

**Dorly Castaneda (Sciences Po Paris)**

## What role for the European Union in the resolution of the Colombian conflict? The Peace Laboratories instrument

### ***Introduction***

Peace Laboratories are the main cooperation programs of the European Union (EU) in Colombia. In the late 1990s, these programs materialized European participation in the peace process between the Colombian government and guerrillas (FARC -Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, and ELN-National Liberation Army). It was a support to civil society in conflict regions for the preparation of post-conflict.

However, the failure of the peace process in 2002 led to the official militarist strategy of the last decade, Plan Colombia, financed by the United States. While the EU got closer to the civil society movement for peace, the US adopted the hard security position inside the Colombian government. After three years of dialogues, the process failed and the global context transformed dramatically with the 9/11 attacks. The hard security line in Colombia took over the other policies, peace dialogues and peacebuilding projects included.

Despite this change of perspective in the Colombian conflict resolution, the EU has maintained its civilian approach of "peacebuilding", and three Peace Laboratories were developed in the middle of the conflict in six strategic areas for the armed actors. The EU decided to maintain its engagement with civil society organizations in conflict regions by keeping its main cooperation aid programs, the Peace Laboratories. There are 3 Peace Laboratories located in six regions where the population is highly affected by the violence and armed actors try to impose their control. Their total budget is 109€ millions coming from the EU Official Development Aid (ODA) for Colombia which means that the Peace Laboratories are to be negotiated with the Colombian government and executed with its participation. Every Peace Laboratory started in different periods and reflects a gauging process of the EU in its relations with the Colombian State and the civil society organizations.

This change meant, on one side, that the Colombian government did not welcome programs focused on the pacific resolution of the conflict in conflict regions with civil society

organizations. Even more, donors supporting them were seen with mistrust. On the other side, organizations working for peace by peaceful means could not agree with the official policy of fighting terrorism and denying the existence of socio-economic causes of the conflict. Then, the EUs' question about who to work with became particularly delicate since working with one actor more than the other could be seen as taking a position in the conflict. It is been eight years since the execution of the first Peace Laboratory and Plan Colombia; and the EU is dealing with two proposals for peace structurally opposite. One comes from the Colombian civil society organizations in conflict regions who advocate the transformation of the causes of armed conflict (lasting peace). The other comes from the Colombian government that seeks above all to (re)conquer the legitimate monopoly of force (immediate pacification). How does the EU manoeuvre in this competition for the definition of a legitimate solution to conflict?

This paper focuses on the EU's role in the resolution of the Colombian conflict visible in the evolution of the Peace Laboratories that support at the same time local civil society strategies for resisting violence and the Colombian government security policy. It is based on my PhD research started over 5 years ago and uses qualitative analysis from 84 interviews carried out in four Peace Laboratory regions, 35 interviews in Bogotá, 34 in Europe (Brussels, Madrid, The Hague and Paris)<sup>1</sup>. It also takes into account official reports made by civil society organizations executing the EU's programs and the official impact evaluation of the Peace Laboratories. The paper studies the Colombian reception of the EU's action for peace: How did the EU deal with Colombian stakeholders antagonists perspectives of peace and the means to build it? The central argument is that the main achievement of the EU in Colombia is to put together antagonist legal actors for finding common paths to building peace in three dimensions, democracy, development and security. In other words, the EU has been able to put in place a peacebuilding program. The first part analyses the concept of peacebuilding. Then the second and third parts study what the Colombia stakeholders expect of the EU according to their strategies facing armed conflict. The fourth part studies what the EU's programs have been able to do on the ground for building peace in Colombia. The paper concludes with the lessons learnt from the Colombian case for the EU's action in conflict prone countries.

---

<sup>1</sup> Interviewees were implicated in the decision making of the EU directly or through member states' cooperation agencies, the design of ODA programs in the European Commission, the execution of the Peace Laboratories in Colombia by coordinating the program or being beneficiaries; other interviewees were part of the Colombian state agencies, local authorities, civil society not participating in any EU program and other donors present in Colombian conflict regions. Interviews were carried out in 2007, 2008, and 2010

## ***I. Defining Peacebuilding as the crossroads of democracy, development and security***

The approach of the EU to the resolution of the Colombian conflict can be understood as a peacebuilding action. However the concept needs clarification. This first part of the chapter states a definition of peacebuilding and the way the EU has developed its own approach to the resolution of the Colombian conflict.

When the EU decided to participate in the Peace Process in Colombia, every actor talked about peace. However, peace has not the same meaning for everybody, neither the means to reach it. While civil society organizations in conflict zones talked about development actions at the local level for building peace, President Pastrana proposed dialogues at the national level and his successor, President Uribe, total war for reaching peace. Thus the Peace Laboratories approach to peace in Colombia has been constructed over the interaction of many perceptions of peace and its means in a sort of peacebuilding process.

What does peacebuilding mean? There are as many definitions of peacebuilding as experts on the issue and actors on the field<sup>2</sup>. Peacebuilding has been synonymous with post-conflict reconciliation, regeneration<sup>3</sup>, or cooperation among the parties to a conflict to deepen their relationship by addressing the conditions that lead to the dispute<sup>4</sup>, or just the preservation of the cease-fire. In the literature about peacebuilding, the concept is linked to the practice giving it a lot of flexibility so as to include many kinds of development programs, humanitarian assistance, diplomacy instruments, judiciary cooperation and even military action. Programs of different dimensions, carried out during armed confrontations, peace negotiations or in the aftermath of a peace agreements are also considered as peacebuilding. This shows the need of revising the analytical lenses through which international action in conflict countries is studied. Otherwise peacebuilding becomes a catch-all concept with

---

<sup>2</sup> DAVID Charles-Phillippe, "Does peacebuilding build peace? Liberal (mis)steps in the peace process", in *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 30, No 1, March, 1999, pp 25-41, p 27

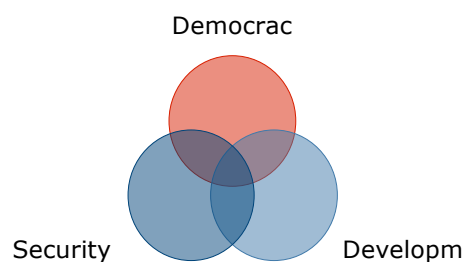
<sup>3</sup> PUGH, Michael, "Peacebuilding As Developmentalism: Concepts From Disaster Research", in *contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 16, No. 3, December 1995, pp. 320-346.

<sup>4</sup> LUND, Michael, "What Kind Of Peace Is Being Built? Taking Stock Of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding And Charting Future Decisions", A discussion paper prepared on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of An Agenda for Peace for the International Development Research Center, Ottawa, January 2003, p15

limited value in research. It is then useful to establish the difference among peacebuilding and concepts such as peace maintenance operations when civico-military operations are involved, post-conflict recovery<sup>5</sup> when international action is focused on the aftermath of a peace agreement.

We understand peacebuilding as a civilian action that can be carried out without peace negotiations taking place for addressing both root and proximate causes of conflict. Its main practical purpose is trying to keep large numbers of human beings from killing others and being killed. Its general goal is to change a potential or actual strife-ridden situation to a state of durable peace which implies three series of critical objectives: 1. Security transition which the objective is to prevent the resumption of violence; 2. Democratic transition which looks for the creation of conditions conducive to a process of democratization; 3. Socio-economic transition which tempts to enable the economy to generate a legal option for excombatants and victims while promoting economic recovery, rebuilding financial systems, and basic services delivery<sup>6</sup>.

Peacebuilding actions imply a decision on how to participate or incite every transition. As each transition has its own dynamics and policies, peacebuilding programs lie on the nexus of the three dimensions: development, security and democracy. Indeed, the three dimensions are interconnected and not causality can be established so as to define a clear order of action. Security depends on economic conditions and political structure as well as democracy depends on welfare and stability, and development on security and democratic liberties.



<sup>5</sup> FORMAN, Shepard et STEWART, *Good intentions: pledges of aid for post-conflict recovery*, Center on international cooperation, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London; 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Based on DAVID work about peacebuilding definitions; however, David focuses on post-conflict. For the sake of this research we are expanding his approach to consider the continuation of hostilities. Op.Cit, DAVID, 1999, p28. refers to reconciliation and reconstruction as the main objectives of peacebuilding. Reconstruction is linked to urgency and restructuring to international development aid programs. Only hope that restructuring economy will help to prevent a resurgence of violence, rather than solving problems of underdevelopment which may be partially and not entirely responsible of armed conflict

The approach to each dimension implies a particular perspective on the role of the state and domestic civil society, the main participants of any peacebuilding program, as well as international actors. The definition of a peacebuilding strategy by a donor is influenced by local perspectives and their own beliefs and interests. Assuming that donors' main interest is the achievement of peace, donors face a main question: where is the potential of building peace greater: at the state institutions or the civil society organizations? Approaches vary between "bottom-up" programs based on local initiatives of civil society organizations, and "top-down" programs based on the strengthening or reconstruction of state institutions. There is no unique answer according to Cousens for whom external actors have to decide case-by-case. In a pragmatic perspective, Lund suggests an initial top-down approach that can prepare a bottom-up under a minimum of physical order<sup>7</sup>.

In addition, practical matters of ODA in conflict countries require donors' answers to the questions of who to work with inside the civil society or the state, and at what level, national or local. If the civil society seems to offer pacific ways of putting an end to violence and seeming sustainable peace: Who are the right actors among civil society? On the other hand: Can the state be considered a monolithic entity? Or are there differences among state institutions? Since peacebuilding is in itself a political action for political goals, the choice of actors is then essential in the definition of the program scope and perspective. Working with civil society or with the state deals out a particular role to each one and thus arise society dilemmas.

### **The EU builds its approach to the Colombian conflict on the making**

The EU decision to participate in the peace process in Colombia and the definition of the Peace Laboratories as the main policy was the result of an intense lobbying of a transnational network of human rights defence. Indeed, the Colombian civil society mobilised strongly against the Plan Colombia and found in the EU's Parliament, Commission staff and some member states a strong support. The first Peace Laboratory meant a position from the EU in

---

<sup>7</sup> Op.Cit, LUND, 2003, p37

favour of the civil society and against the military approach to peace as stated by the Council and the Parliament<sup>8</sup>.

However, once the peace process came to an end, the EU had to reevaluate its strategy because the new elected president aligned with the US in a total war against terrorism. The EU could not continue to consider guerrillas as political actors because they were officially international terrorists in the list of the US and the EU. The European Commission took the leadership of the initiative and adapted it to the new circumstances for avoiding confrontation with the democratically elected President Uribe and the United States. Indeed, Uribe's government understood ODA as political and financial support to the security strategy. Since European cooperation was ODA, the government saw with mistrust the Peace laboratory I in which the civil society organization Programme of development and Peace of the Magdalena Medio (PDPMM<sup>9</sup>) was the main interlocutor of the EU and the Colombian government a channel of aid rather than a partner. Peace Laboratories II and III included the central state as main partner side by side with civil society organizations in conflict regions.

Then since 2002 until 2010 the EU's Commission was dealing with two almost antagonist actors, the civil society organizations executing the three Peace Laboratories, called the Peace and Development programs (PDP<sup>10</sup>), and the Uribe's government<sup>11</sup>. The Commission has been gauging its strategy in Colombia according to the interaction with both actors and Brussels domestic conditions. Next parts analyse the reception side of the European support in order to see what local stakeholders understand of peace and the role they expect the EU to play.

---

<sup>8</sup> See Parliament resolution of 1 February 2001 on Plan Colombia and support for the peace process in Colombia, and 4 October 2001 on Colombia. Also See Conclusions of the Consejo de Asuntos Generales y Relaciones Exteriores from 26<sup>th</sup> January 2003.

<sup>9</sup> PDPMM was one of the main activists in the transnational movement against the Plan Colombia. His leader, the charismatic Jesuit Priest Francisco de Roux was the main interlocutor of the EU institutions.

<sup>10</sup> There is a difference between "PDP" and the organizations executing the Peace Laboratories. In fact, PDPs are the common project of region, the non material process. Thus, they are not physical organizations. The civil society organizations coordinating efforts locally in order to build the common program, the PDP, are named by the EU as "Entidades Coordinadoras Regionales" or "Organizaciones Socias". However, in the common language, the term PDP is often used in reference to the civil society organization as well as the common program. For simplicity, we keep the term "PDP" in its common use, meaning, referring to the civil society organizations coordinating local initiatives.

<sup>11</sup> Peace Laboratories have been executed during President Alvaro Uribe's administration although the signature of the convention between the EU and the Colombian government for the execution of the first peace laboratory happened during the administration of President Pastrana.

## **II. Civil Society organizations strategies and the role of the EU**

For understating the PDPs action in conflict zones and what they expect of the EU, it is necessary to seize the conflict dynamics in their regions and the challenges they confront as civil society organizations (CSO) facing illegal armed actors and local power-holders.

### **Subnational authoritarianisms in formal democracies and armed actors territory control strategy**

Two theories help to understand the Colombian conflict dynamics and the difficult interaction between CSO and national government: first the model of local authoritarianisms in formal democracies described by Gibson<sup>12</sup>, and second the armed actors' territory control strategy based on Balcells and Kalyvas<sup>13</sup> approach.

#### Subnational authoritarianisms in Colombia

Peace Laboratories' regions are conflict regions where multiple sets of norms coexist. The model of subnational authoritarianisms of Gibson helps to understand the context of the PDPs, thus their mode of action. Indeed, despite the fact that Colombia is a democracy, conflict areas present characteristics of authoritarian regimes that coexist with national democratic institutions. Thus, as O'Donnel's analysis of democracy in Latin America points out, two implicit assumptions on contemporary democratic theory are broken: there is a homogenous extension of the legality of the state over the territory, and provincial and local regimes are democratic if nationally the regimes are democratic. Indeed, in many countries of Latin America the reality does not correspond to this: "the resulting coexistence of regimes that pass the test of democracy at the national level with no few authoritarian ones at the provincial level should not be ignored, since among other things it directly influences who is represented at the national level, and how"<sup>14</sup>. Gessier, Dabène and Massardier analyze this situation as democratization against democracy, concluding that authoritarianism and

---

<sup>12</sup> GIBSON, Edward, "Boundary control. Subnational authoritarianism in Democratic countries", in *World Politics* 58, October 2005, 101-132, p103

<sup>13</sup> BALCELLS, Laia, KALYVAS, Stahis, "Warfare in civil wars", working paper for Order, violence and conflict at Yale University, 2007, quoted by ARJONA, Ana Maria, « Grupos armados, comunidades y órdenes locales : interacciones complejas », in GONZALEZ, Fernan (ed) *Hacia la reconstrucción del país: Desarrollo, política y territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado*, CINEP, 2008, p116.

<sup>14</sup> Op.Cit, O'DONNELL, 2007, pxii

democracy are a continuum. The “enclave autoritaires” are not the heritage of former authoritarian regimes in place but rather “alive elements” of new democracies<sup>15</sup>.

Following this rationality, Gibson analyses the “regime juxtaposition” created by the existence of a democratic national government alongside a provincial authoritarian government within the nation-state. His model applies to Colombia where, like the cases of Mexico and Argentina, “two levels of government with jurisdiction over the same territory operate under different regimes, understood as the set of norms, rules, and practices that govern the selection and behaviour of state leaders”<sup>16</sup>. The central state formal democracy juxtaposes the local authoritarianism in a relation of interdependence and not of subordination of the periphery as explains the analysis of centre- periphery theories. In this symbiosis, local authoritarianisms exist because they serve national democracy, and because they manage to take advantage of national democracy. O’Donnell sees a constant truncation of the state in its legal dimension with the rationality of national politicians who shape winning elections including candidates of the “brown areas” or privatized. They help the reproduction of the systems of privatized power<sup>17</sup>.

Local power holders try to keep control over resources, persons, and decisions in a territory, by controlling local politics and the linkages between local and national levels. Local political elites willing to keep their control over the territory develop strategies of parrochialization of power, nationalization of influence and monopolization of national-subnational linkages. The first one implies that local elites have subnational hegemonic parties linked to parties at the national level. Using Sartori definition of hegemonic parties, this means that power holders ensure the victory of the dominant party through legal and illegal means<sup>18</sup>. Thus, local power holders use boundary control strategy including coercion, intimidation of opposition groups, appropriation of public resources for clientelism and partisan activities, information blockage, electoral fraud, as means of keeping their local power. The nationalization of influence consists in reaching the national bodies for increasing their local power. Successful subnational authoritarian leaders are players on the national stage whether by participating

---

<sup>15</sup> GEISSER, Vincent, DABENE, Olivier, MASSARDIER, Gilles, « Introduction », in GEISSER, Vincent, DABENE, Olivier, MASSARDIER, Gilles, *Autoritarismes démocratiques, démocraties autoritaires*, 2008

<sup>16</sup> Op.Cit, GIBSON, Edward, 2005, p110

<sup>17</sup> Op.Cit, O’DONNELL, 2007, p121

<sup>18</sup> SARTORI, Giovanni, « *Parties and party system : a framework of analysis* », Cambridge university Press, Cambridge, 1976. Quoted by GIBSON, 2005, p110

directly in the senate, controlling governors that go to the central level and affect decisions concerning their provinces, or by pursuing national ambitions such as passing from being governors to running for President<sup>19</sup>. Finally, the monopolization of national- subnational linkages is a key strategy because “in territorial politics whoever controls linkages controls power”<sup>20</sup>. Linkages are material and immaterial including institutions established to regulate interprovincial and national–subnational governmental relations, institutions or persons to monitor provincial activities and expenditures, institutions to organise the representation of provincial interests before the centre; also relationships between national and local parties, unions, NGOs; procedures for nominating local representatives to national institutions, revenue flows from the centre to periphery, communication flows, or service delivery.

#### Armed actors territory control strategy

Gibson’s model has to be widened so as to consider irregular war rationality for understating the challenges of CSO in Colombian conflict regions and the participation of international actors. In fact, illegal armed actors integrate the subnational authoritarianisms. Thus, their general strategy of military control over a territory is reinforced by (a) political, economic and social control over local societies, and (b) linkages with the central state and its decision-making process.

(a) Local level: In Peace Laboratories regions armed actors play the role of local power holders. They control regions (directly or indirectly) in an authoritarian way either with or without the participation of local elites. Armed actors are interested in creating a kind of order over the territories where they want to establish their military power. Orders vary according to local societies and armed actors’ particular interests at a moment. According to Balcells and Kalyvas<sup>21</sup>, this creates an asymmetry in the military confrontation over the territory. While some regions are constantly the stage of cruel armed confrontations, others never see a

---

<sup>19</sup> This national presence can be double-edged: “While necessary for effective local control, it is also the Achilles’ heel for subnational authoritarian regimes”. In a national dispute, other leaders may try to eliminate them by undermining their local power structure that supports them. “The virtuous cycle of subnational democratization can sometimes be set in motion by nothing more than a vile political dispute between national leaders” GIBSON, 2005, p111

<sup>20</sup> Op.Cit, GIBSON, 2005, p112

<sup>21</sup> BALCELLS, Laia, KALYVAS, Stahis, “Warfare in civil wars”, working paper for Order, violence and conflicto at Yale University, 2007, quoted by ARJONA, Ana Maria, « Grupos armados, comunidades y órdenes locales : interacciones complejas », in GONZALEZ, Fernan (ed) *Hacia la reconstrucción del país: Desarrollo, política y territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado*, CINEP, 2008, p116.

combat. Contrary to regular wars, the success of the confrontation is measured in terms of control over the territory rather than in terms of victory during military combats. Thus, the creation of local orders implying control over the military, economic and political aspects of societies is a war strategy of armed actors fighting irregular wars as affirmed in counterinsurgency manuals<sup>22</sup>.

Conflict regions of Colombian present zones clearly under the traditional control of one armed actor. The only authority known by local population have been them. Other zones swing from one actor to another. Gonzalez and Bolivar<sup>23</sup> talk about armed actors “collective action” in which they look for controlling by interacting locally with everybody. The more aspects of life are under control, the better the military control. Thus, results of the interaction among local societies and armed actors are as diverse as regions and societies in Colombia. For many authors, armed actors take advantage of the social fissures inside local societies and in their relations with the State<sup>24</sup>. After decades of social struggle and absence of state, armed actors ally with one set of local actors and widen the fissure with the rest of society. By supporting or supplanting local elites they possess the economic surpluses produced by legal or illegal productive activities. In strategic regions where rents are more available or geographically well situated for transport of illegal traffic as the Magdalena Medio and Montes de Maria, armed actors fight. These can be among fractions of the same group (Frente Vs Frente, bloque Vs bloque) or against the adversary (guerrillas Vs paras)<sup>25</sup>. There are cases in which armed actors only destroy the village and attack the society, but usually there is an interaction with local populations that are more or less permeable depending on their needs. In terms of the UNDP, armed actors arrive to regions with low presence of state institutions with an array of “public services” that local populations demand: security, cultural resonance, social protest, justice, protection to illegality, and infrastructure.

Military presence and control over political and economical activities, as well as justice administration, reinforce a control over social life. There is not clear causality over weak state presence, poverty, inequality and illegal economies. Though there is a vicious circle that

---

<sup>22</sup> Headquarters Department of the army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 MCWP 3-33.5, December 2006

<sup>23</sup> Op.Cit, GONZALEZ, Fernan, BOLIVAR, Ingrid, VASQUEZ, Teofilo, 2003, p.

<sup>24</sup> RANGEL, Alfredo, BORRERO, Armando, RAMIREZ, William, et al, « Conflictividad territorial en Colombia. Convenio de cooperación científica para la Investigacion entre la Escuela Superior de Administracion Publica (ESAP) y la Fundacion Buen Gobierno”, ESAP- Fundacion BuenGobierno, Bogota, noviembre 2004, p109.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

reinforces all of them, specially the destruction of social institutions and the individual sense of belonging. The result is that illegality constitutes the normality as well as private justice in a sort of “dishonesty trap” from which it is very difficult to escape<sup>26</sup>. The Colombian state faces then a continuous challenge for having a minimum of legitimacy in conflict regions. In fact, FARC and AUC, developed a strategy of replacing the state and controlling the territory, a kind of “warlordism”<sup>27</sup>. There is a vicious circle: the state loses legitimacy because of armed actors presence, clientelism and corruption, which reduces state efficiency and deteriorate its image among the population, thus, affecting its legitimacy<sup>28</sup>.

(b) National level: Gibson’s model of subnational authoritarianisms explains that linkages with the national level are essential for increasing local power. As O’Donnell describes for Latin American democracies, local politicians behave as ambassadors of the region at the central level in order to attract central money. Success in this funds-seeking action guarantees increasing influence locally. In the Colombian contexts, this linkages local-national used to be under traditional parties control. However, since the 90s new actors have reached them for political reasons that overpass a rent-seeking logic<sup>29</sup>. Luis Jorge Garay<sup>30</sup> says that armed actors want to influence local politics not only for controlling public management but also for reducing the risk of being condemned by national formal justice. Indeed, by being part of the local political life, they access the national state structure and decision-making. This happens in two ways: indirectly through traditional political parties or directly with their own parties. The former refers to local authorities of different political parties that were financed by armed actors during electoral campaigns. They are expected to protect armed actors by influencing policy decisions advantaging their activities and their insertion to legal life. The other way is directly with their political parties, or parties created with their strong support in order to advocate for them at the national level. According to Velazquez, guerrillas and paramilitaries alike looked for influencing the central state. However guerrillas’ political party was destroyed by paramilitary and official force in the 90s. Thus their pretension seems to be the

---

<sup>26</sup> THOUMI, Francisco, *Illegal drugs, economy and society in the Andes*, Woodrow Wilson Center press, 2003 and “Why a country produces Drugs and How that determines policy effectiveness: a general model and some applications to Colombia”, Florida International University, LA and Caribbean Center, January 2002, p21. Quoted by MARCELLA, Gabriel, “Democratic governance and the rule of law: lessons from Colombia”, in *PKSOI Papers*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2009, p10.

<sup>27</sup> DUNCAN, Gustavo, *Los Señores de la guerra. De paramilitares mafiosos y autodefensas en Colombia*. Planeta, Bogota, 2006. Also R

<sup>28</sup> LEAL, Francisco, DAVILA, A, 2010, p102

<sup>29</sup> URIBE, 2001, p260, QUoted by Op.Cit, GONZALEZ, 2006, p46

<sup>30</sup> GARAY, Luis Jorge, *Colombia entre la exclusion y el desarrollo*, Contraloria General de la Republica, 2002, quoted by Op.Cit, PNUD, 2003, p90.

control of regions in order to have enough social, political and military lever in case of peace dialogues with the State. Paramilitaries' strategy differs in that they have been able to get inside many official institutions of the judicial, executive and legislative branches, with traditional and new political parties.

Duncan studies the paramilitaries' linkages in detail and concludes that Alvaro Uribe's election in 2002 was welcome by paramilitary forces<sup>31</sup>. Indeed, they found in him an open interlocutor. Paramilitaries trusted Uribe who had promoted the creation of Convivir (private armies for defending groups of populations in Antioquia). They negotiated their demobilization with him in a rather quickly process<sup>32</sup> because 66 out of 77 members of the Parliament came from newly created political parties suspected of having relations with paramilitary forces in different regions<sup>33</sup>.

In sum, Colombian conflict regions present different degrees of central state presence. There are many sets of norms coexisting among which traditional power-holders and illegal armed actors. In some regions they are the same actors since guerrillas and paramilitaries have developed a strategy of territory control. Civil society is trapped between the absence of the central state and its democratic institutions, the presence of armed actors and authoritarian power-holders, and their links with official representatives of the democratic state.

## **CSO in conflict contexts**

PDPs are part of the many voices from civil society actors attempting to resist in face of pressure from armed actors. Indeed, armed actors see local societies as sources of survival goods and as strategic war resources. Local population can bring provisions and shelter necessary for the military control of the areas and for the expansion of control on economic

---

<sup>31</sup> Op.Cit, DUNCAN,

<sup>32</sup> The first draft of the law framing the demobilization agreement was a highway form illegality to legality: paramilitaries could keep the properties they have acquired by force, had subsidies for reinsertion and did not have to pay for their crimes (victims, reparation and truth were secondary points). However the Constitutional Court did not accept the draft and introduced transformations for the Justice and Peace Law. Nevertheless the first demobilization was done under a very flexible legal frame, and negotiations with other blocks continued with a main obstacle: the US exigency of extradition. The last decision for extradition depends on the president since then. Romero argues that this decision was essential for the re-election of the president in 2006 Op.Cit, ROMERO, 2007, p424

<sup>33</sup> Op.Cit, VELAZQUES et al, 2009

activities of the territory, legal and illegal ones. People are also strategic resources because illegal groups need an obedient population that can bring 1) information about the enemy and the territory, 2) protection in case of enemy's presence in the territory (local population can hide or make them look like local people), and 3) new combatants. The more present an illegal group is in different aspects of society, the more efficient its military force is. Moreover, in order to increase people empathy and willingness to obey and contribute to their fight at the local and national levels, armed groups want to be seen as legitimate and military powerful. Hence control over the territories cannot be based only on military violence because in the long term it becomes costly in terms of civilian willingness to cooperate. Armed actors develop other kind of relations for provoking this civilian cooperation<sup>34</sup>.

In Colombia violence against civilians is part of the strategy of paramilitaries, guerrillas and even official armed forces. Political violence began to increase noticeably from the 1980s onwards with an exponential increase at the end of the decade, reaching an average of 3000 deaths per annum until the end 90s. Taken together the victims of the last 15 years are more than 50.000 dead of whom 64% were civilians killed because of political violence, and 3 million internal displaced because of violence<sup>35</sup>. In the territory control strategy civilians have been attacked by all armed actors, legal and illegal ones. Carlos Castano, leader of the AUC, said that "civilian population" is a relative term in the Colombian war since two thirds of the guerrillas were unarmed non-uniformed people<sup>36</sup>. As Pecaut states, this logic is also present in the guerrillas' side<sup>37</sup>.

Armed actors in Colombia see CSO like the PDPs and their grassroots organizations as excellent means for increasing control over the population and thus over the territory according to the study of Rangel, Borrero and Ramirez<sup>38</sup>. Indeed, dominating CSO in a territory allows to determine the kind of action they do and to reach people through their own local leaders.

---

<sup>34</sup> ARJONA, Ana Maria, « Grupos armados, comunidades y órdenes locales : interacciones complejas », in GONZALEZ, Fernan (ed) *Hacia la reconstrucción del país: Desarrollo, política y territorio en regiones afectadas por el conflicto armado*, CINEP, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Statistics from Data base on Human Rights of CINEP and Justicia y paz, quoted by Op.Cit. BOWEN and GARCIA-DURAN, 2003, p7

<sup>36</sup> Op.Cit. RANGEL et al, 2004, p206, quoted ROMERO, 1998, p90

<sup>37</sup> PECAUT,

<sup>38</sup> Op.Cit, RANGEL et al, 2004

CSO relations with the State, if they ever existed, are deteriorated by conflict dynamics. Generally, the Central state mistrusts these CSO in conflict regions because they are seen as close to illegal power holders<sup>39</sup>. Thus, CSO are under strain because they have to reconcile their avowed independence and/or neutrality vis-à-vis armed actors with their obliged cooperation with governments and militaries in strengthening security<sup>40</sup>. On the other hand, the state is not trusted in the regions. Despite the fact of being a democracy, the state in a conflict country can be suspected of being an armed actor capable of harming its own civilian population. Indeed, in Colombia armed forces have been involved in human rights violations, have refused to guarantee security for everyone, and have supported paramilitary action in some regions. Moreover, civilian state bodies enhance corruption, ignore illegal and legal armed actor violations of HR (impunity), preserve inequalities and defend private interests affecting badly the quality of life of civilians groups (like victims of armed actors) through policies of security, economic development and through the control of linkages national-subnational.

Thus CSO in Colombian conflict regions, like the Peace Laboratories' ones, face enormous challenges for carrying on their actions. First of all, they cannot spear contact with dominating armed actors. The more polarized the conflict, the harder for CSO to work because they are easily labelled friend or enemy of an armed group. Second, CSO's autonomy in conflict areas is always under threat. Indeed, under armed actors' control, civil society organizations, trade union leaders, and HR defenders (including teachers, journalists, NGO activists) are threatened or intimidated. Third, social values are deeply affected by armed actors' strategy. Trust, solidarity, sense of belonging to a community, are completely destroyed by the infiltration to a community or the violence against civilian forcing them to leave their lands and family<sup>41</sup>. Populations and families are divided in the war. This has an impact on everyone life as well as in life conditions since economic activities are affected by the lack of trust and mobility. Last but not least, economic development is badly affected by armed group presence. Not only exchange among populations reduces also exchange inside the community diminishes. The production model privileged by armed actors induces non-sustainable natural

---

<sup>39</sup> HOWELL and LIND, argue that this mistrust increased considerably since the 9/11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p257

<sup>41</sup> MARTEENS, Donny, « The nostalgic future- terror, displacement and gender in Colombia », in MOSER, Caroline, CLARK, Fiona, *Victims, Perpetrators or actors. Gender armed conflict, and political violence*, Zed Books, London, 2001.

resources exploitation, assigns inefficiently production inputs such as land and technology, discourages investment, privatize public management and produce labour migrations<sup>42</sup>.

## **Who are the PDPs**

PDPs are civil society reactions to local authoritarianisms and as such develop a complex relation with the Central State advantaging the presence of institutions supporting democratic participation and peace dialogues. The PDPs are shown and recognised as initiatives from local civil society. According to the interviews and the official position of the PDPs' network, Red Prodepaz, they are civil society organizations: "we are a group of citizens of a project of nation built from the bottom of the conflict. We are sewers in the middle of the armed confrontation and violence, we dream of future crops of confidence and fair economy, while we undertake projects of citizenship and enterprise"<sup>43</sup>. The PDP see themselves as "expressions of the society that promote inclusive processes of citizen participation with the objective of generating development and peace for the construction of a peaceful nation"<sup>44</sup>. However the term "Civil Society" appeared in the discourse of the PDP from Magdalena Medio with the arrival of the World Bank funds; otherwise they called themselves 'inhabitants of the region'. The PDPs are inclusive structures in which many actors with dissimilar interests try to build a common regional plan for the long term with autonomy from the state.

### Strategy of calling in international actors

As part of their strategy, PDPs call in international actors, especially the EU, so as to pierce local authoritarianisms and mobilize central state forces. The EU revealed a key actor for the regional and national strategy of the PDPs by acting as an international eye and a political support for an alternative model to the Plan Colombia. Indeed, the EU encouraged the PDPs position as an alternative in terms of the resolution of the conflict by pacific means rather than military means

---

<sup>42</sup> Op;Cit, RANGEL et al, 2004, p112

<sup>43</sup> in <http://www.redprodepaz.org.co/>

<sup>44</sup> in <http://www.redprodepaz.org.co/>

The PDPs' strategy was to reach international donors in order to have enough resources for carrying on projects without depending on the Colombian State and to bring in international eyes. In terms of Gibson's model it is a strategy of opening boundaries, or the positive pole of civil resistance in Semelin's terms<sup>45</sup>. Indeed, the PDPMM as well as others PDPs, has first nationalized the regional conflict so as to bring in democratic forces and eventually benefit of the protection of a democratic state. The PDPs did this by calling in international actors and expecting the "boomerang effect"<sup>46</sup> to work. The idea is to bring in international eyes and economic resources for encouraging democratic national institutions to react in the regions directly, without passing through the traditional elites and authorities which can be under the control of armed actors or interested in perpetuating an authoritarian rule. The presence of other actors and the access to external resources without intermediation increases PDPs' autonomy, which is a key factor for the success of their action. It also creates what Semelin calls the dialectic civil society- state agents that can break the local dynamics and open the way to democracy, and in this case, to the search of a peace policy.

However the radicalization of the government did not leave space for the PDPs approach and the EU was expected to take a position advantaging CSO. But the EU remained 'diplomatic' and respectful of the democratically elected Colombian president and his policies. The Peace Laboratories II and III transformed radically the approach of the Peace Laboratory I for including the state at the Central and local levels. The PDPs were forced to deal and work with different state institutions.

### Risks of getting close to President Uribe's policies

PDPs mistrust the official counterinsurgency policy. For the first PDP, the Uribe's administration programs were clearly in antagonism with its philosophy since they closed any possibility for peace dialogues, which are the first objective of the PDPMM, and polarized civil society<sup>47</sup>.

---

<sup>45</sup> SEMELIN, Jacques, « Introduction : La notion de résistance civile », in SEMELIN, J (dir), *Quand les dictatures se fissurent*, Desclées de Brower, Paris, 1995, pp21-44.

<sup>46</sup> KECK Margaret, SIKKINK Kathryn, *Activists beyond Borders, Advocacy networks in international politics*, Cornell University Press, London, 1998

<sup>47</sup> "Tenemos la idea equivocada de que la dignidad nos va a venir de la protección que nos de otra nación, o de las armas o de la seguridad del Estado. No, eso es nuestro y nosotros tenemos que constituir el Estado soberano y protegerlo". La política de Seguridad democrática "es un discurso del miedo, porque busca que unos colombianos se protejan a través de las armas de otros colombianos, y eso constituye una amenaza" said by Francisco De Roux, according to: ARELLANO, Fernando, "Política de seguridad de Uribe es una amenaza: Francisco de Roux, provincial de los Jueistas en Colombia", Prensasur.org, Monday November 16th 2009.

In fact, all PDPs face the dilemma of working with the state for increasing sustainability but fears being instrumentalized. The relations PDPs -state and the support of the EU have to be analysed in the context of the neoliberal policies reinforced with the antiterrorist agenda. Both have transformed the relations between CSO and State. In interviews, some PDPs staff members and cooperation agencies members fear that the PDPs executing the Peace laboratories are becoming “the peace policy” of the State. If someone asks what the government is doing for peace, the PDPs are there to be shown like the official programs supported by the EU while in reality the military strategy dominates and there is not a peace policy at all. Thus, the Colombia government is avoiding political dialogues with the guerrillas by using the PDPs, their grassroots civil society organizations and the EU. In fact, since CSO cannot spear contact with armed actors, they end up negotiating informally with them, working with local communities and reinserting former combatants. Then, denying the armed conflict and acting through PDPs with the EU’s flag would be a way to arrive to vulnerable populations with traditional development programs without changing local rules. In sum, the PDPs see that the state is avoiding the politically expensive peace policy that would imply the correction of root causes of the armed conflict<sup>48</sup>.

The second instrumentalization by the state mentioned in interviews is for ODA resources that donors refuse to give in the frame of the counterinsurgency strategy. Even in rich areas like the Meta region where oil production produces enormous dividends for the Department, the government is interested in ODA resources for carrying out social programs. There are two reasons for that: the local powers do decide on the use of oil resources, not always willing to support Central state actions, and second, ODA resources have a political dimension of international support to the Democratic Security Policy. From the PDPs point of view it is clear that the government is making match the Peace Laboratories with its security objectives. The European money is the ‘carrot’<sup>49</sup> that sweetens the “stick”.

Finally, PDPs do not agree with the increasing technical aspects of development aid. They considered this a sort of “neutralization” of the political purposes of the PDPs. Indeed, at the national level they think there is a selection of the kind of CSO respected by the government and considered the representatives of civil society in international spaces (like the G24). Even

---

<sup>48</sup> Interview, Javier Moncayo, GTZ

<sup>49</sup> Interview Carlos Santacruz in Pasto, Maribel in Sicnelejo

more, PDPs who initially would carry out the Peace Laboratory as their main activity found themselves doing also a World Bank program. Some staff members, after years of execution see in this multiplication of projects an intention of making completely technical their work so as to minimise any political action. Procedures and papers ended up consuming the PDPs team and Peace Laboratory's political spaces.

Thus PDPs fear the instrumentalization by the state of their action in the regions. But they also expect the state to support their action. The EU was expected of making reachable the democratic institutions of the state and to defend the CSO autonomy from security polices.

### **III. *President Uribe's war against terror***

President Uribe defined Colombia as a “deepening democracy, respectful of human rights, pluralist and participative”<sup>50</sup> that is threatened by terrorists groups defending narcotraffic. They are terrorists because they use violence against the legitimate state and the society instead of using the democratic channels of political participation. Since the Colombian state guarantees all political liberties, the argument runs, it is incomprehensible the extreme use of violence and therefore those groups are considered terrorists and not belligerents. Departing from this postulate, the Democratic Security policy defended democracy and investment by recovering security<sup>51</sup>. Indeed, ‘democratic’ refers to the fact that security is for everyone no matter political beliefs, and also to the objective of rescuing security at the same time as deepening democratic guarantees and defending liberties<sup>52</sup>. Thus security and social cohesion were two of the three axes of this policy. The third axe was investment understood as the encouragement of private actors productive activities in Colombia. In 2006, the Democratic security policy was perceived as a success by security and economic indicators. Uribe's popularity reached 77%<sup>53</sup> which allowed him to be easily re-elected for a second term after

---

<sup>50</sup> “Uribe define a Colombia como una democracia en profundizacion, respetuosa de los derechos humanos, pluralista y participativa. Colombia es un Estado de derecho, con separacion de poderes, transparencia en los procedimientos, respeto a las libertades publicas, cohesin social y acatamiento a las instituciones”, Op.cit.:GAVIRIA, 2009, p79

<sup>51</sup> See Plan De desarrollo Alvaro Uibe Velez 2002-2006 « Hacia un Estado Comunitario”, and Plan de Desarrollo Alvaro Uribe Velz 2006-2010 “ Estado Comunitario: desarrollo para todos”, available at <http://www.dnp.gov.co/PortalWeb/PND/PlanesdeDesarrolloanteriores.aspx>

<sup>52</sup> GAVIRIA, Jose Obdulio. *A Uribe lo que es de Uribe*, Bogota: Planeta, 2009, p31

<sup>53</sup> Invamer Gallup survey, Noticias 24h, <http://www.noticias24.com/actualidad/noticia/165683/uribe-se-marchara-con-una-popularidad-de-cerca-del-80/>

transforming the constitution<sup>54</sup>. The limits of the policy started to show up during his second mandate, but the popularity of the president was never affected ending his period with 80%.

## Counterinsurgency logic

A strong counterinsurgency perspective dominates the Democratic Security policy that established five main strategic objectives: state control over the Colombian territory, protection of the population, elimination of drugs traffic, deterrence capacity maintenance, and efficiency and transparency<sup>55</sup>. The main goal was to strengthen the military capacity of the state to the point of transforming the balance of forces on the ground, thus dissuading the guerrillas to negotiate their demobilisation. It came from the conviction that the guerrillas could be defeated militarily<sup>56</sup> but armed forces had to adapt to the context of irregular war. The policy followed the principles established in counterinsurgency manuals.

1) One first step recommended by the manuals is to leave the insurgents without political status<sup>57</sup>. The objective is to treat them as “bandoleros” instead of irregular armed forces with political purposes. Otherwise the capture of members can be seen as martyr<sup>58</sup>. Then, since insurgents are not military forces to be beaten in a battle ground, armed forces and official institutions should work together to isolate the terrorists of the populace and expose them to military defeat<sup>59</sup>. This is exactly what Uribe did by strongly determining that guerrillas were narco-terrorists, the enemies of the democratic society. There was no reason for establishing peace dialogues with them. The failures of the peace process with the Farc were considered by President Uribe a determinant proof of their unwillingness to talk about peace. Even more the fact that the guerrilla used the demilitarized region for growing stronger military, increasing the narcotraffic business and kidnapping military and civilian population,

---

<sup>54</sup> For being re-elected, President Uribe passed to the Congress a proposal of Constitutional amendment voted in June 2004 in a controversial session.

<sup>55</sup> See COLOMBIA, PRESIDENCIA DE LA REPUBLICA, MINISTERIO DE DEFENSA NACIONAL, *Politica de defensa y seguridad Democratica*, 2003, available at [http://www.presidencia.gov.co/seguridad\\_democratica.pdf](http://www.presidencia.gov.co/seguridad_democratica.pdf), also FUERZAS MILITARES DE COLOMBIA, *Guia de planeamiento estrategico 2010*, 2010, p30.

<sup>56</sup> Op.cit: GAVIRIA, Jose Obdulio. p114. He considers that the position advocating for peace dialogues defended by the UNDP is simple defeatism.

<sup>57</sup> US, Headquarters Departments of the Army, *Counterinsurgency.FM3-24, MCWP 3-33.5*, December 2006, p5-1

<sup>58</sup> US, Headquarters Departments of the Army, *Counterinsurgency.FM3-24, MCWP 3-33.5*, December 2006, p5-1

<sup>59</sup> Ibid: US, Headquarters Departments of the Army, 2006, p5-3, and op.cit.:Mayor ORTIZ TOBON, 2005, p195

confirmed their greed and absence of political project. President Uribe found unacceptable the conditions of dialogues accepted by Pastrana and was firmly opposed to repeating the experience even in a smaller scale. He considered that not only the state was renouncing to accomplish its duty to protect every citizen but also that armed forces would have felt demoralized<sup>60</sup>. In a similar logic, President Uribe in his first term refused to do hostages-for-prisoners swap because the message sent was that a soldier and a guerrilla man are equivalents, even worst that kidnapping is accepted<sup>61</sup>.

2) Three counterinsurgency objectives of the Democratic security policy: strengthening of the armed forces, recovering strategic areas (for terrorist economic and military activities) and increasing presence of the state (visibility).

- Strengthening armed forces meant quantitative and qualitative transformations. The means employed for achieving the objective were to increase armed forces budget, size, and professionalization level. Indeed, the army was totally restructured. Defence budget passed from 2.8 % of GDP to 3.3 % in five years. The number of troops increased, professionalization of soldiers, high mountain battalions were created for controlling strategic corridors, mobile brigades and urban antiterrorist forces, anti-kidnapping groups increased in number, and mobile squads of mounted police. Total of 96000 new members of the police and armed forces<sup>62</sup>. There was also the reinforcement of the antidrug police unit (antinarotics) with increasing budget and means for aerial spraying of illicit crops.

- “stop bleeding, inpatient care- recovery and outpatient care- movement to self-sufficiency”:  
“stop bleeding” means to break the insurgents’ initiative and momentum<sup>63</sup>. President Uribe’s first administration focused on the military aspect of the strategy of recovery of the territory. It was based on the Plan Patriota (continuation of the Plan Colombia) targeting guerrillas’ heartlands and strategic areas: Cundinamarca and the South. It did reduce the guerrillas’ capacity of attack in the main cities of the country, especially Bogota. Operation Liberty One was carried out in Cundinamarca in June 2003 in coordination with the Southern Command of the US<sup>64</sup>. The southern operation began in December 2003 with 18000 soldiers arrived in Caqueta, Putumayo, Guaviare and Vichada Departments. The next step for recovering

---

<sup>60</sup> Op.cit.:BERMUDEZ, 2010, p141

<sup>61</sup> Op.cit.:GAVIRIA, 2009, p132

<sup>62</sup> KLINE, Harvey, *Showing Teeth to the Dragons. State-building by Colombian President Alvaro Uribe Velez 2002-2006*, University of Alabama press, 2009, p41

<sup>63</sup> Op.cit.:US Headquarters department of the Army, 2006, p5-2.

<sup>64</sup> Ciponline.org

strategic areas according to counter-insurgency manuals is “inpatient care- recovery”, meaning achieving stability, and then “outpatient care- movement to self-sufficiency”, meaning expansion of stability operations across contested regions<sup>65</sup>. In the second mandate of Uribe the guerrillas were forced to retreat to isolated areas and the “Social recovery of the territory” (Recuperacion Social del Territorio)<sup>66</sup> was launched as a complement of the military strategy. The Centre for Consolidation on Integrated Action (CCAI) coordinated by Accion Social, with the Ministry of Defence and the USAID<sup>67</sup> participation, lead the program. At the end of the second administration, the CCAI transformed the recovery program in the “Consolidation program’ which Uribe’s successor continued. The general objective of the CCAI and the two programs was to develop interagency actions with the “purpose of increasing security so as to create investment trust and progress, and through that way guarantee the conditions and resources necessary for social state action everywhere”<sup>68</sup>. The Consolidation program is carried out in 7 regions (15 zones comprising 100 municipalities): nudo de paramillo, Catatumbo, Montes de Maria, Sierra Nevada, Central Cordillera, Pacific, and Macarena<sup>69</sup>. Four of them share zones with Peace Laboratories two and three.

- Look for favourable public opinion: Since enemies are inside society (because insurgents use civilian population), the fight must be integral covering the whole range of causes that provoke rebellion so as to have populations support to counterinsurgency actions. For that policies should awake the strongest nationalism and there should not be doubt about the Armed forces legitimacy<sup>70</sup>. Questioning the authority of armed forces is the equivalent of giving away territory to the insurgency. Thus, armed forces have to establish their authority in the communities and carry on a psychological action. The way of doing so is by knowing very well the communities, classifying people in potential partners or dangerous. In the manuals, it is suggested that armed forces use propaganda for convincing people to join the

---

<sup>65</sup> Op.cit.:US Headquarters department of the Army, 2006, p5-2.

<sup>66</sup> It is an internal document of Accion Social which combines two official documents: the Ministry of Defence Action Plan and the DNP Democracy Plan.

<sup>67</sup> There is a very close relation between Accion Social and USAID. The director of Accion Social since 2009 was the former director of USAID program Midas. The CCAI is composed by: Accion Social, Ministry of Defence, ministry of Interior and Justice, Minsitry of Education, Ministry of Socil Protection, Ministry of Agriculture, Colombian Institute of Familiar Wellbeing (ICBF), Coldeportes, Attorneys office, Registraduria Nacional del Estado Civil, and National Service of learning.

<sup>68</sup> Op.cit.:FUERZAS ARMADAS DE COLOMBIA, 2010, p14

<sup>69</sup> COLOMBIA, Centre de Coordinacion de Accion Integral, Plan Nacional de Consolidacion, 2010

<sup>70</sup> Op.cit.:US Headquarters Departments of the Army, 2006, p1-23,1-25

counterinsurgency. If there are reticent people, they are considered as supporters of the insurgency and treated as such so as to reduce local resistance<sup>71</sup>.

At the end of President Uribe's first administration, all municipalities had police or armed forces. From the national level, President Uribe's style of governance did encourage nationalism so as to move public opinion towards total support to the security strategy at all levels, local and national. The polarization of society was palpable opposing those who defended democracy alongside the legitimate government and those who attacked it, considered supporters of terrorists' ideas and actions<sup>72</sup>. Medias played the game also and contributed to the increasing sense of nationalism<sup>73</sup>. For Major Ortiz, this is part of the political war understood as the unarmed way of destroying the enemy<sup>74</sup>. In his analysis of the Colombian armed forces strategy, he finds that the best way of influencing civilian population is through personal contact and propaganda. Thus, armed forces should be in constant relation with civilians, go to meetings, forums, conferences, and use "spoken or written propaganda taking advantage of the media"<sup>75</sup>. This was complementary with the President Uribe expectations on media's responsibility of respecting military strategy and not echoing terrorist's messages<sup>76</sup>.

3) Direct civilian participation in counterinsurgency actions. This was the case of the programs "Soldiers from my Town", the informers' network that assisted the state intelligence services, the rewards for information program and the manual eradication operations. Soldiers from my town were created by military men native from the targeted regions. They chose

---

<sup>71</sup> Op.cit.:US Headquarters Departments of the Army, 2006, p1-23,1-25, and Op.cit.:ORTIZ, p131

<sup>72</sup> According to GAVIRIA, Jose Obdulio, the unofficial spokesman of President Uribe's policies, this was clear : if the society is a democratic ones, people criticizing the government were against the legitimate defence of democracy, then were supporters of the enemies. Op.cit.:GAVIRIA, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> According to Mayor Ortiz Tobon, this is an essential step in the psychological war that complements the military war. President and armed forces have to change the vocabulary related to terrorists because this is a way of legalizing enemy's crazy acts. For instance, guerrillas 'justice' should be called simply 'assassinations'. Op.cit; ORTIZ-TOBON, 2005, p71

<sup>74</sup> Op.cit.:Mayor ORTIZ TOBON, 2005 , p25. He describes the political war is developed in six main forms: ideological war, psicological war, inteligencia war, strategem war, organizations war and mass war. It is complementary to the military war an dessential in couterinsurgency because terrorist organizations employ it contantly by putting the population against the state, p1- and p20.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, 2005, p25. Further, in the chapter about pscycological war, Major Ortiz explains in detail the actions to be done. Concerning media he encourages armed forces to persuade people to write against guerrillas and to spread strategic official thinking. He also encourages armed forces to give wrong information in the local medias about military operations with the objective of misinforming terrorists. The strategy should reach the international level via internet. Pictures and infoamtion relating terrorist to narcotraffic should be used in oder toshow the violence created by guerrillas. P76-77.

<sup>76</sup> Op.cit.:GAVIRIA, 2009; p30-33

young people trusted by the communities, trained them for 3 months and organized an armed force at the community level under the commandment of the military chief of the area. In the first government of Uribe, soldiers from my town operated in 754 municipalities out of 1099, in 2005 they were 27000 in 28 of the 32 departments. Informers and rewards created the “network of citizen cooperation”. They furnished information confidentially to the armed forces, and did “civic” duties determined by the police forces. Rewards were for any citizen giving information about insurgent groups. In 2005 the government paid a total of 3 million Euros<sup>77</sup>. Concerning the strategy of illicit drugs eradication, a civil-military program is carried out at the same time as aerial spraying and police operations. It is the manual eradication program in which peasants paid on a daily basis, accompanied by police and armed forces, root out coca plants in conflict regions<sup>78</sup>.

Finally, military forces also had the objective of winning hearts and minds of people by doing civilian works. Major Ortiz Tobon simply states that “police chief or military chief are the representatives of the military forces so they have the responsibility of putting together the economic and political powers for reaching peace and social development”. Armed forces should do “social work” side by side with civilian authorities, CSO and populations. This includes building roads, schools, hospitals, and protecting caravans of tourists heading to the coasts. These activities “allow civilians to be a protective shield of the armed forces and to refuse the enemy’s presence”<sup>79</sup>. But mostly they seek to transform the image Colombians had of their institutions.

In sum, recovering security was the primary goal of the Democratic Security policy carried out during the two administration of President Uribe. By redefining the armed conflict in terms of the war on terror, leaving the guerrillas without political status, President Uribe developed a strategy of counterinsurgency with coordination of actions from the military, political and social aspects of public policy. The strategy implied the redefinition of budgetary priorities, the augmentation of military capacity and the transformation of relations between

---

<sup>77</sup> Op.cit.:KLINE, 2009, p42

<sup>78</sup> According to the new paper *el Colombiano*, 61 peasants, 72 policemen, and 69 soldiers have been killed during eradication operations. 190 peasants and 222 policemen have been wounded and handicapped by antimersonnel mines. *El Colombiano*, “Erradicacion de cultivos ilicitos es politica de Estado”, 30 June 2010, available at [http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/E/erradicacion\\_de\\_cultivos\\_ilicitos\\_es\\_politica\\_de\\_estado/erradicacion\\_de\\_cultivos\\_ilicitos\\_es\\_politica\\_de\\_estado.asp](http://www.elcolombiano.com/BancoConocimiento/E/erradicacion_de_cultivos_ilicitos_es_politica_de_estado/erradicacion_de_cultivos_ilicitos_es_politica_de_estado.asp)

<sup>79</sup> Op.cit.:Mayor ORTIZ TOBON, 2005, p172

civilians and military forces from civilian neutrality vis-à-vis armed actors, to civilian active participation in the defence of society.

## **The place of the PDP in President Uribe's policy**

President Uribe's counterinsurgency logic penetrated the relation between the civilians and the military, concentrated power on the executive and put the civil society organization in conflict regions working on human rights defence and peace advocacy under strain. Indeed CSO propping dialogues with illegal actors and resisting any form of violence were seen with mistrust.

According to ICG, the dialogue between government and activists turned out to be impossible because the two sides became antagonists and their discourse strongly ideological. President Uribe maintained his position of defense of the Armed forces legitimacy in detriment of the betterment of the record on human rights respect. Since 2007 the ministry of defense issued a policy for training security forces in the concepts of human rights and international humanitarian law, hiring army legal advisers so as to design operation under the frame of law, creating "complaints desks" in army battalions to encourage civilians to report violations, and putting in place a periodic televised accountability mechanism for the commander or army division and regional police<sup>80</sup>. Nevertheless, despite the "obvious lack of success in protecting human rights"<sup>81</sup>, the government was reluctant to review the counterinsurgency policy and the programs involving rewards to informants and military actions against guerrillas. Even more, "important sectors in the military tend to perceive the defense of human rights as a "juridical weapon" used by the insurgents and their supposed supporters in Colombia and abroad to undermine troop morale and discredit the most effective officers and units. Many officers still hold the view that the judiciary is controlled by "left-wing radicals" intent on defeating a victorious army"<sup>82</sup>. This position was publicly supported by President Uribe during his town meetings and press conferences where he expressed his distrust towards Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, UNHCHR and opposition leaders like Gustavo Petro and his former ally Rafael Pardo (both members of the congress). For instance in May

---

<sup>80</sup> OP.CIT.:ICG, 2009, p4 and 10

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, ICG, 2009, p10

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, ICG, 2009, p5

2007 he addressed Human Rights Watch/Americas director José Miguel Vivanco at a dinner with members of Congress in Washington “You’re biased to the guerrillas and everyone in Colombia thinks that”<sup>83</sup>. Other common way of referring to human rights activists, peace advocates and left-wing politicians was “terrorist in business suits”<sup>84</sup> or “advocates of terrorism”. A position shared by official and political allies<sup>85</sup>.

On the contrary, human rights activists and peace defenders have little security policy expertise. There is reticence to treating security matters because of ideological and personal reasons. Indeed, many peace activities think security is a right-wing subject. They mistrust the security institutions of the state because some of them have been victims of abuses committed by state agents<sup>86</sup> and because of links between security forces and paramilitary forces that have threatened activists all over the country. Thus, CSO advocating for peace and human rights tend to be critical of the government and some even affirm that Uribe is partisan of paramilitaries or a paramilitary<sup>87</sup>. Since the beginning of his government, president Uribe made clear that this critical attitude was not welcome: “Every time a security policy to defeat terrorism appears in Colombia, when the terrorists begin to feel weak, they immediately send their spokespeople to talk about human rights. These human-rights traffickers must take off their masks, appear with their political ideas and drop this cowardice of hiding them behind human rights”<sup>88</sup>.

---

<sup>83</sup> CIPCOL.Org, <http://www.cipcol.org/?cat=56> “[In the early 1990s some demobilized ex-guerrillas] simply took off their camouflage, put on a suit and came to Congress wanting to teach the country about morality. Some have done it well. Others, unfortunately, went from being terrorists in camouflage to terrorists in business suits.” – President Uirbe speech

<sup>84</sup> CIPCOL.Org, <http://www.cipcol.org/?cat=56> “[In the early 1990s some demobilized ex-guerrillas] simply took off their camouflage, put on a suit and came to Congress wanting to teach the country about morality. Some have done it well. Others, unfortunately, went from being terrorists in camouflage to terrorists in business suits.” – President Uirbe speech

<sup>85</sup> ICG, 2009, p6, refers to many journal articles mentioning speeches of President Uribe such as AFP, 11 september 2003, in february 2004 Uirbe said the “subject of human rights cannot be used as an excuse to provide voer for terrorist” according to International Peace Observatory, 31 October 2007. Uribe called “the intellectual bloc of the FARC” to the CSO promoting a hostage-for-prisoners swap, see ICG reppot “Ending Colombia’s FARC conflict”, Report No30, 26 March 2009

<sup>86</sup> ICG, 2009, p5

<sup>87</sup> See the dossier Colombia of [www.sodepaz.org/colombia](http://www.sodepaz.org/colombia), also articles at <http://www.dhcolombia.info/spip.php?article304>

<sup>88</sup> September 8, 2003, addressing the military high command. He also said : “Many of those who attack the government saying that the president is a paramilitary, basically what they are is enraged that the president attacks the guerrillas. They are not able to say that they defend the guerrillas, and that they are very bothered

PDPs and other CSO in the region can be seen in two ways by the Colombian government. On one hand they represent local actors able to attain areas out of state reach, to access international resources and to do service delivery in order to address poverty and social cohesion challenges. According to Econometria study on the Peace Laboratories' regions<sup>89</sup>, the democratic security policy has had significantly lower impact on security and development indexes in conflict regions like the Peace Laboratories. Thus PDPs can be useful in those areas for tackling development and security challenges including the protection of civilian population and even the mobilization behind the counterinsurgency as part of the ideological war<sup>90</sup> against terrorists' ideas. On the other hand, the government takes many risks by encouraging CSO in conflict zones. First, the President can lose the support of those regions that are the basis of his governability. Indeed, the political and economic support to CSO contesting local orders can be seen badly by local-power holders. Second, the government may weaken the common agreement on war as the way to address guerrillas. In fact, PDPs action may increase confrontation between democratic forces of the state looking for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and forces pushing for a military solution. Yet, security policies are essential for handling the constant challenge of illegal armed adversaries. Third, supporting CSO in strategic regions involves the risk of advantaging CSO related with illegal armed groups, making possible to illegal adversaries the access to media and international resources, meaning political significance.

In Peace Laboratories' regions the Colombian government faces a classical dilemma analysed by Howell and Lind<sup>91</sup> in the global context of war on terror. Indeed, civil society is needed for legitimizing the state and doing the service delivery it cannot do but also is suspected of working for terrorist. Thus the resulting approach is one based on control and cooptation. In the Colombian case, the central government had divided visions on the PDPs nature and utility. While most people at the Unit of Justice and Security of the Department of National Planning, old ally of the PDPMM, see the PDPs as civil society promoting democracy from the bottom; staff at Accion Social do not always value the PDPs' political dimension. Some

---

because the government is fighting them. They should be more authentic, more sincere." November 19, 2006.

See CIPCOL.Org, <http://www.cipcol.org/?cat=56>

<sup>89</sup> Interview with Arturo Garcia, director of the study at Econometria, Bogota, December 8 2008.

<sup>90</sup> ORTIZ TOBON, 2005, p41.

<sup>91</sup> HOWELL, Jude, and LIND, Jeremy (eds.) *Civil society under strain: counter-terrorism policy, civil society and aid post-9/11*. Kumarian Press, Connecticut, USA, 2009

people calls the PDPs “the non-guerrilla left of the regions”<sup>92</sup> while others consider them war strategic actors that can help the enemy by hiding its members and tolerating coca crops<sup>93</sup>. This happens because there is mistrust towards CSO members of the PDPs such as Fundecima en el Cauca (part of the Project Comité de Integration del Macizo which objective is to fight ‘traditional’ public Management<sup>94</sup>), ANUC en Montes de Maria and Meta (National Association of Peasants, considered by paramilitaries and some authorities as partisans of the FARC). In fact, from a counterinsurgency point of view, PDPs and their grass roots organization could be classified in Mayor Ortiz definition of organizations that spread terrorists’ ideas, and therefore contribute to demoralize the national power. This is because they encourage people in the regions to ask for peace dialogues and hostages-for-prisoners swap<sup>95</sup>.

The strategy of PDPs of calling in international actors in order to gain autonomy is then perceived both as dangerous and welcome. Dangerous because it can support “wrong” actors. Welcome because it is a political and financial support for a country struggling to end conflict. For reducing the risks of affecting the counterinsurgency objectives the government transformed its structure for dealing with donors directly and for becoming PDPs’ first partner.

## **Aligning the EU behind the war**

From the government point of view, ODA programs legitimized particular groups of actors. Since international actors’ presence is not neutral, the Colombian government expected donors to accept the new conditions of the war against terror in Colombia. This was especially important for the EU’s cooperation. The fact of backing Padre Francisco de Roux was a clear support to a defiant leader in a highly strategic region. Not only the leader was part of the Jesuit network that enjoy legitimacy in the region, but also the Peace Laboratory I was willing to repeat the experience of the PDPMM in other localities where the church is more present than the state. Moreover, European cooperation was supporting the objective of negotiating

---

<sup>92</sup> “La izquierda no guerrillera de las regiones”, accordign to a member of staff at Accion Social, Interview, Bogota, 19 May 2008.

<sup>93</sup> Comon comments at the Presdential program against Illicit crops (PCI) at Accion Social. Personal conversations with staff members during 2007 during my work period as counsellor for strategic action.

<sup>94</sup> [http://www.pazdesdelabase.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=413:fundecima-prepara-el-congreso-de-los-pueblos&catid=39:cima&Itemid=109](http://www.pazdesdelabase.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=413:fundecima-prepara-el-congreso-de-los-pueblos&catid=39:cima&Itemid=109)

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.: ORTIZ TOBON, 2005, p17

with guerrillas at the local level which went against the main security policy of isolating them geographically and socially. During the two periods of President Uribe, the EU's programs were approached from three angles: first by changing the information available in Europe through a constant campaign in Brussels; second by mobilizing multilateral principles for donors' alignment and respect of "ownership" in the frame of the OCDE; and third, by including the PDPs and the Peace Laboratories in the security strategy of the National Development Plan.

The unwillingness of most PDPs to play the role of partners of the government in a security strategy, especially those with Peace Laboratories' resources, pushed the Uribe's administration to use the international stage for transforming the conditions of ODA and thus the modes of action of PDPs in the regions. This is a sort of counter-boomerang effect or neutralization of the boomerang effect launched by the PDPs. Colombia behaved as a middle income state, non dependent on ODA resources, which resists international pressure and adapts it to its main objectives.

Next part summarizes their conceptions of security, development and democracy, see the clashing issues and the role played by the EU in finding intersection points among Colombian actors' perspectives.

#### ***IV. EU's peacebuilding approach for dealing with demands from antagonist legal actors***

The EU not only had to deal with both actors but also put them to work together.

#### **Differences in the three dimensions of peacebuilding**

Clashes among PDPs and the government started since President Uribe first term. Besides the non recognition of the conflict and the closeness to peace dialogues, PDPs carrying out Peace Laboratory programs also disliked the fact of reducing the economic development policy to economic growth while social action became cash transfers to poor people in order to

reinforce the counterinsurgency strategy. They found objectionable the priority given to macroprojects and extractive economy, the criminalization of opposition groups and the conditioning of policies to military criteria. In the second term of President Uribe, the Consolidation plan created a lot of controversies inside the PDPs. Indeed, being the last phase of the counterinsurgency strategy that Marcella<sup>96</sup> qualifies of good exercise for increasing state presence, PDPs hesitate to participate. Some PDPs agree others don't defending two perceptions of CSO in a democratic state: being an alternative to the official Plan, or building the state with the state. The directors of the two PDPs directly concerned, those executing the Peace Laboratory III, arrived to the conclusions that "better in than out"<sup>97</sup>. However, they as well as other PDPs and peace advocates criticize strongly official approaches to four main issues: land Access, illicit crops forced eradication with aerial spraying, differentiation of civilians and military as the basis of any security policy.

The divisive issues mentioned above reveal structural differences among PDP and President Uribe's government corresponding their approaches to building peace. In general the government vision is closer to the minimalist peacebuilding where the status quo is protected for peace. The PDPs tend towards a maximalist peacebuilding where structural changes are needed for peace. There is also a non negligible difference of scale in their perceptions. Indeed, PDPs are focalised in the regional-local level while the government sees the regions as part of a national strategy. Moreover, the role given to grassroots CSO in both actors' approaches to peace is not the same. Uribe's counterinsurgency tends to eliminate the space between the civil society organizations and the state<sup>98</sup> while PDPs defend CSO autonomy.

Differences among their perspectives of security, development and democracy can be irreconcilable. PDPs support peace dialogues with illegal armed actors and focus on the protection of human rights and civilians neutrality as main security concern. The Uribe's government put the spot on military action with civilian's direct participation, sometimes in detriment of human rights defence. Concerning development, the dominant model of the last two decades is the neoliberal model to which president Uribe adhere. Many PDPs carrying out

---

<sup>96</sup> MARCELLA, Gabriel, "Democratic governance and the rule of law: lessons from Colombia", in *PKSOI Papers*, Strategic Studies Institute, US ArmyWar Collge, 2009.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Sonia Pabon, Bogota, November 5 2010, Fabio Canchila, former coordinator of the Peace Laboratory at the Fundacion Montes de Maria, Bogota, December 14 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Duffield describes this strategy of service delivery through CSO in Iraq. He considers that it blurs the lines among both actors but places the state at the centre. DUFFIELD, Mark, *Development, security and unending war ; governing the world of peoples*, Polity, Cambridge, 2007, p131

the Peace Laboratories question the pertinence of the neoliberal zones for conflict regions where institutions (rules) are not clear and often advantaging armed actors. Finally, the perspective of democracy defers in the concept of participation, the role of the executive and the place of the regions in the national political spaces as well as citizens’ participation. PDPs tend to define participation as an everyday action made by full-citizens, meaning people with social and political liberties. The executive has a role of guaranteeing these liberties and putting together the regional specificities. Uribe’s approach of participation is through the institution of elections, and his main policy amalgamated regions while centralizing the power on his own person. Next table schematize PDPs and President Uribe’s administration approaches to the three dimensions of peacebuilding.

<b>Peacebuilding dimension</b>	<b><i>PDP</i></b>	<b><i>Central Government</i></b>
Security	Peace dialogues, Human rights protection	Military control
Development	Human Development	Neoliberal model
Democracy	Participative Democracy and decentralization	Democracy with President leadership and strong central state

Both actors demanded the EU’s support to their approaches to peace. Thus, the question for the EU as an international actor willing to promote a peacebuilding program is: are there intersection points among these two perspectives of security, development and democracy?

**The EU’s action**

The EU’s Delegation was between the PDPs mistrust towards the rapprochement of the government and the need of working with the government. Inside the EU many changes domestic and international, transformed the regard over the ODA programs in Colombia. There was division inside the EU: support to Uribe’s counterinsurgency, support to civil society alternatives to the war plan. This is why EU did not make a clear statement or communication from the Parliament or the Council expressing its inconformity with the fact of being part of the Democratic Security policy. Nevertheless, the peace Laboratories were carried out and reinforced both Colombian actors presence in the regions:

- increased the PDPs autonomy by augmenting the efficacy of their actions at the individual and community level, placing them as important actors for peace and as

articulators between the local grassroots organizations, national institutions, and international donors.

- The EU has also supported the government strategy of recovering territory by increasing the presence of social service and human rights defence state agencies, allowing state participation over the execution of cooperation resources and ameliorating the image of central institutions like the army, police and justice.

The biggest challenge for the EU during the Uribe's government was how to support local initiatives for peace while the national government denied the armed conflict. It has been very hard to build peace when local authorities are either following national directives of ignoring conflict dynamics in their policies and leaving them to the military forces, or taking advantage of the Manichean vision of counterinsurgency for strengthening local power-holders. The results of the Peace Laboratories on the ground imply successes and evident failures. Indeed, there is not a clear visible impact at the national level but the programs managed to protect local initiatives, generate regional dynamics and slip in the Uribe's government agenda discussions about "peace".

After almost ten years of execution of the Peace laboratories, this is the main achievement of the EU's action for peace in Colombia: to put together the Colombian government and the civil society organizations supportive of a pacific resolution of the conflict. In fact the EU forced the interaction among both set of actors as a strategy of building bridges among them for peace which meant building bridges between local actions and national levels. This was not a process a priori designed, but a learning –by-doing process of the EU as a donor in Colombia. Indeed, the first Peace Laboratory shows how the EU arrived naively for supporting a civil society organization in the perspective of a post-conflict period and gradually understood the stakes by interacting with the PDPs and the state.

What the Colombian case shows is that the peacebuilding approach is a process in itself, not a determined set of actions with a precise output. Building peace is the process of putting together both legal actors around concrete actions ameliorating everyday life of vulnerable populations. It is a combination of bottom up approach coming from the grassroots CSO with a top-down approach coming from the development plan of the central government. Thus the Peace Laboratories cannot be expected to ending the Colombian 40 years old conflict and violence. But they can be symbolic actions of what international actors can do by making

converge civil society initiatives and public institutions interests. Indeed, there are intersection points among the two set of actors in the three dimensions of peacebuilding, development, democracy and security.

## **Development**

The PDPs impact on development is seen in the amelioration of life conditions, grassroots organizations capacities and settlement. This can be considered an intersection point with the Central government will of addressing the most vulnerable populations, especially internal displaced, for reducing poverty and misery. The governments' own social programs based on conditional cash transfers have had less impact. Thus, the experience of the Peace laboratory III is extremely worthy for public policies. Indeed the complementarity achieved between the World Bank program and the Peace Laboratories increased the PDPs capacity of addressing local needs and strengthening grassroots CSO with vulnerable population. In Montes de Maria, the PDP staff supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and benefiting of a proper timing (and the experience of the PDPs of the previous Peace Laboratory) managed to create a synergy of international resources and Accion Social. The grassroots CSO were newly created or too weak for answering a call to tenders or even carrying on a project. Then the PDP used the World Bank resources for creating and consolidating grassroots CSO during two years. Then, these CSO worked with specialised consultants paid by the UNDP and coordinated by the PDP. After an intensive work on 80 local initiatives, 16 projects were presented to the Peace Laboratory III call to tenders.

Other intersection point could be found on the creation of alternatives inside the neoliberal model followed by the Colombian state. The macroprojects of agriculture and mining are considered essential for rural and national development but the social consequences are underestimated if not ignored. Thus, the PDPs have transformed their initial approach of resisting the model to looking for alternatives within. Even the peasants movements like ANUC, reckons that “we cannot go against the macroprojects but we can fight for our inclusion as peasants with the right to a peasant economy and food security”<sup>99</sup>. Thus, the economic neoliberal model is not necessarily refused but transformed so as to protect local people rights which concern delicate subjects like land access and titling.

---

<sup>99</sup> Interview Jose Martinez, President of ANUC Meta 2008, Villavicencio, 18 Oct 2008

The role of PDP can be complementary of a program looking for land restitutions to victims and land titling. Indeed, PDPs have shown positive results at the individual and policy making levels in the land access problem. First, according to PDPs' leaders, the has helped them to access land<sup>100</sup> while non beneficiaries still struggle for it. Second, the PDPs can open spaces of discussion and decision with multiple actors around the subject of land. Indeed Cordepaz convened the Consolidation policy actors in the Macarena region- Incofer (in charge of land titling), ombudsmen, general attorney, governor of Meta, mayors- and opened the dialogue with peasants CSO, Catholic church and the PDP. Two concrete projects were designed there and currently financed by the Peace laboratory III<sup>101</sup>. Thus, PDPs convene capacity can be effective on concrete subjects such as land access if there is a central policy backing up.

## **Democracy**

Two main intersection points: one, the Peace Laboratories has supported the demand side of democracy, meaning people's capacity to express their needs and claim accountability from institutions. Indeed, EU's programs have opened spaces for dialogue between state institutions and civil society organizations for discussing concrete projects. They have also brought central institution, strengthened their capacities at the local levels and helped the government to be present in regions without legal norms. CSO increased their capacity of resisting and clarifying their strategies of action and demands to public institutions. The second intersection point is the citizenship attitude encouraged by the PDPs work. Even if security conditions are not transformed for guaranteeing the protection of human rights in discussion spaces<sup>102</sup>, the PDPs encouraged individual leadership in the communities and increased beneficiaries participation in debates and election polls<sup>103</sup>. This means that the EU's

---

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Arturo Garcia. Data form the Evaluation for the Departamento Nacional de Planeacion, 2008, table I3.1.25

<sup>101</sup> : one of institutional strengthening in Puerto Rico and other for land access in three areas of a former FARC zones currently under the consolidation policy

<sup>102</sup> In Montes de Maria people feared the military presence in those spaces during the social territory recovery; in Meta the reaction from leaders was "we do not want official spaces. There are many deaths for participating there (...) anyway decisions concerning the rural sector are taken in Bogota. What for trying to influence any regional policy? 102". Although the peace Laboratory III gave new hopes of activating these spaces, after 2 years of execution no results were visible<sup>102</sup>. Nevertheless for most people in the Peace Laboratory regions, there are low profile official spaces for participating freely (Juntas de Accion Comunal, Consejos directivos escolares and junta municipal de deportes<sup>102</sup>) as well as informal spaces.

<sup>103</sup> People participate in formal spaces such as Juntas de Accion Comunal and Citizens' oversight committees (Veedurias), and non formal spaces like the ones proposed by the PDP. Ibid, COLOMBIA, Departamento Nacional de Planeacion, 2008, p128

aid is addressing the truncated citizenship by ameliorating life conditions and creating social and political actors.

## **Security**

The civilian perspective of peacebuilding does not include hard security. As seen in the introduction, peacebuilding programs imply a precondition: a minimum of military stability on conflict regions. Thus, by default, the EU in Colombia has followed the security agenda of the government. In this learning process it has been comfortable to avoid discussions over hard security matters. But the political position of the EU in favour of peace by peaceful means meant an alternative for CSO out of the Colombian state mainstream.

The intersection point between the PDPs and the government in the security dimensions can be seen in short and long term. In the short term the balance of the consolidation policy and the Peace Laboratory III is a good example of joint work without loss of autonomy. However, this demands clarity from the central government policies concerning armed actors, civilian neutrality and land access. When central policies are not clear, uncertainty is higher locally. State and PDPs can take advantage that grassroots CSO accept the Democratic Security and the PDPs as a common strategy because increasing security allowed participation. But negative peace is not enough for setting of participation and trust. Then PDPs have had to make clear their distances with the military action for increasing CSO autonomy and deal with political actors.

In the long term the intersection point at the security dimension is the fact that the Peace Laboratories helped to protect and reinforce CSO, especially the leftist ones that the government could not tolerate under the democratic Security policy. The PDPs potential role is to create bridges between the government and leftist CSO, key partners in future peace negotiations or demobilization processes with guerrilla groups. However, as before, the capacity of reaching intersection points depends on the openness of the central state policies.

## **Conclusions**

What role for the EU in the Colombian conflict resolution? Until now the EU's main role has been of putting together antagonist legal actors that deal directly and indirectly with armed actors. The EU's action has been defined on the making of the Peace Laboratories and its interaction with Colombian actors for finding the crossroads of the three dimensions (economic development, democracy and security) which has implied a minimum of participation in the democratic process (citizenship), possibilities of economic development for all (inclusiveness), security conditions for the development of economic activities and social interaction for everybody in the region (with victims and excombatants) including the reinforcement of social control as a mean of protection against illegal armed actors action.

The scope of EU's peacebuilding action for finding ways out of the conflict depends strongly on the Colombian government official policy and the place it leaves to CSO action. The more open the Colombian government is to a peaceful resolution of the conflict, the wider the space for the EU for proposing an original program of peacebuilding. The link regional initiatives with national public policies seem to be at the heart of the impact of cooperation aid. However, programs implementation requires minimum security conditions for people on the ground as well as central government capacity to reach unambiguously conflict zones with civilian institutions. Thus, the European proposal of peacebuilding, created on the making, has tacitly accepted the use of military means as a first approach to be calibrated in a second time with social, economic and political programs as Rolland Paris<sup>104</sup> suggest.

The EU's capacity for building peace in conflict contexts depends on recipient country conditions as much as in its own capacity to be present as a political actor. This challenge implies that the EU's ODA create synergies with other EU's policies such as the commercial one, and respond clearly to donors dilemmas in conflict countries.

---

<sup>104</sup> PARIS, Rolland, "Wilson's ghost: the faulty assumptions of post-conflict prebuilding", in CR CROCKER, Chester et al, (eds) *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges Of Managing International Conflict*, United States Institution for peace press, Washington, 2001, pp 765-784