city. Situated in a tropical, humid climate with an annual average temperature of 29ºC at 197 meters above sea level, it shows an ideal climate for artisanal agriculture – both legal and illegal. Other

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economic opportunities are limited to the informal sector such as motorcycle taxi services, car and motorcycle cleaning and repairing, hauling and stone extraction. Only 20% of inhabitants of working age have a formal job, mostly in the public sector.

Guerrilla groups such as the FARC, the ELN, and the ERP have been operating in the area since the early 1980s. At the end of the 1990s the AUC also entered. The AUC committed terrible massacres in El Salado (1997 and 2000) and Macayepo (2002), and gained control of the urban centers, while the guerrilla stayed in the mountainous area with its very difficult access by land – an almost typical "draw"-situation between leftist *guerrilla,* rightist *paras*, and the Colombian state during the conflict years.
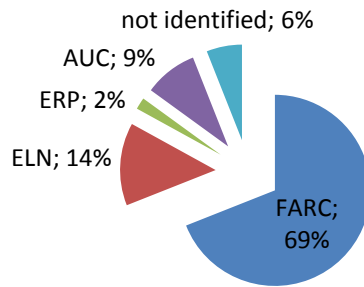
Graph: Armed illegal activities by actors for the Bolívar department 1990-2002 (Vicepresidencia de la República, n.d., p. 8)

The internal conflict greatly affected local work dynamics and led to massive forced displacement. Carmen de Bolívar showed the highest level of forced displacement in the Bolívar department in the 2012 report, 46% (UARIV, n.d., p. 6). Important companies in the region such as tobacco companies were disappearing and with them numerous economic opportunities and social and cultural activities around the plantations. Currently the quality of life of the inhabitants of Carmen de Bolivar is marked by poverty, insufficient infrastructure, a lack of basic sanitation and housing, which is why many residents live in shacks made of palm leaves. Regarding education, the 2016 development report states that "(t)he 16 municipalities of the Montes de María are not certified in the sectors of Education and Health." (Gallo Paredes, 2016; see also De Bolívar, Esther, & Leon, 2012).

Photo 2: Focal group in Carmen de Bolívar (© Páez, 2016)

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3.2. Gulf of Urabá, San Pablo de Tulapas, municipio de Turbo (Antioquia)

San Pablo de Tulapas is located on the *eastern* side of the gulf of Urabá, close to the coast of Panamá, 374 km northwest of Antioquia's Capital Medellín. This isolated remoteness, its location at sea level near one of the most tropical-humid climates of the planet, the almost complete lack of infrastructure, and its proximity to Panamá make it a strategic point of interest for international drug-traffickers – both for drug cultivation and for its transportation towards the global North (ACNUR, 2004). This has fueled the armed conflict from the 1980´s onwards.

The community is mostly inhabited by Afro-descendant or *mestizo* Colombians and consists of about 1800 inhabitants. Its main legal economic activities are the breeding of small cattle and the cultivation of tropical fruits and vegetables such as cassava, yams and bananas – economic opportunities other than subsistence or illegal agriculture are technically non-existent. The majority of houses are built with palm leafs, with "dirt"-floors and precarious sanitary facilities. At the moment of our visit San Pablo de Tulapas did not count with any health or education services and faced a food shortage for the extreme seasonal rains. The nearest town is Necoclí, located two hours on foot on unpaved roads, where access to health care and basic education is available.

Photo 3: Round table (mesa de trabajo) with victims, San Pablo de Tulapas (© Páez, 2016)

The region was heavily affected by homicides and massacres during the 1990´s:
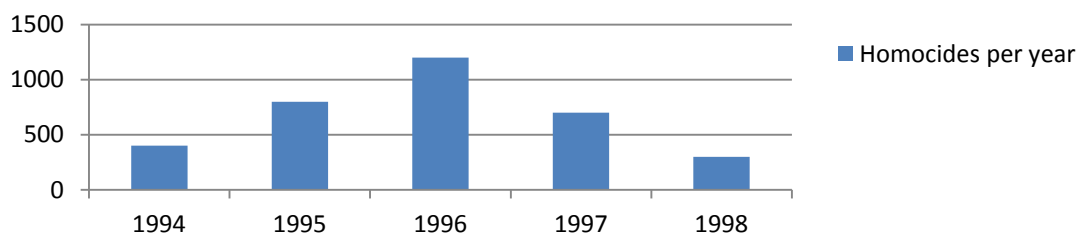
Graph: Homicides per year in the Turbo region (source: Verdadabierta, n.d.)

In addition to homicides of specific persons, 30 massacres occurred between 1990 and 2005 with 184 dead and 46 "disappeared" inhabitants (Verdadabierta, n.d., ibid.).

Currently, the municipality of Turbo brings together more than 70,000 victims, more than half of its population, who have suffered a diversity of criminal acts, such as forced disappearance or homicide of relatives or neighbours, sexual violence, child recruitment, kidnapping, and land deprivation – and violent acts persist. Two weeks before our visit in May 2016, the *Clan Úsuga* (a

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Bacrim group) carried out an armed strike in the area, affecting 18 of Antioquia's 125 municipalities, leaving one person dead, several wounded and 35 illegal actors captured (Radio Caracol, 2016). On our way to San Pablo, graffiti on various houses warned us "AGC presente" (*The AGC is here;* see photo 1).

According to the UARIV the damages inflicted upon the community by the conflict are psychosocial, economic, and cultural as well as political. In the political sphere, freedom of expression could not be exercised and democratic participation at the municipal level was limited and dangerous. The community gradually lost its leadership to the armed groups that banned community association and development of any kind. These armed groups and the dispossession of land led to the disintegration of the social fabric and often even family ties (see e.g. Meier & Paez, 2016, p. 104). The population was threatened indiscriminately for facilitating or belonging to one armed actors or the other – or the opposite thereof. Life had turned into a lose-lose equation for most of the ordinary population. We sensed a general sense of bitterness, sadness, anger and fear during our visits, as well as the feeling of having lost the possibility of living with due dignity and enjoying basic rights such as health, education, food and recreation.

3.3. The Andes, El Palmar, municipio de Leiva (Nariño)

Photo 4: The steep mountains of Nariño (© Páez, 2016)

The settlement of El Palmar belongs to the municipality of Leiva and is located in the northeast of the *departamento* Nariño, near the western Andean mountain range. It covers approximately 100 square kilometers consisting of a steep mountainous landscape, 900 - 1800 meters above sea level (Alcaldía de Leiva - Nariño, 2016). The trip to the urban center of El Palmar took us about 3 hours on unpaved roads from Leiva.

El Palmar counts about 5,100 inhabitants, mostly small-scale farmers, out of which 2/3 live in poverty. The main agricultural products cultivated are sugar cane, coffee, banana, peanuts, beans, maize, wood – and coca. There is no other industry. According to the Mayor of Leiva illicit crops such as coca and poppy provide "most of the income" in the area and have displaced other traditional economic activities. Wood logging has caused serious environmental problems in the area. It only has one health center in precarious conditions and a basic education institution that has been the target of clashes and attacks by illegal armed groups present in the region. Similarly, it lacks public security forces. (all data from Alcaldía de Leiva - Nariño, 2016). In short, El Palmar shows high state abandonment.

Both El Palmar and the municipality of Leiva have suffered the consequences of the internal armed conflict. Its remote location, rugged topography, and difficult access to the area by road positioned them both as preferred cultivation location and strategic corridors for drug trafficking (OIM, 2016). In 1979 the FARC took control of the region, carried out attacks and armed incursions in the

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municipality in 1982, 1985 and 1986 and so consolidated its presence in the community (all data in Muñoz, 2013). During this very long period of domination of the FARC together with the historical absence of the Colombian State, the neighbors developed "informal relations of power" with the first, by virtue of which

> (t)hese actors [of the FARC] were "the Law", addressing various issues of the community such as: domestic violence, robberies, land suits. In the same way [they] established "Laws" for the coexistence of the community. This historic collaboration permitted the community to accept and tolerate its situation, [but] which affected it in a negative way, since it has stigmatized them – a stigmatization [as "community of criminal collaborators"] of which the community is still a victim. (Hoyos, 2014).

By the year 2000 the AUC had entered the area to control the water supply and the exploitation of the land. Coca and poppy cultivation increased consecutively, making the department of Nariño the largest producer in the country in 2007 (Muñoz, 2013, p. 215). At the same time, the population displaced by violence also increased, as did crimes such as theft, intimidation and indiscriminate verbal and physical mistreatment (Ávila, Escobar, & Torres Tovar, 2014; Muñoz, 2013). According to the UNHCR, "while the department of Nariño in 2000 recorded the expulsion of 2,411 people, in 2002, 2005 and 2006 it saw about 10,000 people displaced annually, who had to flee to protect their lives and their integrity" (Muñoz, 2013, p. 215). Following the negotiations with the AUC by the Uribe government and their disarmament agreement, the year 2005 saw the demobilization of 689 AUC-men. However, violence *in*creased with the birth of the *Bacrim* (said to be mostly recruited from Ex-AUC-*paras*) and their longstanding dispute over land and drugs (Muñoz, 2013, p. 224; OIM, 2016). These *Bacrims* alone killed hundreds of civilians in the municipality, seven of which in El Palmar in December (Rutas del Conflicto, n.d.), causing great socio-psychological injury to the community. The church was a place often used by illegal groups to gather population and "dispense justice", even killing people inside it. Plans are now to deconsecrate it and turn it into a peace monument.

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Photo 5: Church of El Palmar, place of illegal gatherings and executions, now proposed to become a peace monument (© Páez, 2016)

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By 2012, the FARC had regained control over the region after multiple armed "guerilla"-type-skirmishes with the Colombian Army and monopolized the trade routes for narcotics in the department. In 2013 homicides, indiscriminate detentions and forced displacements were reported massively – and also attributed to the Colombian Army in combat. (see e.g. Raigozo, 2013).

Was (and is) the Colombian Army a player or an opponent of the drug business?

The question is vital to the understanding of the conflict and the post-conflict period, and it would be far beyond the scope of this paper to investigate it empirically. Also, the thorny issue of the *falsos positivos* (literally "false positives") – army members that killed (supposedly) innocent civilians and declared them *enemy combatants* in order to gain military benefits – hovered over the peace talks in La Havana for a long time. Was the Colombian state arbitrarily committing crimes against humanity itself, or were the *falsos positivos* merely singularities to be settled by disciplinary military law? The first interpretation would have delegitimized the state monopoly of violence; the second interpretation would have rendered the argument politically irrelevant. We repeat that the issue is politically still highly charged and cannot and need not be answered in detail in our context here.

Finally, since the year 2015 with the peace talks in Havana/Cuba advancing and the transition of the FARC into a political party (now *Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común*), an increasing presence of the ELN has been noticed. (OIM, 2016) and reports of illegal detentions and kidnappings related to the drug trafficking business continue, as well as numerous murders of civilians (DIV03, 2016).

4. Results

Our research in the three municipalities yielded several lessons in terms of territorial reconciliation. Six appeared central to us:

- Victims, victimizers and the communities have developed a deep mistrust in the State and its institutions that will be hard to overcome for the peace process.
- Isolating *collective redress* to *formal reintegration* reduces PPR contributions to reconciliation. Victims and victimizers in a 50+-year conflict are not always, and not always definitely, distinguishable (although in many instances they indeed are, and drastically) nor is the line between them and the "indifferent rest" clear at all times.
- *Systemic reconciliation* helps improve conditions in communities and avoid assistentialism.
- Setting up economically successful, self-organized small enterprises works to bring affected people together and envision a better future.
- Cultural and sports activities are important to ease tension and regain zest for life.
- As long as the (political and economic) causes of the armed conflict remains, it will not be extinguished.

4.1. Victims, victimizers and the communities alike have developed a deep mistrust in the State and its institutions that will be hard to overcome for the peace-process

In general, the population of the municipalities visited showed a profound mistrust towards the functioning of the democratic system, the Colombian State specifically. Complaints about the poor management of public goods by the officials, referring to corruption, administrative inefficiency and links with illegal armed actors were heard during almost all occasions. This ubiquitous and constant complain is problematic for the transition to peace, since one of our main goals was to establish confidence in the political processes, to recover the legitimacy of the State in the eyes of its citizens, and to consolidate democracy (see Van Zyl, 2011, p. 65).

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Both victims *and* PPR reported that functionaries of the Army or National Police subjected both groups to arbitrary detentions, unjustified searches, indications of belonging to illegal groups, and violations of the right to due process. And in fact, Public Force has received augmented rights in the context of *Transitional Justice* to secure public safety in the transition period, but for the citizens it had the effect of destroying an already weak trust towards the State. A certain lack of commitment of the Armed Forces to the reconciliation process perpetuates the image of the State as an enemy of the civilian population – to which the PPR belong now – and puts their reintegration at risk.

Our informants demanded "democratic training" to participate actively in public management beyond electoral activity. Some points they mentioned were a clear information about administrative responsibilities and limitations, control and denouncement of corruption of public resources, more direct impact of community decisions on local government plans, especially on the definition of budget spending, along with a general interest in skills of public and private leaderships and entrepreneurship. We evidenced a lot of ignorance about legal ways to demand their rights and strengthen community associative capital during the training and the necessity for technical training in areas as diverse as new technologies, basic accounting, the design of a simple administrative scheme or how to establish channels of communication and cohesion.

For example, in Carmen de Bolívar several social leaders from the victims' spectrum pointed out to us that numerous civic associations have political agendas for the region, but that they lack the capacity to influence traditional political parties or to launch their own candidates for regional governments, because of the existence of strong clientele networks, we were told. Likewise, both in San Pablo de Tulapas and El Palmar the inhabitants emphasized the need for the creation of spaces for informal democratic deliberation, within which plans for the reconstruction of the regions could be realized.

To compare this with a distant example, Sierra Leone demonstrated that the distrust of the PPR in "others", including the State, diminishes the feeling of attachment to the democratic process and can stimulate recidivism.

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Past participation in an abusive military faction is the strongest predictor of difficulty in achieving social reintegration. On economic and political reintegration, we find that wealthier and more educated combatants face greater difficulties. Ideologues, men, and younger fighters are the most likely to retain strong ties to their factions. Most important, we find little evidence at the micro level that internationally funded programs facilitate demobilization and reintegration. (Humphreys & Weinstein, 2007, p. 531)

In fact, in all three populations our informants identified

1. State abandonment and 2. public corruption

as the main causes of *la violencia* (the violence), even more than the actions of armed groups. "We have been hurt more by corruption than by armed groups," (Informant "Jhon", El Palmar, 5.5.2016) said one informant, and questioned us about how exactly the resources allocated to the collective reparation of his community by UARIV were to be distributed. Peace and reconciliation is "big business" now, more so as it includes many international actors not well acquainted with the history of the Colombian conflict and local traditions.

Legally, compliance with the requirements set forth by national reintegration policies cannot be left to the political willingness (or unwillingness) of the respective local politicians or teachers (see below) but has to be enforced. The socialization of the respective state programs and a general sensitization for the vulnerability of the victims as well as the PPR population is a national challenge and should be promoted intensively in order to secure the process of "social healing" envisioned. This must include the PPR.

In all three municipalities, there was a clear lack of knowledge about the components of the reintegration route, but also a lack of interest on the part of the media and educational institutions to communicate these and thus help overcome the situation. This ignorance facilitates myths about

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disproportionate (economic) state benefits for PPR, visions promoting PPR rejection and discrimination and stimulating feelings of bitterness among the victims, who see their victimizers as being "rewarded" by the State. "Delinquir paga" (to commit crimes pays) was a phrase we heard several times in this respect. The wrong information had spread that PPR receive a free monthly pay of three minimum wages – way above any rural income attainable for the average Colombian *campesino* –, disseminated by the political opposition. This had obviously created a feeling of exclusion and betrayal not only in victims, but also large parts of the communities. This policy, aimed at helping PPR in their reintegration process and well justified compared to the high costs of the armed conflict, also played a role in the rejection of the plebiscite.

4.2. The victim-victimizer dichotomy is too person-centered

The legislation of *administrative reparation* sought to settle the historical debt of the Colombian State vis-à-vis those who suffered from the absence of state institutions. It gave – for the first time – legal recognition to the *category* of victims, under formalized procedural schemes, without the necessity for *individuals* to win a trial before a judge. However, the focus was clearly on the past, not so much on securing their future. Furthermore, in both the cases of the victims and the PPRs, we see that peace-processes must focus from the beginning on *peace-building* and *peace-keeping*, not only *peace-making* – or more positively, the three have to be intertwined from the beginning, not just consecutively.

The Colombian reconciliation expert Moreno warns that only "buying one's way out" will not do, but that the "ideal of inclusion should serve as a framework for administrative redress in a way that will dignify the victims and reintegrate them into the community in full equality." (Moreno, 2011)

Similarly, the effective reintegration of PPR requires a coherent and inclusive discourse that gives meaning to the process, and a change of a social climate of excessive polarization or reticence of local actors. For this reason, reconciliation strategies must revolve around citizens, rather than victims and victimizers, since the latter category is inclusive, ideologically more neutral and associated with the active participation of democratic institutions. Likewise, the role of citizen places the subject as an actor of social change and protagonist of the exercise of public power, which triggers changes in their expectations of life.

In this regard, the Center for Non-Violent Action, committed to the transformation of conflicts in border areas of the former Yugoslavia, considers that perpetuating the role of victim among the population represents an obstacle to the construction of sustainable coexistence scenarios, as it dismisses the person from his or her responsibility to actively build one´s life and care for the community (Austin, 2011). The State can compensate for failures in the past, but it is the victims and the victimizers who have to actively work their way back into the community, all of them being prepared for the psychological and social transformations that are associated with it (see also Sikkink, Marchesi, Dixon, & D'Alessandra, 2014).

As for the former, the idea that economic compensation alone allows communities to reconcile or establish relationships of trust in a framework of sustainable coexistence was discarded for lack of empirical support. In our view, it could not be otherwise, because reparation and reintegration seek to satisfy demands and provide services to only certain small sectors of the population, which in quantitative terms do not represent the majority of the inhabitants and the institutions of a community. It is the community, its institutions such as schools, churches, companies and cooperatives and its citizens and their different states of minds, indifference, opportunism, anger and anxiousness, and the situation in which they occurred and occur, which forms the scenario for reconciliation.

In this sense, the fact that both institutions – UARIV y ACR – distribute their services only to individual recipients of their programs and not to regions or communities, they account for a sort of disconnection from the social, political and economic environment they work in. The person-

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centered approach they follow and implement excludes the local dynamics and the specific configurations of each region, but instead leaves them with an unfavorable assistentialist notion that "something is being done".

This can be attributed in part to the legal framework for the *reintegration of ex-combatants* as it was limited to determining the special processes through which combatants would lay down their arms and take on new life projects outside the illegal armed group – *peace-making*, not *peace-building* nor *peace-keeping* was the primary focus (for a theoretical discussion see Fetherston, 2000; Greig et al., 2005). The proposal for community reintegration, although existing and seeking to improve local conditions or incentives to prevent the return of the PPRs to illegal groups, was more conceived as a legal guarantee for the "defenseless" PPR and to facilitate reconciliation (cf. the DDR), and not so much as a direct mechanism to actively promote community development and the rebuilding of a social fabric. In our conception, that was an error.

Practically, the PPRs interviewed experience the ACR as their only governmental ally and perceive indifference, exclusion and even open hostility on the part of municipal mayors, local companies, but also in the education sector and the media. This is particularly noticeable, when they seek work, or try to access public services. In general, the language "the rest of society" uses to refer to them is distant, cold and even hostile.

PPR, but also victims, felt that many public and private institutions did not contribute to the reintegration of PPR but rather perpetuate their stigmatization, from which they suffer. As a PPR put it, "the commitment to reconciliation is important for everyone, not just for us – or for the victims" (PPR "Juan", Carmen de Bolívar, 26.4.2016). In this regard, an ex-member of the AUC reported with sadness the discrimination one of his daughters suffered in the public school she attends, because although she obtains good academic results and is a respected student, some teachers deny her any public recognition and openly remind her classmates of her father´s criminal past. (Informant "Iván", Turbo, 19.4.2016)

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4.3. Systemic reconciliation helps improve conditions of communities and avoid assistentialism

If social reconciliation has to do not only with the victims and victimizers of the internal armed conflict, but also with society in general, and this is to be more than lip-service, approaches need to differentiate between the personal – often traumatically painful – experiences of the victims (but also those of the PPR), and the destruction the conflict has left to both of them within the social fabric they come from and they are about to reenter in renewed roles.

An armed conflict of such magnitude and length could not have passed unnoticed by the many other social roles it created: the seemingly indifferent, the bystanders, the ones with "open accounts", the fearful, the courageous, the opportunists, the sympathizers and the many others and the different roles they may have taken in different situations and circumstances during more than 50 years. It is therefore indispensable to differentiate existing methodologies and approaches and develop new ones.

Concretely, there is a need to develop a systemic approach, away from the person-centered toward a community-centered perspective. Otherwise, peace may be stuck halfway in the communities evaluated. This is not to deny that integral reparation and effective reintegration increase the local conditions of reconciliation, and thus, the chances of making peace sustainable. In effect, "when guilty parties are held accountable, when facts are openly investigated, when pardon is requested and compensation is paid, when guilty institutions are subject to reform, reconciliation is more likely to succeed" (Vera, Contreras Pardo, Torres, & Salcedo, 2015, p. 14), but the reparation and reintegration programs under study are not sufficient to promote reconciliation in communities as a whole, since the latter requires specific and additional activities that foster empathy, provide

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encounters, establish and/or deepen relationships and promote – above all – changes in living conditions in these communities.

This would also move forward towards modifying the *welfare logic* with which State authorities intervene in the communities. Welfare involves an understanding of subjects as being – temporarily or chronically – incapable of managing their needs. This is not generally true for young men and women in the PPR project, and not generally true for the victims neither. Thus, it does not contribute much to eradicating the causes of poverty or exclusion (Franco Martínez, 2011) nor does it improve the capacity for interest agency. For these reasons, the negative logic of *welfare dependency*, that accentuates inequality in the long term and increases the vulnerability of communities, has to be overcome, as it does not confront the real causes of pressing needs, but rather hides them with palliative measures (Franco Martínez, 2011; for a discussion of the concept see Schugurensky, 1998; Villanueva O'Driscoll, Loots, & Derluyn, 2013)

In the selected municipalities, the role of the UARIV, the ACR and other local entities was mostly associated with the delivery or provision of welfare services. The three municipalities shared a common perception that numerous social projects carried out for income generation or improvement of the quality of life, failed or did not achieve the expected results, because of the lack of personal involvement on the part of the recipients. We see them as investments of public financial resources for laudable purposes, but without sustainability and little or no contribution to build any capacity for self-management of the people in the region.

4.4. Setting up economically successful, self-organized small enterprises works best to bring affected people together and envision a better future

In the *Montaña Alta*, as well as in Tulapas and El Palmar, economically profitable activities enabled actively involved inhabitants to become agents of local transformation and created scenarios favorable for the encounters and the building of relationships between them.

For example, UARIV officials in charge of El Palmar and PPR residing in the area spoke very positively to us about the spontaneous reconciliation between victims and former members of the AUC – thanks to their participation in a small-scale poultry business: In 2015 UARIV, ACR, SENA and a foundation called *Manyani de Luz* started a business of egg and chicken production in the city of Pasto including seven PPR and 20 victims, which was reported in the focus group to have generated close ties and even friendships among the two and led to spontaneous forgiveness exercises.

According to the participants, the success of this initiative was due, among other factors, to the psycho-social support they received throughout the process, but also the adequate marketing chances of the products, which made the association profitable and helped them to financially support their families and develop a sense of economic sufficiency (Caracol TV, 2016). We reported the "success story" to UARVI, ACR and OIM back in Bogotá and it was televised as a successful example of the reconciliation process. Methodologically we are referring here to anecdotal "there-is"-evidence without statistical back-up, that nevertheless shows, that the combination of psychological accompaniment – oriented towards the past – and economic prospective – oriented towards a better future – did work in this specific case.

It was also in the renewed social context of the poultry project also, where we sensed a desire to apologize and ask for forgiveness in our psycho-social workshops. One PPR expressed that he felt the spontaneous desire to apologize to the victims for his actions in the illegal armed group:

> The bait was the project, but the goal was reconciliation and we always had something in common: the same problems [...] culminated the stage well [sic], we cried without having to

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and we realized that we were all human, [...] but it is from above that they implement prejudices against us [...] " (Informant "Pedro", Pasto, 10.5.2016)

However, even if it remained clear that he felt emotionally sorry, the responsibility was not his personal one, but fell upon an unidentified "they at the top".

A negative example we encountered was in El Palmar, where between 2012 and 2014 national entities together with international cooperation funds had set up an organic coffee company. Its objective was to replace coca leaf cultivation with profitable and legal agricultural alternatives. However, according to villagers, the project did not yield the expected results because it demanded high cost inputs and effective marketing networks, both of which were missing. In addition, coffee hardly competed with the value of the coca leaf and its easy planting in the region. Hence the project never rooted within the community, who quickly abandoned the business and returned to its traditional illegal economic activities.

For many, the assistentialist attitude of the authorities involved in this exercise, coupled with the poor participation of the beneficiaries in their design and management, were some of the factors that led to their failure. The common denominators of successful projects were the impulses, commitment and personal contributions of the participants, it was seen as "their" project. Such was the case of the poultry company in Pasto, in which victims and PPRs contributed to the initial financing of the required machinery, received permanent advice and psycho-social care from the ACR and the UARIV during all the process.

Despite the success of the poultry project, administrative difficulties prevented its sustainability. In this regard, PPR regretted the lack of continuity of the project due to delays in the disbursement of individual reparations to several participating victims. A PPR commented:

> The Victims Unit depends more on politics [...] the activity worked and allowed us to make friends [...] but it was short, and the local entities disappeared [...] the victims left them even more hurt than they were before, one victim told me [a PPR]: "Do not believe these people [referring to the functionaries of the UARIV] they tell pure lies." (Informant "Pablo", Pasto, 10.5.2016)

This comment leaves no doubts again about the deep mistrust both victims and PPRs seem to have towards state functionaries, being considered by the former as "those who left us defenseless during the armed conflict" and by the latter as "those who fought and killed our comrades". It also makes clear that one of the main aims in the endeavor of reconciliation is building (or in some cases: restoring) trust in the impartiality of state institutions as such, be they security, health or education.

4.5. Cultural and sports activities are important to ease tension and regain peace

Another important area of reconciliation we witnessed in the municipalities studied are cultural activities, sporting events or the promotion of music, dance, theater and other artistic expressions, which individuals attend as neighbors and citizens (and explicitly *not* as PPR or victims of the armed conflict) and generate bonds of trust and maybe even friendship. It seemed exactly its apolitical, "leisure" nature that permits people to get together without falling into the traps of old roles and their respective old arguments.

An example: In October 2015 the population of San Pablo de Tulapas approved its collective reparation plan. In addition to requesting funding for banana, cacao and small livestock farming, it included the "endowment for the house of culture", abandoned by war or transitorily occupied by illegal armed groups. Also, the adaptation and re-opening of the existing sports facilities in the region and the realization of football and baseball sports tournaments to "strengthen the bonds of trust within the community" and motivate "integration among the residents of the village" (*Plan

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integral de reparación colectiva, 2015) seemed good tools. "It would be so great to celebrate *Carnival* again, like we used to, such a long long time ago …" said one informant literally with tears in his eyes (Informant "William", San Pablo, 16.4.2016).

The three cases showed that such scenarios create artistic, sports and leisure opportunities and strengthen the sense of belonging to the community, to restore interpersonal relations affected by the conflict, to overcome the differences between former antagonists and to build new identities (individual and collective) that are distant from the armed conflict.

> During the time of the armed conflict and due to the process of dispossession and mass displacement, the different musical groups responsible for seasoning community and family festivities disappeared (...) With the arrival of paramilitary groups, musical practices had to be transformed with the purpose of preserving life and maintaining the order imposed [i.e. the few musical groups remaining had to adapt to the paramilitary musical taste] (*Plan integral de reparación colectiva*, 2015)

The UARIV had coordinated the construction of a collective reparation plan, where members of the community could participate. Consequently, in the collective reparation plan provided for two "peasant coexistence days" (*dias de la convivencia campesina*), during which the population meets to prepare the typical *sancocho* dish of the region, playing games and engaging in recreational activities throughout the day. To revive the tradition of the musical groups, instruments were delivered on the streets of Tulapas and the interested public was taught how to play and maintain them (Tulapas focus group, 18.4.2016).

In Leiva our informants also mentioned positively the creation of the "departmental board of social pedagogy", as prescribed by the Victims' Law as part of the establishment of guarantees of non-repetition. This initiative was composed of representatives from several local universities, Social Foundations, the Office of Human Rights of the National Police, the Departmental Education Secretariat, the ACR and the UARIV. Some of its achievements were the inclusion of a Chair of Peace in the departmental development plan, which began to be implemented in several public schools, and academic events on repair and reintegration of PPR. (Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización, 2015).

4.6. As long as the (political and economic) causes of the armed conflict remains, it will not be extinguished

Returning to the poultry-project for the last time, it seems clear that economically productive, work-based projects contribute to reintegration, as otherwise PPR find it very difficult to enter the labor market. The stigmatization by the community, but also their lack of work-discipline due to their long time in the armed groups, mixed with a general sense of insecurity and irritability they may sense and/or radiate obliges them to carry out occasional, informal or simple agricultural work. This also confirms the strong links between the processes of reconciliation and the modification of the material conditions of the rural areas:

> Reconciliation has to be based on more than pragmatism and rhetoric. A public acknowledgement of what went wrong in the past, a minimum of retribution and redress and, above all, progress towards economic justice are needed. (Bloomfield, Barnes, Huyse, et al., 2003, p. 36)

For a process of reconciliation, it is necessary to treat the problem of economic injustice and participation in political power as related aspects. In this sense, the search for political solutions to conflicts should not only contemplate the armed dimension as a military question and respond to

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the effects of violence as a psycho-social problem, but also face the fact that at the root of the conflicts there is a strong component of political marginalization and social conflict directly related with conditions of poverty and exclusion in a community, but also a broad strata of society, as an economic issue. (Bloomfield et al., 2003)

All this hints at the private sector strengthening the social environment and their necessary active role in the post conflict period and the reconstruction of a strong and reliable state (see Gerson, 2001). For these reasons, it is imperative to link that sector to the management of reconciliation initiatives in the territories, so that they provide accompaniment or technical advice and even funding. As we have already emphasized, economic recovery depends on "the private business sector [and it] plays a fundamental role in the economic and social management and recovery of the regions most affected by the conflict as well as in the expansion of democracy." (*Perspectivas y aportes empresariales para la construcción de paz*, n.d.)

5. Some recommendations for the future

5.1. Promote greater linkage of local governments, private companies, educational institutions, the media and Public Security

During the Havana talks the focus was clearly on peace-making, on bringing an end to the 50-year-old conflict, it was aimed towards the past. The DDR was a military necessity that had to be treated with care, the focus was clearly not on a vision of the future for the communities. But peace-building and peace-keeping are systematic challenges. They require adjustments not just from PPR and victims, but an active role that local governments must take on, a commitment of private companies in the area to invest and employ, a willingness of educational institutions to accept new students with vulnerable biographical and educational backgrounds, a media that will cover and report the ups and downs of the process, without stigmatizing or faking, and Public Security forces that refrain from "balancing open accounts", but transform into reliable forces, securing the state monopoly on violence and the functioning of state institutions. Without this hand-in-hand co-operation the peace process will break down into a bundle of isolated state actions whose distribution will attract beneficiaries from all sides of the community, create an assistentialist *welfare mentality* and form new dependencies without a lasting and transforming effect for the communities and their future.

5.2. Move from a person-centered to a community-centered reconciliation approach

We have found the *Entrelazando* approach extremely helpful as such, but it should be extended to include the communities as a whole, expressly also the PPR, and not only the victims, in order to turn into a strategy for reconciliation that moves beyond the current restitution and repair logic. The different psycho-social exercises proposed are not only helpful and healing for the victims but could prove to be so for the victimizers as well, most of whom were recruited being minor of age and without apparent alternatives (see Meier & Páez, 2016, p. 96). But it could prove useful and inspiring for the different other members of the communities as well, most of them involved in one way or the other during the traumatically long 50 years the conflict lasted – the indifferent, the broken, the cynical, the angry and the anxious and all the different shades and nuances in between.

5.3. Promoting reconciliation means empowering local citizens

The deep mistrust so obviously encountered during our visit will make it difficult for the State to regain control, or even the trust of its citizens in the affected areas. Local citizens should be empowered to "take their fate into their own hands" in the positive sense, that they do not expect

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too much from a historically always weak or even absent state but develop forms of self-organization that allow them to economically sustain themselves and head into a better economic future, leaving the past behind. The distribution process of PPR and victim state benefits has already left regions in bitter fights over their just allocation, potentially hurting more than helping in the post-conflict process.

5.4. Restore mutual trust and love of life in the affected communities by arts and sports

Social fabric is historically closely connected to feasting together. The desire to reestablish the old traditions of Carnival, musical processions, family and community festivities, playing football on the village square (while the girls seem to be otherwise busy, when they are indeed watching ...), even seemingly unspectacular activities such as cooking and eating together without fear of violence and prosecution has to be taken very seriously, and become a paramount object of the reconciliation process. To ease the bitterness, the armed conflict has left, by celebrating together may even be a good tool to better overcome the economic hardships faced.

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