

Colombian PDET. A key strategy to build peace from below?

A case study of the vision of territorial peace of the PDET Montes de María.

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Abstract

In 2016 the Colombian State and the oldest guerrilla of Latin America 'FARC' signed a peace accord in order to end the 60 years internal conflict. As part of it, the Development Plans with a Territorial Approach (PDET) were created to promote territorial development, the effective enjoyment of rights, decentralization, and citizen participation. This paper investigates about the conception of peace contained in the theoretical model of the PDET, and explores about the different visions of peace in Montes de Maria. There are tensions that relate to unlike understandings of development, the local implications of the conflict and peacebuilding. Building peace require a territorial, ethnic, gender, and participation focus which should be vital features of for the PDETs.

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Abbreviations

ART: Agencia de Renovación del Territorio

CEV: Comisión de la Verdad

CINEP/PPP-CERAC: Technical Secretariat of the international component of verification

DANE: Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística

DIH: Derecho Internacional Humanitario

FARC: Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia

IAP: Participatory Action Research

LGTB: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

OPIAF: Observatory of citizen participation in the implementation of the peace agreement

PATR: Planes de Acción para la Transformación Regional

PDET: Planes de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial

URT: Unidad de Restitución de Tierras

ZEII: Strategic Integral Intervention Zones

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Chapter 1 Introduction

In 2016 the Colombian State and the oldest guerrilla of Latin America 'FARC' signed a peace accord in order to end the 60 years of internal conflict. The superposition and complexity of conflicts of different nature that characterise Colombian conflict imply that a fractured State has not been able to assure the rights of those who occupy the territory.

As a consequence, and as it has been exposed by Orlando Fals Borda (1962, 1963), and the Colombian Truth Commission final rapport (2022), the inequality, poverty and violence deeply relate to the 60 years of armed conflict. Years where political and social participation have been nearly inexistent and where the uneven distribution of land have triggered the invisibility of ethnic communities and the poor. In addition, sustainable development goals have not been fulfilled.

The final accord for the termination of the conflict includes 6 points that pretend to contribute to solve the causes of the conflict in order to achieve and build a stable and lasting peace. In this sense, the accord seek to integrate the territories that have historically been abandoned and excluded. As well, it recognizes the need to get the State to regions that have been forgotten, and to incorporate their people in its development. (Acuerdo Final para la terminación de la Guerra y la construcción de una paz estable y duradera, 2016)

The Peace Accord includes a *territorial focus*, without which 'a stable and lasting peace' cannot be fulfilled. It recognizes the economic, political, social, environmental, and cultural necessities, characteristics and particularities of different territories and communities. All measurements, policies, and actions that derivate from the Accord should contain and effectively be designed with a territorial focus. For this to happen, it requires a huge effort to achieve social participation.

Perhaps, the most important tool to achieve and put in practice the territorial focus are the Development Plans with a Territorial Approach (PDET¹). They promote territorial development, the effective enjoyment of rights, decentralization, and citizen participation. A territorial, ethnic, gender, and participation focus are vital features of the PDET.

Their purpose is the structural transformation of rural areas, to ensure well-being and development of the communities, and ethnic groups and the development and integration of regions affected by the conflict. They prioritized 170 of 1103 municipalities grouped into 16 zones. These municipalities were chosen based on poverty levels, unsatisfied needs, the degree of affectation by the armed conflict, the weakness of the State apparatus and presence of illegal economies.

The Colombian PDET was presented as an opportunity for participatory planning and governance, as a tool for *territorial peace*, that should be planned and implemented with a perspective from below. In this sense, it is relevant to wonder about the way they were built and implemented. Did their configuration respect and effectively put in practice the territorial focus?

1.1. Main Objective

The main objective of this study is to examine if the conceptions of peace of the Colombian PDET “Montes de María” relate to the territorial focus exposed on the Peace Agreement as a key element to achieve a lasting and stable peace.

1.2. Specific Objectives

- To investigate the conception of peace contained in the theoretical model of the PDET.
- To explore the vision/visions of peace from the different actors in the territory.
- To comprehend the creation, construction, and implementation of the PDET.

¹ From its acronym in Spanish: Planes de Desarrollo con enfoque territorial.

1.3. Research Questions

- 1.3.1. To what degree does the PDET Montes de María reflect the vision of peace that people have in the territory?
- 1.3.2. Which are the visions of peace from the PDET Montes de María?
- 1.3.3. How was the PDET Montes de María built?
- 1.3.4. Do the creation, construction, and implementation of the PDET Montes de María contribute to achieve the territorial focus exposed in the peace accord?

1.4. Problem Statement

Colombian peace process is a very recent event; and although Colombian conflict has been studied by many scholars, there is not much research about the implications of the implementation of its peace accord. In this sense, I consider useful both for academy and for Colombian society, to start reviewing what have happened with the process and its development. How has it been build and implemented? With which criteria? Has it been able to fulfil its main goals?

Studying a particular and very small part of the process, the PDET, could be useful for Colombia and the effective implementation of the accord. It could also contribute to the analysis and understanding of what peace have been understood as, and how peace processes cope with bottom-up strategies, participation, and decentralization efforts in order to achieve it. What does peace mean in practice for different actors?

There are tensions in the Montes de Maria area that have contributed to the armed conflict, and it should be interesting to research them, to comprehend how the intersect. Do they relate to the long history of conflict? Is the PDET able to mediate between them?

1.5. Study Area

From the 16 zones PDET, I am particularly interested in the Montes de María. This region is formed by 15 municipalities in 2 departments of the Colombian Caribbean Coast.

As recognized by the Colombian Truth Commission (2022) Colombian armed conflict implied a violent transformation of the territories, where forced displacement and dispossession of land are characteristic in many of the regions of the country, including Montes de María. Overall, the Gini

Coefficient per land is 0,92, poverty and inequality are vast problems in the national agenda and the effective reach of the State in the 16 PDET is still a challenge to overcome.

Based on the last National Census of 2017, there are 360.000 inhabitants in the region, of which 57,7% live in urban areas and 42,3% in rural areas. (DANE, 2018) Additionally, the indigenous Zenú are present in 10 of the 15 municipalities captured by the PDET, and the Afro- Colombian population is especially present in San Onofre (Sucre), Maria la Bajan and San Jacinto (Bolívar).

Based on information of the National Department of Planning (2014), people living under poverty in rural areas reach a scandalous 92,6%, and more than 80% of the population in all the municipalities under this PDET live in poverty. There are also 529,026 cases of displacement (Unidad para las Víctimas, 2023) and 7,036 land restitution applications. (URT,2023).

The Action Plan of Regional Transformation (PATR) of Montes de María (2018) exposes how the economic activities of the region are 41% agricultural, 5% cattle ranching and 48% forestry. 67,2% of the rural population have difficult access to water and 92,8% do not have access to technology for production. The monoculture of oil palm is predominant in the region. Afro Colombians and Indigenous Zenú and Embera Katío are representative in the region.

There are also many social, economic, political, and cultural tensions, that for example, Orlando Fals Borda (2002, 1962, 1963) expose. Some of them reflect on the decomposition of the peasantry, the exploitation of people and natural resources, the historical presence of paramilitaries and armed conflict.

The Alto Sinú has 5696 km and 60% of the rainforest of the whole department. Here is the “National Natural Park Nudo de Paramillo”, a natural reserve that houses one of the largest concentration of native fauna and flora in the northern South America (Corporación Autónoma Regional de los valles del Sinú y del San Jorge, 2023) The soils are high fertile and the Sinú and San Jorge rivers are born in here. These rivers are central water sources for the agriculture and people living in the region, and therefore key for the development of the conflict in the Montes de María. The control of the Nudo del Paramillo by illegal armed actors implied controlling water distribution for economic activities that benefit local elites and agroindustry.

The San Jorge (being the biggest subregion with 7455 km) and the Medio Sinú (5178 km) are extensive wooded areas with the greatest influx of water. They are characterized by deforestation, changes in the agricultural frontier, monoculture and livestock.

Chapter 2 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

In order to understand the visions of peace that people have in Montes de María, and question the way in which the PDET was build, I consider relevant to present an approximation to literature and theoretical framework that reflect about the conflict in Colombia; peace and territory; the PDET; an *epistemologías del sur* focus; and participation and decentralization.

Reflecting about different theoretical approximations of peace and conflict result important, since it give a broad theoretical framework about how peace could be achieved. Colombian peace accord enunciate a vision of peace from the territory, from the people; therefore, I further discuss about peace from below, and how it relate to decoloniality and the epistemologies of the south (*epistemologías del sur*).

The findings show that people associate peace with emergent agendas and understandings of development; with economic, social, cultural and environmental rights; and with diversity and plurality. Discussing how to achieve peace from below, from a decolonial approach, is part of the bet to show what people understand by peace. In this sense, I consider *epistemologías del sur* peace postulates key to reflect about peacebuilding from the territory.

In addition, discussing about participation and decentralization, and how they have been understood in Colombia is important to wonder about the scope of the peace accord, and especially the PDET, in the territory. If, as I will deepen later, participation and decentralization are key for achieving peace, how were they understood in practice in the construction of the PDET. What does participation means? How to effectively achieve it?

Furthermore, I explain lightly about the Colombian peace accord and the PDET, since I consider having an idea of what the PDET is and where it comes from important for both the discussions about peace and participation.

Lastly, is extremely important to discuss about the conflict in Colombia, why did it happen? How? Who played which role in its development? Understanding about the conflict in Colombia and its rural implications play a two way role. On one hand, it is important to understand where the PDET comes from, and how the end goal of the peace accord is to tackle causes and implications of the Conflict. On the other hand, the findings show that peace relates to solve the foundations of the conflict, and how it specifically affected the region. What happened in Montes de María relates to what have been theorized about the Conflict in Colombian and its rural implications, but also what people consider key for peacebuilding and to actually achieve peace relate to outstanding debts, violations of human rights through the many years of conflict, and affectations to the people and their territories. Building peace imply tackling these causes and implications.

2.1. Background of the conflict in Colombia

There have been different efforts to understand and explain the origins, causes and consequences of the conflict in Colombia; what are the principal causes and origins of the conflict, which factors contributed to its enlargement and what effects have it brought to Colombian society.

Some of the most important studies include the approximations of a radiography of ‘The violence In Colombia’³; the findings of the Historical Memory Centre⁴ and its report ‘¡Basta Ya! Colombia: Memorias de Guerra y Dignidad’ (2013); the book ‘Contribución al entendimiento del conflicto armado en Colombia’ (2015), that collects the individual interpretation of scholars that have dedicated their life to the understating of the conflict in Colombia⁵; and the findings of the

³The work of German Guzman Campos, Eduardo Umaña Luna, and Orlando Fals Borda (1962). These scholars are recognized as pioneers of the studies of the conflict in Colombia.

⁴A state institution that put together some of the most relevant academics regarding Conflict and Peace Studies in Colombia, in order to research about the causes, dynamics, impacts and affectations of the conflict.

⁵Such as Eduardo Pizarro Leongómez (2015), Víctor Manuel Moncayo (2015), Jairo Estrada (2015), Darío Fajardo (2015), Jorge Giraldo (2015), Francisco Gutiérrez (2015), Alfredo Molano (2015), Daniel Pécault (2015), Renán Vega (2015) and María Emma Wills (2015)

‘Colombian Truth Commission’ (2022) ⁶, created by the Peace Accord, with the goal of showing the voices of the victims of the conflict, as well as its causes, consequences and recommendations for non-repetition.

The explanations presented by the scholars relate to capitalist accumulation; a vision of development from above, with colonial interest; the consolidation of power of the dominant social classes; the difficulty of the State to hold the monopoly of the legitimate use of force and its lack of control in the territory; and the decision of the Colombian State to control instead of pursue participation.

Scholars agree on that the debate about the origin of the conflict imply: a multiplicity of causes and actors, a historical perspective and factors that contributed to the persistence of conflict. They will be approach next:

2.1.1. A multiplicity of Causes

All studies about the *conflict in Colombia* agree on a multiplicity of causes. This means that there is no simple explanation for the last longing confrontation, but on the opposite, a bower of complex tensions, actors, and factors, that contributed to the beginning of the conflict and its development and deepening.

There are two factors that scholars recognize as the most prominent influential in the conflict: How politics have been understood and performed; and the agrarian question. Molano (1995,2011,2015,2016); Giraldo (2015); and Fajardo (2015) argue that the excessive concentration

⁶Conformed by 11 commissioners in between social activists and social leaders, social scientists, human rights defenders, journalists, academics and members of research centers. The Commission carried an empiric research process for 3 years, based on the testimonies of more than 30.000 victims of the conflicts; 28 focus groups in all regions of the country; work with exiles in 24 countries; and information from different sectors of society. As a result, their final report.

of rural property, land grabbing and exploitation, lack of property titles, and very poor agrarian reforms (that actually have intensified land concentration and colonization) , kept contributing to the deepening of the conflict.

On the other hand, Pécault (2015) discusses, the coexisting of violence and democracy have characterized Colombian conflict.

2.1.2. A Historical Perspective

Without the understanding of what have happened through different periods of time, and how different actors have played a different role is impossible to identify causes and factors that have contributed to the deepening of the conflict. Long lasting conflicts, as Colombian, are not steady. On the contrary, they mutated trough time, and these mutations are crucial for its understanding.⁷

Colombian armed conflict characterises itself by the violent transformation of the territories, displacement and land dispossession. (Colombian Truth Commission, 2022)

As argue by Molano (2015), Escobar (2010) and Fals Borda (2001) these problematics relate to a colonial territorial model, that has its origins in *la Colonia* (Spanish colonization in Latin America) where land concentration was used as a political and economic valuta. Spanish colonization implied a sophisticated land dispossession and sacking of resources system, which has been inherited by landlords and local elites. This land dispossession and sacking of resources is associated with he forced colonization of natural resources, forced displacement and expulsion of farmers from the agricultural frontier.

Between 1920 and 1946 the civil elites had control of the military institutions, and the adhesion of the population to the two traditional political parties (Liberal and Conservative) generated the

⁷ Scholars as Guzmán, Umaña Luna and Fals Borda (1962); Fals Borda (1962, 1963, 1986, 2002 2009) Gutiérrez (2015); Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016); Fajardo (2015); Giraldo (2015); Wills (2015); and the studies of the Historical Memory Centre (2013) and Truth Commission (2022) have analyzed from a historical perspective Colombian conflict.

division between two political subcultures, where the elites adopted a liberal model of development in contrast with the popular mobilizations in the rest of the continent. From the 1930s, party violence excavated, and the communist party, that failed in its try to become a relevant political actor, was added to the liberal party. Liberals were associated with communism; military forces where highly polarized towards the conservative party; and an antiliberal trend from the Catholic church was put in place. This contributed to the explosion of *la Violencia*, an analytical category established by Guzmán, Umaña Luna and Fals Borda (1962) to explain the configuration of the conflict between 1930 to 1958, characterized by the intensification of land grabbing and political violence.

Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016), Guzmán, Umaña Luna and Fals Borda (1962), Giraldo (2015), and Fajardo (2015) have discuss trough their studies on how the killings, forced displacement and land grabbing against peasants and the rurality in Colombia in happen since 1929, and are key for the formation of guerrillas, and the period of *la Violencia*.

The victory of the conservative party in 1946 and the death of *Jorge Eliècer Gaitán* (A liberal politician that focused on the development of an agrarian and social reform) in 1948 triggered national social mobilizations and the establishment of *El Frente Nacional* (A political pact between conservative and liberal party between 1958 and 1978, where the stay in office alternated each four years). A period with special lack of political guaranties for participation.

From 1964, modern guerrilla groups where created. As Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016) and Gutiérrez (2015) describe, the long-lasting conflict relate to the recruitment of experienced people in past violent cycles. The ELN, EPL and FARC were created by old members of liberal guerrillas from the 20s.

In the 1970s, as in the rest of Latin America, guerrillas were almost extinguished (Giraldo, 2015). However, the incapacity of the State to achieve agrarian, administrative, tax and labor reforms, and

transform the countryside⁸; patronage as main mechanism of political co-optation; the expansion of coca plots in colonization areas and the agricultural frontier; and a high percentage of unsatisfied basic needs contributed to the resurgence of the armed conflict.

The Overthrow of Allende in Chile in 1973, the triumphant Nicaraguan revolution and the new military doctrine in USA product of the cold war made the guerrillas think about the impossibility to reach and hold power via democratic means, and instead contributed to the upsurge of violence. Not just groups were reactivated, but also drug cartels and paramilitary groups came into the picture. FARC is the guerrilla that grew the most, with 4 fronts in 1974 to 8 in 1978 and 24 in 1982. 1000 men in weapons were active by this time. (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2013). From 1980 the drug expansion and paramilitarism have played a key role in the development of *the conflict in Colombia*. From this period, the higher rate of violations of human rights have been committed.

2.1.3. Actors

As the subchapter of historical perspective have tried to sketch out, the scholars and studies that have theorized about *the conflict in Colombia* coincide in periods of time and actors in those. From 1920, the guerrillas, and the traditional political parties *conservador* and *liberal* have been the main performers in the development of conflict.

Between 1964 and 1980 scholars agree on that the rise of the guerrillas and the focus on their weakening by military forces/ the Colombian State characterized the period. After 1980, and until the negotiation with FARC in 2014, there seems to be an aggravation of the conflict. The Colombian Truth Commission (2022) and the Historical Memory Centre (2013) argue that the irruption of paramilitarism and third opportunist (political agents, criminal organizations, national and international companies that used the conflict for their own benefit); limitless resources from drugs and kidnaping and extortion, made the conflict even more complex and ruthless.

⁸ Molano (2015) argue that the resistance of landlords and the reinforcement of colonization contributed to this.

Pécault (2015) discusses how paramilitarism started with the intention to combat guerrillas, then mutated to economic objectives, especially accumulation of land; and political objectives, such as local power control and access to the congress. Gutiérrez (2015) argues how paramilitarism is key to understand the extension of the conflict. This phenomenon cluster the support of four significant agents: legal rural elites, illegal elites (mafia), political sectors and members of the security agencies of the State. Not just him, but different scholars share the thesis that, without of the incursion of paramilitarism, the conflict would not have last that long.

2.1.4. Factors that contributed to the persistence of conflict

Different factors have contributed to the persistence of the conflict, however the influence of narcotraffic; institutional precarity; inequality in the countryside; and mixing the conflict with politics are essential to understand why the conflict lasted so long. I will subsequent explore about them:

2.1.4.1. Narcotraffic and war economy

The studies of different scholars⁹ show that since the emergence of paramilitarism, drugs have played an important role in financing the conflict. Paramilitaries had an active role in drug trafficking, as well as creating strategies to dominate resources product of narcotraffic, while guerrillas benefited from drug taxes, by collecting taxes from drug cartels that had interference in the territories under their control. Drug economy established links between local and national elites¹⁰; a narco-politic local and regional power; and had a huge impact in regional economies, that from being weak, saw as an alternative the involvement in coca leaf and marihuana farming.

⁹ (Moncayo, 2015; Estrada, 2015; Pécault, 2015; Wills 2015; the Colombian Truth Commission, 2022) and the Historical Memory Centre, 2013)

¹⁰ In order to be more decentralized, these alliances happened. More autonomy required more resources. An example of this is the *parapolítica*, where the paramilitary structure infiltrated the legislative power in different levels, from the local to the national.

In addition, kidnaping and extortion were key strategies for financing and recruitment by the guerrillas.

2.1.4.2. Institutional precarity

Giraldo (2015) explains how a weak Colombian State translates into inefficacy to obtain resources for the operation of the public institutions; the size and quality of public force¹¹; a lack of infrastructure in order to effectively integrate the territory; and a weak capacity of the justice apparatus, which translates into own hand justice.

2.1.4.3. Conflict in Politics

From the legislative advance in the democratization of the political system in 1991, systematic killings of political leaders that were accused of “supporting the enemy” by different armed actors happened.

The transfer of national resources to the local and regional spheres, caused principally paramilitaries, and in a minor role, the guerrillas, to try to achieve control over royalties. In this sense, pragmatic and ideological alliances between local and national politicians and high rates of political assassinations occurred.

2.1.4.4. Continuum of agrarian disparities

Based on the work of various scholars¹², I argue that agrarian inequality relate to processes of land concentration; the constant expansion of the agricultural frontier; illegal occupation; and articulation between political power and the acquisition of land. The attempts to achieve an agrarian

¹¹ That on the contrary to popular believe, was very low until the first time in office for Alvaro Uribe. This phenomenon helps to explain the need to privatize security, one of the causes of paramilitarism.

¹² Guzmán, Umaña Luna and Fals Borda (1962); Fals Borda (1962, 1963, 1986, 2002 2009) Gutiérrez (2015); Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016); Fajardo (2015); Giraldo (2015); Wills (2015); Pécault (2015); Pizarro Leongómez (2015); Moncayo (2015); Estrada (2015); Gutiérrez (2015); Vega (2015) and Wills (2015)

reform in the past have contributed to the continuity of the Status quo and the colonization via the expansion of the agricultural frontier.

Agrarian disparities continued due high levels of insecurity in land tenure, many informal proprietaries, lack and insecurity of the few land property rights of women, indigenous and afros; complex and inaccessible administration of land system; lack of information, excess of political and administrative centralization, lack of credit mechanisms; land conflicts and lack of alternative mechanisms to resolve them; resistance from political and economic groups, and lack of a legal framework.

2.1.4.5. Vicious circle of violence

A characteristic of long-lasting conflicts is that it end up aggravating the socio-economic conditions of the people, deepening the institutional precarity and weakening the citizen trust. Violence generate new conditions for more violence. Giraldo (2015) explains how armed groups closed the possibilities for local democracy and offered the only opportunity for surviving and recognition for young population.

2.1.5. Effects and impacts on population

The reports of the Colombian Truth Commission (2022) and the Historical Memory Centre (2013) are key when recollecting the voices of the victims of the conflict. They calculate more than 11 million victims, where rural population has been the most affected. Displacement, dispossession of land, and death are synonyms of Colombian history.

Kidnaping, extortion and recruitment of minors were some of the strategies used, that sadly impacted the population on different levels. For Colombian people, the guarantee of human rights have been broken a long time ago, and selective homicide and massacres; crimes against sexual freedom and integrity; enforced disappearance and mines were the day-to-day bread. The amount of people affected on many different levels is uncountable and incorrigible. Strategies towards

justice, non-repetition, reparation, and truth must happen if Colombian society wish to overcome the vicissitudes of the conflict.

From a sociological perspective, the affectations in society, are also incalculable. Social capital and communitarian ties have been broken or fractured, and the trust in the institutions is pretty much inexistent. Systematic killing of members of the political parties, massive killing of demobilized and the assassination of social leaders have created distrust in the political system, but also in democracy and participation. As Fals Borda (1962) suggests, the conflict have fissured the Colombian social structure, which keep deepening poverty and inequality, especially in peasant sector.

2.2. Rural Implications of the Conflict

The rurality in Colombia is the most affected by the conflict. The *peace accord* acknowledge this, and therefore, create the PDET as tools to tackle problematics in the countryside. What are these?

As I have pointed out, land distribution and the abandonment of the countryside have been both causes and consequences of the Colombian conflict. The circular process of rural impacts and implications means that the abandonment of the rural world and the concentration of land in a few hands have strongly influenced the development of the conflict; but at the same time the persistence of the conflict has exacerbated inequality, poverty and neglect of the countryside.

As explained in the *background of the conflict in Colombia*, contribution from Colombian scholars as Fals Borda (1962,1963,1986,2002), Estrada (2015), Fajardo (2015), Molano (2015) and Vega (2015) explore the history of Colombia, and the implications and origins of the conflict. They have discovered as causalities: land accumulation, concentration of land ownership, lack of opportunities, human rights violations and forced displacement.

Based on the work of several Scholars¹³ I argue that the rural world is where the conflict had greater prominence, and therefore more visible consequences. The land tenure structure, the agro-industrial economic model and weak institutionality are factors that have contributed to poverty and inequality in the rural world. In consequence, between 1980 and 2010, 434.100 families were forced to abandon, sell or 'gift' more than 6 million hectares. Around 7 million people have been displaced in Colombian, and 7 million hectares have been stripped. (Ropero Beltrán, 2015; Villamizar, 2020).

Ropero Beltrán (2015), Chavez (2018), Villamizar (2020), and Berman Arévalo & Ojeda (2020), recognise that more than 60% of the rural population live under conditions of poverty and more than 20% live under conditions of extreme poverty. Additionally, the Gini coefficient of land in Colombia is 0,8%, being one of the most inequal in the world (Villamizar, 2020).

The researchers point out that the rural implications of the conflict relate to land and natural resources accumulation, the expansion of agricultural frontier trough privatization of public land, an unequal socioeconomic structure, the consolidation of power relationship between elites and a market-led distribution of land.

In a rural country, where just 7,6% of the land use is for agriculture (Villamizar, 2020), the hegemonic control of illegal armed groups of the rural areas, the incapacity of the state to be present in the territory, a development model that privilege big capital inversion over agriculture and the dispossession of land are common causes proposed by the authors findings.

¹³ Villareal Escallón (2020), Ropero Beltrán (2015), Chavez (2018), Villamizar (2020), LeGrand, Van Isschot & Riaño Alcalá (2017), Berman Arévalo & Ojeda (2020), McKay, B. (2018). and Nieto Alemán, García Alvarez Coque. Roig Tierno & Mas Verdú (2019)

Colombia have tried to implement an agrarian reform¹⁴. However, it have not been able to effectively tackle the structural problems of Colombian countryside. On the contrary, these policies have contributed to the maintenance of the status quo and the expansion of the agricultural frontier, mostly through privatization of public land. This is explicative factor for the connection between violence and land use and distribution. (Villareal Escallón, 2020)

The failure of agrarian reforms relate to the influence of rural elites, that have historically protected their interests over land grabbing and accumulation, and control over the agricultural market, in the formulation of agrarian policies and the incapacity of Colombian State to recognize collective rights, protect human rights and territorial rights, and offer a fair access to land to peasants and ethnic minorities.

Paramilitarism has also caused implications in Colombian conflict. Berman Arévalo & Ojeda (2020) argue how paramilitary control applied through massacres, sexual violence, torture, forced displacement and confinement served the implementation and expansion of agroindustry in the country. An example are of this is the oil palm extractive project in the Montes de María.

More recent studies, such as those from LeGrand, Van Isschot & Riaño Alcalá (2017), LeGrand, Van Isschot & Riaño Alcalá (2017), show how land inequality and insecurity keep being on the scope. They are linked to dispossession, tensions between peasants and the agro-industrial model, such as mining corporations, the challenges of the implementation of the peace process, and the continuation of illegal actors' incursion in the territory. The challenges are vast in a country where there has not been an agrarian census in 50 years and 50% of the peasant population who have no titles to their fields have not gotten recognition; and the demands for recognition of collective rights keep being unresolved.

¹⁴ Trough the law 200 of 1936; land Act of 1936; Social Reform between 1961-1974; Law 30 of Amnesty 1988-1993; Law 60 of 1994-2002; and the Comprehensive Rural Reform of 2016

More recent empirical studies have recognized and argued about the connection between the inequality in the rural world, the exacerbation of the conflict and ecological implications. Berman Arévalo & Ojeda (2020), Krause (2020), Genoud (2021), Murillo Sandvoval, Gjerdseth, Correa Ayram, Wrathall, Van Den Hoek, Dávalos & Kennedy (2021), and Unda & Etter (2019) explore how deforestation, extractivism and forest degradation have implication for the environment, but also for the populations in the territories.

The scholars call attention on how ecological problematics have been exacerbated after the signing of the peace accord. The conflict has led to the expansion of agricultural frontier, land concentration, forest cover change and occupation of strategic ecosystems of illegal actors, that fight for territorial control with the State and the agroindustry.

Krause (2020) for example, emphasises on how the rates of deforestation have been increasing with post conflict. From 2001 to 2015, where one of the lowest of Latin America to 0,17% in 2015 and 0,52% in 2017. The explanation relate to how the authority and control of FARC in the territories. Colombian State has not been able to occupy the void left by FARC in certain areas of the country, which have led to landlords, new colonizers, the agroindustry, and illegal actors to enlarge their landholdings and indulge land speculation.

Genoud (2021) also studies ecological consequences after the peace accord and concludes that palm oil is another agro-industrial factor for ecological annihilation. Colombian government has supported the expansion of the palm oil industry over the country and local politicians have been complicit with land grabbing practices conducted by paramilitary groups in order to integrate land into the agro-industrial market, including the palm oil sector.

2.3. Colombian Peace Accord

Considering that the conflict in Colombia have its foundations in land problematics, a lack of political and citizen participation, inefficiency of the State, and war economies; that there are

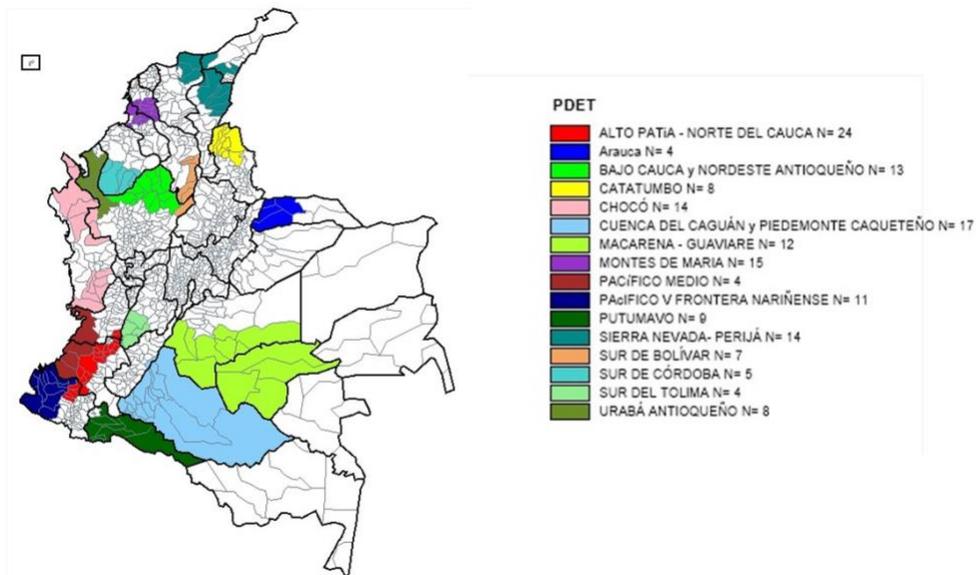
millions of victims; and that the countryside has been the most affected scenario of confrontation, the General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace (signed in 2016 between Colombian State and FARC) contains 6 points, created with the purpose to tackle the problematics that caused the conflict in Colombia.

The points 'End of the Conflict and Implementation of the Agreements' contain operative measurements, ceasefire and the reinstatement of FARC. The point 'Rights of Victims' contemplates measurements towards truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition, recognizing the victims of the conflict as key actors to achieve peace. The point 'Solution to Drug Problems' recognizes that illicit drugs have affected many poor regions of the country and have served as a media to finance the conflict; so it propose alternative substitution plans and a different understanding to the consumption of illicit drugs. The point 'Political Participation' proposes measurements towards the effective participation of people in politics and decision-making. And the point 'Agrarian Development Policy' establishes measures for the well-being of the people who live in the Colombian countryside. The PDET are a key part of this point.

In addition, an 'ethnic chapter' recognizes that ethnic population have faced historical conditions of injustice, exclusion, racism, marginalization, and poverty and have also been seriously affected by the armed conflict. So this, it defines that their self-determination, autonomy, participation and consultation should be put in practice when developing all the points of the accord.

2.4. PDET

Understanding that mayor causalities and challenges of the conflict relate to the rural problematic, the point 1 of the Colombian Peace Agreement 'Towards a new Colombian countryside: Integral Rural Reform' proposes the participatory planning tool 'Development Plans with a Territorial Approach (PDET)'. This is an instrument for *territorial peace* and *peace building* with the challenge of achieving the structural transformation of the countryside, based on the needs of the territories, and recognizing the rural implications of the conflict.



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The PDET are proposed as tools for the construction of territorial peace and the transformation of inequities, violence and poverty that have characterized various territories which have intensely experienced the consequences of the conflict. They must promote territorial development, the effective enjoyment of rights, decentralization, and citizen participation. All this with participatory planning; and a territorial, ethnic, and gender approach. (Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace, 2016).

The PDET prioritize 170 municipalities, which were the most affected by armed conflict¹⁶. A methodology of pillars was proposed by the Territorial Renovation Agency (ART)¹⁷ for the development of the PDETs. These were: 1. Social Ordering of rural property and land use; 2. Infrastructure and adequacy of land; 3. Health; 4. Rural education and early childhood; 5. Rural housing, drinking water and basic rural sanitation; 6. Economic reactivation and agricultural production; 7. System for the progressive guarantee of the right to food; 8. Reconciliation, coexistence and construction of peace.

¹⁵ National PDET Map, elaborated by the Observatory of the Peace Agreement Participation Tasks (OPIAF)

¹⁶ Based on the criteria of extreme poverty, unsatisfied basic needs, degree of affectation by the conflict, weak institutionality and the presence of illicit use drugs or war economies. (Decreto 893 de 2017).

¹⁷ The institution of the State in charge of putting the PDET in practice.'

They have the purpose of structurally transform the countryside, ensuring well-being and good living, protecting multi-ethnic and multicultural wealth; the development of the peasant and family economy and the forms of production of the peoples, communities and ethnic groups; the development and integration of the regions abandoned and affected by the conflict; the recognition and promotion of rural women's organizations; and making the Colombian countryside a scenario of reconciliation.

The construction of the PDET is very recent, and its implementation is still in process. Civil society organizations and the entities in charge of the verification of the implementation of the agreement, such as the Observatory of citizen participation in the implementation of the peace agreement, the Kroc Institute and Technical Secretariat of the international component of verification CINEP/PPP-CERAC, have identified opportunities, challenges, and difficulties, both in the participatory construction process, and the implementation of the PDET. However, there is little academic sources regarding this territorial development plans.

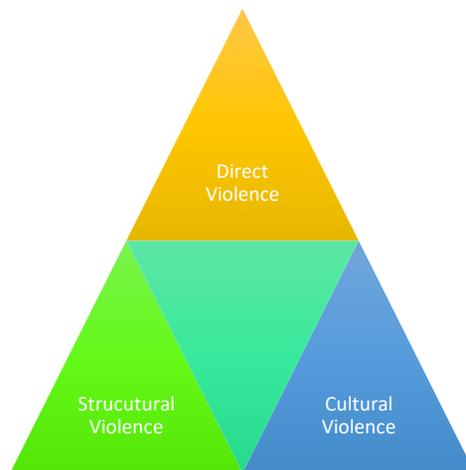
Scholars as, Sánchez Iglesias & Sánchez Jiménez (2019) and Medina Bernal (2018) agree with the reports of the verification bodies. The territorial focus of the PDET present opportunities to plan from below if the decentralization and participation focus are key in the process. Yet, the empiric evidence suggest difficulties regarding the quality of the process. Specifically: concerning the methodological design used in all 16 regions (which brings crucial questions about the recognition of territorial differences); the relevance of political interest playing an important role in complications towards the construction process; and a clash between development models proposed by communities, ethnic groups, and peasant organizations and the extractivist model from the national government.

2.5. An approximation to the peace and conflict theory

In order to wonder about the PDET as a tool for *territorial peace* and *peace building* is necessary to discuss what this research will understand by peace and conflict. Peace studies have been a key

field for social science. There are many approximations and theories that relate to conflict studies and peace. How to achieve peace? How to understand it?

The postulates of Johan Galtung are central for the understanding of peace and conflict studies. Galtung (1969,1996,2003), gives a first approximation of how violent conflict is negative for society, and respond to structural, cultural, and direct spheres. So, this, in order to build peace, is necessary to tackle all 3 dimensions of conflict. I argue based on the work of Galtung (2003), and other scholars¹⁸ that building peace imply a long process, where economic, social, and political transformations, and different actors must work together in order to reach it.



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According to Galtung, direct violence is explicit violence, and its expressions can generally be physical, verbal, or psychological. Structural violence is about violence intrinsic to the social, political, and economic systems of each State. Finally, cultural violence is “those aspects of culture, in the symbolic realm of our experience (materialized in religion and ideology, language and art, empirical sciences and formal sciences – logic, mathematics – symbols: crosses, medals, crescents, flags, hymns, parades military, etc.), which can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence” (Galtung, 2003, p. 62)

¹⁸ Guarín (2016); Chaves (2011); and Calderón (2009)

¹⁹ Diagram of violence proposed by Galtung (2003). Elaborated by the author.

Based on this classic theory of conflict, to solve a conflict it is necessary to work on the three dimensions previously discussed. First, it is essential to eliminate direct violence; secondly, that the State commits itself to strengthening social institutions and resolving historical debts with the populations throughout the national territories to reduce and subsequently eliminate structural violence and finally work to eliminate cultural violence, that by having roots in everyday life, result the hardest to eliminate.

In this sense, Galtung's theories suggest that the first step to end a conflict is to eliminate direct violence, which ultimately means ending the armed confrontation between the parties. For Colombian Peace Accord, keeping a priority to the ceasefire and bilateral hostilities is an example of this. Immediately afterwards, the State must commit to solving structural problems. In the case of Colombia, the Final Agreement for the termination of the armed conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace presents solutions in terms of land, political participation, and drugs. Finally, it is necessary to work on cultural violence, that is, the ways in which we act, feel, and think.

Now, if only direct violence is eliminated, but structural violence and cultural violence continue to manifest themselves, there is negative peace, since, although the way in which the conflict is most visible has been eliminated, the violence that is not manifest still exists. Positive peace is achieved when direct violence, structural violence and cultural violence have been eliminated. That is to say, when all the violence that is variable for the maintenance of the conflict has been eliminated. (Galtung, 2003).

Another popular theory used to solve conflicts around the world is liberal peace. Scholars such as Mac Ginty (2010), Cruz (2020), Fontan (2013), Volker Boege, M; Brown, A & Clements, K. (2009), and Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013) have conceptualized and criticised the idea of liberal peace, as one of the principal referents in international peace processes. Liberal peace became a popular approach to conflict after the cold war, and it's been associated with the concept of *negative*

peace developed by Galtung (1969, 1996,2003). In this sense, the interventions of liberal peace, relate to technocratic solutions, ethnocentrism, and in the end, respond to the interest of the global north (Mac Ginty, 2010) that don't tackle structural problems or consider multiples actors as agents in the peace building process.

As a consequence, hybrid peace has come to light, as the way in which different actors and processes play an important role in peace building. For Mac Ginty (2010), hybrid peace imply the interaction between liberal and globalized powers and mechanisms and its core elements (security, stabilization, democratic governance, and the extension of the free market) with the agency of local actors to participate, resist and adapt to create networks and include their agendas and interest in the bigger panorama.

On the other hand, the studies of Lederach (2004) bring an understanding of conflict that cares about the local actors, and how they have experienced and being impacted by it. As well, he explores the importance of the collective knowledge and the recognition of the social character of conflicts.

From a critical perspective, scholars as Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013), Cruz (2018), Fontan (2013), Sandoval & Capera (2020), and Martínez Guzmán (2000) recognize how from the global south there are other perspectives and theoretical approximations to peace and conflict studies. For some of them, it is about decolonizing peace.

So on, from the perspective of the *epistemologías del Sur*, peace is a concept full of hegemonic and colonial burdens. For Fontan (2013), the way peace is applied in the south rely on the idea of the south saving himself from himself, in order to achieve the economic, politic, and cultural standards from the north.

In this sense, there is a need to deconstruct the paradigms of the peace studies, and therefore, starting to recognize the ways in which the local build and understand peace. As Cruz (2018) recognizes, building peace from Latin America imply building peace from below, from the *epistemologies of the south*. These ideas are deeply related to the focus of building from below; to a local and territorial approach to peace; to a decolonial perspective of peace and from *epistemologías del sur*.

Additionally, Sandoval & Capera (2020) recognize in their empirical studies that peace is a socio-cultural construction process, where people understand and overcome differences, it's a process that should be build based on respect and deliberation. As I will discuss in the *findings and analysis* section, this did not happen in the Montes de María PDET.

From the empirical research about forest change (clear and loss) in a post-conflict scenario in Colombia, Murillo-Sandoval, Gjerdseth, Correa- Aymar, Wrathall, Van Den Hoek, Dávalos & Kennedy (2021) have concluded that peace is not an event or state, it is a process, where powers and interests should be negotiated in order to create valid solutions. Peace can't be achieved by following a step by step procedure, since it involve complex and diverse political, social, economic, cultural and environmental relations, that are unequal from place to place. Peace is a process, that require time and understanding of differences and particularities. In the Colombian case, after 60 years of intensive conflict, achieving peace imply a challenging and long process.

Following this perspective, Fontan (2013) and Martínez Guzmán (2000) explore an approach to peace from the *epistemologías del sur*, rejecting class, gender and ethnic prejudices. For them there is a need to conceptualize peace from an epistemological turn, celebrating intersubjectivity; participant observation; knowledge build between subjects; science build from togetherness; and a different relation with nature.

This imply an understanding of the differences (humans have many different ways of doing things), and a recognition of multiple identification processes, ergo of diversity. The epistemological focus should not be just on reason, but on the contrary, on a multiple comprehension of feelings and reasons.

Following these ideas, I argue that making peace imply different complex processes that relate to class, gender, geographic and ethnic axis. Building peace from below in Colombia, imply rethinking the territories, with a decolonial perspective, and with a strong and effective participation component.

2.6. *Epistemologías del sur*

For this study, peacebuilding in Colombia should be approached from the *epistemologías del sur*. The south epistemologies are a theoretical, epistemological and methodological approach that recognizes that knowledge, practices and economic, political, social, cultural and social relations in the global south have been constructed based on ideas and notions from the global north. Scholars as De Sousa Santos (2011), Escobar (2003, 2007) Fals Borda (2015) and Quijano (2000) argue that colonialism and imperialism impacted the way that practices, beliefs and acts are understood in the global south, forging structures of power and ideology and reproducing alienation, domination, and exploitation.

Escobar (2003,2007,2010), Girola (2008), López (2009), Cardoso & Faletto (1977), Fals Borda (2001, 2009) and Quijano (2000) are key to comprehend development and modernity from the parading that question Eurocentric principles (domination, secularization, order, control, discipline). It explore a different understanding of social reality, from an altered political, cultural, social and economic imaginary.

Quijano (2000), for example, analyses the coloniality of power and the configuration of global capitalism. The role of Latin America as a raw material producer is part of the core of the historical

model of control of labour, resources and products, where based on the categories of race and class, hierarchies and a social structure have been created.

The studies of Escobar (2010) in the Colombian pacific region put in perspective the importance of decolonialize the understanding of locality and territory. What he calls *place* invites to rethink about how economic, ecologic, cultural, political, social and economic perspectives are constructed and experienced in different ways on different geographical areas. For him, the understanding of *place* relates the recognition of *place* as the opposite to *global*, implying that globalization try and has tried to suppress differences existent on the local, so on, of the cultural knowledge of indigenous and Afro Colombians (*afrodescendientes*).

Coloniality imply thinking that all territories are equal, and can be treated in the same way. Based on the studies in the Pacific region of Colombia, Escobar (2010) has discovered how the local is associated with tradition, and an inability to development, while the historical processes of capitalist accumulation and sustainable development strategies relate with the global, ergo with progress. This process have excluded the knowledge of indigenous and black people, but also the ways in which conflict is processed and solved in the local.

It seems as in order to build peace from below, the bet should be to focus on the territories of difference, so in the ecological, cultural and social formations of places and regions. (Escobar, 2010).

The aim is to understand knowledge as a construct. As a collective, multiple construction, caused by different nuances, and historical processes that must be studied, analysed, understood and even transformed. The task of science involves recognizing such constructions in their methodological and theoretical-practical systems, praxis, framed in cultural, political, economic and social systems. The bet is to build knowledge from this particularities, from the territory.

Understanding peace from an *epistemologías del sur* focus imply understanding that the traditional or liberal paradigms of peace, widely used in the world, are built with a conceptual framework from the north that do not respond to the contextual reality of the South. I argue, based on the findings of this research and the work of Fals Borda (2001) and other scholars²⁰, that peacebuilding should on the other hand, recognize the diverse and unequal geographical, cultural and historical contexts; the projects and visions of territory and development from the people; the historical debts of the State in the territories; the particular causes and implications of the conflict; and the clashes between the interests of those that have traditionally hold the power and visions of peace.

2.6.1. *The Myth of development*

A key element for *epistemologías del Sur* is the discussions about development. What is development? Is it possible to think about development from the South?

Based on the ideas of Escobar (2003) and Fals Borda & Mora (2001) I argue that development has been historically related to strategies of colonialism and imperialism that have impacted differently the global north and south. On this matter, development has been associated with prosperity and progress in the global north, while in the global south it has shown patters of alienation, domination, and exploitation.

The history of development relate how the European economic, political, geographic, and also religious colonialism influenced the way we see and behave in the world. This notions have set practices, beliefs and acts in order to forge structures of power and ideology. In this respect, development could be understood as a process where lives, plans, hopes and imaginations are shaped by what the global north conceive as ‘developed’. These practices, beliefs and acts could be translated into the production of gods, the mastery over nature and the importance of technology as a structure of power and ideology. (Tucker, 1999)

²⁰ Escobar (2010); Fontan (2013); Martínez Guzmán (2000) ; Sandoval & Capera (2020); Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013) and Cruz (2018)

This idea of development, extremely connected with dependency has in the end shaped the notions that people have of the world, the imaginaries about history, modernity, urbanization, and science. (Tucker, 1999; Girola, 2008)

An example of this is the model of development in Latin America between 1950 and 1960, where based on the international division of work established by the Marshall plan, the role of producer of raw materials was given to Latin America, while USA and Europe were in charge of production and industrialization. (Cardoso & Faletto, 1977) and Prebisch (1949). It has been recognized by many scholars that this distribution of international industrial functions influenced the poor economic performance of Latin America countries, as well as accentuated poverty, poor work conditions and the neglect of basic needs.

For Quijano (2000) the postulates of Prebisch are useful in order to analyse the configuration of global capitalism, due their importance in identifying how the role of Latin America as a raw material producer is part of the core of the historical model of control of labour, resources and products. For decolonial theory, global capitalism -profoundly connected to 'development'- was, is, and will be colonial and eurocentered.

On the other hand, as recognized by Tucker (1999) the influence of development in culture is strongly related to the idea of modernity. However, 'modernity' has historically been related to practices and relations of inferiority and superiority between dominant and dominated. Quijano (2000) argues how gender and race has been the most effective and long-lasting term instruments of social domination. "Race became the fundamental criterion for the distribution of the world population into ranks, places, and roles in the new society's structure of power." (Quijano, 2000, p, 535).

The findings show that in Montes de María, the influence of *the myth of development* indicate that agro-industrial and extractive projects, such as the palm oil and the mining industries are seen as synonym of progress and development. In reality, they imply historical conditions of inequality, exacerbated by the conflict.

2.6.2. *Peace from below*

Unlike the colonial thinking that propose all territories as equal, and peace as an homogeneous process, the postulates of the *epistemologías del sur* invite us to consider the understanding of peace building from the understandings of indigenous, local, ancestral, social movements, and ethnic perspectives. Cruz (2018) and Fontan (2013) have theorized and understanding of *peace from below*.

One of the most important flows in traditional approaches to peace is the lack of recognition to local and ancestral understandings of peace. Identity, race, feminism, subalternity, are subjects that have been in the eye of what local organizations and communities relate to peace building.

The main idea of building peace from below is simply to recognize the conceptions of peace that arise from social struggles, ancestral communities, border projects, migrants, and refugees, between others. Peace is contextual and embodies situated knowledge; is in constant dispute and creation and require dialogue between different projects. (Cruz, 2018).

Decolonizing peace imply recognize the local approaches to peace. Peace should not have to be built according to values and the understanding that are not owned by the communities. It also means looking for new ways of empathy with the local, recognizing not one or two possible peace, but different, multiple and heterogeneous peace that is nourished by the local. It involves overall a process of looking from below, and a recognition and effective involvement of those of which peace is for. (Fontan, 2013).

2.7. *Territorial peace, a decolonial approach?*

Based on the findings and the discussions above about peacebuilding, I argue that a different understanding of development relate to territorializing peace, to approaching peace from a decolonial view. Following the hypothesis of critical perspectives of peace discussed above, I argue that if *peace* is something that should be constructed from the local, from the territories. The idea of *territorial peace* is key in the comprehension of the possible understandings of peace and how to build the territory.

One of the guiding principles to make The Final Agreement bet for territorial peace happens is the territorial approach, which recognize and consider the economic, cultural and social needs, characteristics and particularities of the territories and communities, guaranteeing socio-environmental sustainability. This approach imply implementing the different measures in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, with the active participation of citizens. (Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace, 2016).

When proposing changing the structural transformation of the countryside, trough the PDET, the Peace Agreement set *territorial peace* as a condition. To meet this challenge, action plans for regional transformation are proposed, in order to build the roadmap that the territories must follow in terms of implementation. These must consider the historical, social, environmental, cultural, and productive characteristics of the territories, as well as their needs. They must be developed in a participatory manner.

Scholars such as Harto de Vera (2018); Restrepo & Peña (2019); Sanchez, Gallardo & Romero (2017); Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013); and Hirblinger & Simons (2015) suggest the importance of local actors in peacebuilding, and how a challenge to achieve peace imply building from below, giving protagonist to those that inhabit the territory.

Based on the research of the scholars mention above, I argue that visions of peace from the territories can be different and multiple, and consequently building peace from below imply recognizing local agencies and agendas, and how inequalities and conflicts have happened differently in diverse territories. Planning from below should be a multiple, diverse and reality/needs conscious process where particular variables of particular territories drive planning activities. (Fals Borda, 2009; Garzón, 2014) In this sense, territorial peace imply a process where, with a planning from below approach, peace building happens.

In this sense, in order to achieve peace, I believe that it is necessary to consider that i) peace and territorial development are closely related, that is, the sustainability of peace depends on the territories; ii) development is not only economic, it refers to human development, which implies the effective enjoyment of rights, especially of vulnerable populations; iii) each territory must be treated according to its needs and particularities; iv) the territorial approach must prevail over the sectoral one; v) decentralization must be strengthened; vi) the debt owed to rural territories and peasants must be recognized; vii) there is a need of commitment to citizen participation - in terms of expression of freedom and decentralization -which implies mechanisms of deliberation, agreement and collective construction.

Sanchez Iglesias & Sanchez Jiménez (2018) and Lederach (2017) support these arguments, recognizing that peace must be built from the territories, not from above. Territorial peace requires an understanding of peacebuilding as a multidirectional constructed process, where everyday practices matter. Territorial peace imply recognizing plurality and the autonomy of the communities to decide over their territories, with active and effective participation, agency and reterritorialization.

As a fruit of the regional meetings for peace, held in 12 regions of Colombia in the second half of 2014, peace in the territories implies deactivating armed violence; the disarmament of daily life in the territories; better educational and infrastructure conditions. That is, an effort to build better structural conditions and non-violence against women and ethnic populations. "The understanding

of peace as the end of violence incorporates a preventive/educational dimension that involves the new generations in the sense of teaching them methods and non-violent practices of conflict transformation" (Red de organizaciones impulsoras de los Encuentros Regionales para la Paz, page 8)

As I have been arguing, peace is a long-term process, through which conflicts can be transformed by peaceful means. This implies generating democratic conditions to solve the problems that gave rise to the conflicts, and also the consequences of these. It imply economic, political and social transformations, that reflect the commitment of the State with the elimination of social injustice and territorial inequality. Peace must be understood as the full validity of human rights and the possibility of integral human development. "Peace is a path, a dialogue process where a just order is reconstructed, living conditions are improved and solidarity exists. The horizon is a new country that requires efforts at various levels: personal, family, community, local, regional and national" (Regional Meeting for Peace- Magdalena Medio, Red de organizaciones impulsoras de los Encuentros Regionales para la Paz, p. 8)

In addition, the recognition of plurality and respect for the autonomy of the communities in decisions about the life of the territories contribute to building peace. This implies a differential thinking, which requires adapting and creating differential solutions and processes to the diverse populations, the various sectors and the multiplicity of territories that are part of the country.

Peace building must include levels of specificity, according to the particularities of the populations, sectors and territories (both locally and nationally), as well as mechanisms that allow it to be achieved. Decentralization and participatory planning, result key in the process; but also, the elimination of violence.

As it was stated in the Regional Meeting for peace, organized by organizations in the Montes de María "Peace is a long-term construction that requires new codes of ethics and relationships that

make it possible to overcome the conflicts that arise from the overlap of various development models" (Regional Meeting for Peace- Montes de María, Red de organizaciones impulsoras de los Encuentros Regionales para la Paz, page 9)

2.7.1. Territory

In order to understand the importance of *territorial peace*, it is necessary to explore what this research will understand by *territory*, and why, a territorial approach is key for the development of peace in Colombia.

Based on the postulates of (Montañez, 2001; Mignolo 1996; Santos, 1997; Delgado, 2001 Giménez, 1999; Jacanamijoy, 2001), I argue that *Territory* is a social construct charged with symbols, configurations of tensions, with multiple complex political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental relations that are configured in a geographic space. At the same time, *territory* is a space where identification processes happen. Where particular forms of agency and understandings of social relations occur.

The word territory is derived from the Latin *térra* and *torium*, which together mean the land that belongs to someone (Montañez, 2001), which invite to think about the relationship between land and communities, and therefore affirm that constructions in relation to land are essential for social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental relations.

As Walter Mignolo argues, socially we build an entity called "we", an entity that is situated in relation to a space - delimited by geographical and chronological borders - and a shared tradition, that is, to a territory. (Mignolo, 1996).

From a social geography approximation, "space is a complex system, a system of structures, subjected in its evolution to the evolution of its own structures" (Santos, 1997, p. 16); This shows

that space is in constant transformation, that it mutates on a complex system of structures, and that these structures themselves have the capacity to transform and be transformed by the system and social relations. For Benjamín Jacanamijoy (2001), from an indigenous perspective, territory represents an essential space for the construction of languages, rituals, customs, arts, practices, and collective memories.

In this sense, the concept of *territory* is useful to understand that social reality is mutable, alterable. Therefore, social relations must be understood as something that can be produced, deconstructed and reconstructed. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1997).

I suggest that *territory* is the social transformation of space, understood as the consolidation and transformation of complex social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental relations. Accompanied by a shared tradition, a set of appropriations, and the conformation of collective memory. The territory is always in constant change and transformation, and contain processes that enable change, transformation, and appropriation.

2.8. *Participation and decentralization*

Participation is a key element for the formulation and development of the PDET, since it recognize that without it, peace budling is not possible. Scholars such as Ligarreto (2018), Bobbio (1996); Phago & Molosi-France (2018); Kapoor (2002); Mohan & Stokke (2000) and Appadurai (2001), suggest the need of communities as part of the decision-making process in order to change their socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental conditions. Participation strengthen democracy, good governance and facilitate bottom-up development interventions. So, on, participation implicates that social agents are part of the decision-making process, implementation, and evaluation. The assumption is that the closer the government is to the people, the better it understands and deals with necessities and the guarantee of rights.

In this sense, as Pike, Rodríguez-Pose & Tomaney (2017) and others²¹ recognize, localities have a huge impact in development, and consequently, planning processes should be built from and with the communities.

Participation as a concept has been understood in multiple ways, from approaches that seems it as a mere formality or a mean to justify authoritarian decisions to an effective participation, where agents are part of the decision-making process, implementation, and evaluation.

The effective participation approach is based on the assumptions that the closer the government is to the people, the better it understands and deals with necessities and the guarantee of rights. Participation contribute to decentralization, where government improve accountability and accessibility to the decision-making process to the people. In this matter, participation implicates that communities are involved in the decisions that may affect them, as well as governments priorities, mandate, vision, budget, and planning mechanisms. (Phago & Molosi-France, 2018)

The work of Kapoor (2002) explore, based on his analysis of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), that participation implicate strong theoretical basis that in the end define the way the governments and actors of development and planning recognize the role of the people in the decision-making process.

For Kapoor (2002) PRA, defined as a practical methodology, that advocates local knowledge, the inclusivity of marginalized groups, induced methods and techniques from social work for people to take control over their own development, lack a critical and theoretical basis. PRA present gaps regarding the legitimacy of the participation process; explicit procedures and rules to cover interactions; a gender approach; and mechanisms for reaching consensus and questions about power.

²¹ Rodríguez-Pose (2018); Appadurai (2001); Mohan & Stokke (2000); Bevir (2009) and Phago & Molosi-France (2018)

I would like to rise attention on the question of power. For Kapoor (2002) PRA present a voluntarist solution to power and dominance, suggesting behavioural training in order to change the structures of power, hence, power is related to individual change. This conception misses arguments regarding the relations between power and knowledge, the link between structures of power with the complex historical and material process of colonialism, as well as the implications of it in the cultural, social, economic, environmental, and political spheres with strong repercussions on the way that planning, and development have been understood over the years.

The critic of Kapoor (2002) to the way PRA conceive power and participation are of great importance here. The notion of effective participation proposed by many of the scholars used for this thesis understands that participation not just mean the physical interaction of communities with government. On the contrary, it implicate a political position, where participation is a means and an end (Phago & Molosi-France, 2018). Participation as a means implicates that communities are part of the decision-making process in order to change their socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental conditions; and as an end it fingers the importance of participation to “strengthen democracy, Good governance and facilitation of bottom-up development interventions” (Phago & Molosi-France, 2018, p. 743)

Participation has also been used as a means to achieve control. This usually imply that governments don't see it as a key component to improve the way the government reaches and build together with its citizens. On the contrary, I argue based on the data recollected, that participation has been used as a simple requirement to fulfil, or as a tool in order to make believe that civil society has a saying in the decision-making progress.

On the other hand, the work of Mohan & Stokke (2000) present considerations regarding local participation and both its importance and challenges for development. For them, participation challenges the centralization of the top-down state and helps to shift the market domination in local and regional decisions to a broader conception of development.

Effective participation implicate challenges regarding questions of political power, accountability, internal and external environment (Phago & Molosi-France, 2018), promotion of transparency, lack of a regulatory framework, implementation, and weak local governments participatory structures. (Kapoor, 2002)

As it has been said and based on the work of the scholars regarding participation, it is possible to recognize that local participation can be used for different political purposes and can either deconstruct power relationships or reproduce the status quo. As Mohan & Stokke (2000) identify, there is a need for critical analysis regarding local and regional participation, as well as a ‘global sense of place’ composed by social, cultural, political, environmental and economic relations and flows that must be taken into consideration in the participation process.

2.8.1. Participation and decentralization in Colombia

As recognized by Sánchez Iglesias & Sánchez Jiménez (2019), Medina Bernal (2018) and verification bodies²², the PDET imply a participatory and decentralised process, that could challenge the way planning has been traditionally happening in Colombia. Therefore, this section is about relevant findings concerning the state of art of participation and decentralisation in Colombia.

Colombian State have try to consolidate a decentralised and participatory planning system. After the Constitution of 1991, and its recognition of participation as a right and duty, a participatory planning approach has been the bet and challenge for the State. In addition, the law 1757 of 2015 stablish measurements towards citizen participation. The law includes actions in relation with referendum, revocation of mandate, accountability, and participatory budgeting. (Hurtado Mosquera & Hinestroza Cuesta, 2016)

²² Such as the Observatory of citizen participation in the implementation of the peace agreement, the Kroc Institute and the Technical Secretariat of the international component of verification CINEP/PPP-CERAC

Participation is a key democratic principle, that should be a significant axis of development plans. It gives agency to people in order for them to decide the road they want to take; strengthen the State; helps to reconfigure the public; create better public management and contribute to democratization and governability. (Hurtado Mosquera & Hinestroza Cuesta, 2016; Ligarreto, 2018; Velásquez, 1995)

The history of participation and decentralization in Colombia is marked by a vast normative framework, that if put in practice correctly, could bring relevant results. However, the empirical evidence presented by Velásquez (2010), Asela Molina (2015), Maldonado (2010) and Rengifo (2012) suggest that even though there have been efforts towards decentralization and participation, including measurements, policies and actions towards participation, participatory budgeting and accountability, the territorial reality is complex and challenging.

Based on the literature review, I argue that Colombian State has not been able to recognise the different territorial dynamics that must understood and processed in order for decentralisation and participation to happen effectively. Furthermore, no fiscal decentralization, a centralised model of royalties, a lack of serious measurements or policies in national development plans and the absence of political will are important challenges when thinking about participation and decentralization in Colombia.

In this sense, the Peace Accord present both opportunities and challenges for participation and decentralisation. As pointed out by Gehring, Barberena & Restrepo (Ed.) (2014), the Peace Accord offer an infinity of possibilities to achieve decentralisation and participation. However, challenges relate to including new actors in the territorial planning process, as well as the locality and territoriality and the necessity to effectively account for the public policy created by the agreement.

Ligarreto (2018) and Rodríguez Iglesias & Rosen (2022) coincide in that PDET are a core participatory tool created by the agreement, but also to achieve the measurements and actions of the agreement. The PDET have an enormous emancipatory potential, however, they face an immensity of challenges. Are they able to challenge the model of hybrid peace, and its colonial background? To face the lack of trust of the communities, the tradition of broken promises, the centralist patterns of planning?

Chapter 3 Methodology

To research about peace in Colombia is a complex process, where different tensions and historical problematics should be understood. As I have discussed in the theoretical framework, the PDET, as a tool of participatory planning had the challenge to tackle causes and implications of the conflict, but also to comprehend and put in dialogue what people understand by peace.

The findings will show how the conflict was experienced in particular ways in Montes de María, and how it relates to negligence of Colombian State to guarantee basic needs and human rights; tensions between visions of development; and the complicity of actors to guarantee historical relations of dominance. In this sense, they will show that conflict and peace are comprehended and experienced in a particular way. The methodology proposed understands that the visions of peace in the territory are specific, and therefore should be studied in particular. I consider a qualitative approach key to achieve this, since (as I will deepen later), it allows me to get people's ideas and proposals.

I argue, based on the work of Fals Borda (1985) and Deleuze & Guattari (1997) that the social world is diverse and multiple, and that the actions, emergent agendas and wishes of the communities and organizations are key for peacebuilding. The methodological decisions keep those principles in mind.

3.1. Research context and field work

This research was conducted in the North of Colombia, in the department of Córdoba between February and March of 2023. In order to conduct the research, I contacted old acquaintances from my old work in Colombia.

Between 2016 and 2019, which happened to be a key period in both the signing of the *Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace* and beginning of its

implementation. I worked in an NGO of national character that focused on building democracy and protecting human rights. As part of my job, I worked hand by hand with local leaderships in the consolidation of local peace agendas and in the participation process of the PDET in different municipalities of the Caribbean Coast; as well as carrying out political incidence in the national sphere in order to achieve effective participation towards the building and implementing of the peace accord.

Due this past experience, I had the possibility to contact both social leaders in the local sphere, members of NGOs of national character and government officials that either worked in the development of the PDET between 2016 and now, or are currently working towards the construction of territorial peace in the Colombian Caribbean Coast.

In addition, this document contemplates information collected from the building of regional peace agendas in the Caribbean Coast in order to influence the National Development Plan 2022-2026 “Colombia, world power of life”. These activities, conducted by human rights and peace platforms were useful for me to approach social leaders, and collect information about the construction and development of the PDET Montes de María; but also about what communities want in order to achieve territorial peace. These exercises were extremely useful for me to get insights of the meanings and understandings of peace from the territory.

Before doing the fieldwork, I had the intention to visit at least some of the municipalities that compose the PDET Montes de María. I spoke with former colleagues and old acquaintances in order to arrange the fieldwork. However, I was advised otherwise. I was recommended to always be around members of NGOs that had presence in the territory, and to try to do fieldwork based on the activities planned already by them. It seems like the security conditions in some of the historically abandoned municipalities of the country, which naturally relate to the PDET, are critical, both for those that inhabit the territory, but also for those that are invited in.

The people that kindly participated in this research, have either been part of the process of peace building and PDET construction in the territory, because they actually are those who inhabit it, have suffered the vicissitudes of the conflict and fight for achieving peace; or because they are committed to the achievement of the peace process in different levels.

The participants of this research include:

-Members of national and local NGOs that have been involved in development and peace building in the country. These organizations work towards building democracy, the guarantee of human rights and the defence of the victims of the conflict. Their historical work have included working towards the elimination of violence in the territory; the protection of social leaders and communities; and achieving peace, by empowering local organizations, social leaderships and communities and being bridges between the communities and the State. After the signing of the Colombian Peace Accord in 2016, all of them have focus their work on assuring that this is fulfilled, either by doing pedagogy with the communities and in the territories; building local agendas of peace; doing lobbying and political pressure; or by verification and monitoring.

-Social leaders that either represent organizations and communities from the Montes de María region or that work in the whole Colombian Caribbean Coast. Their historical work focus on land restitution; defence of the victims of the conflict; woman, LGTBIQA+ and indigenous rights. They have been working in the development of territorial peace in either the municipalities or in the Caribbean Coast as a region. These leaders have also participated in the start-up, building, and following of the PDET of Montes de Maria and keep working towards the consolidation of peace in Colombia.

Social leaders are perhaps the most important group for my research. Their insights, opinions and propositions reflect historical problematics in the region, but also the conditions that people require in order to achieve territorial peace. Their brave work from times in where the conflict escalated and was extremely violent; to times of paramilitary control, fear, and pain (due killings, forced displacement, disappearances); or times of peace; imply that they have the knowledge and

experience about how the conflict has happened; the PDET and its participatory process; but most importantly, what people and the territory required in order to achieve long lasting peace.

-Government officials that have been involved in the development of the PDET as a tool for territorial peace. They either worked for the administration of the former president Iván Duque or are currently working in the territory with the administration of Gustavo Petro, in institutions that have a key role in the implementing and start-up of the PDET such as the Territorial Renovation Agency (ART) or the Land Restitution Agency (URT); or in institutions working towards the rights of victims and the achieving of truth, justice, reconciliation and guarantees of non-repetition, such as the Truth Commission (CEV).

Their perspective is important to understand about the planning process of the PDET, the national methodology proposed by the State in order to develop them; but also, about how the current government confronts challenges and problematics in the territory.

3.2. Epistemological foundations

Knowledge is not build from a single truth. On the contrary, based on the postulates of Fals Borda (2008) I suggest that it respond to different visions of the world, and the contextual understandings based on social, political, cultural, and economic problematics.

I also share what is proposed by different scholars of the *epistemologías del sur*, as De Sousa Santos (2011) when formulating that the world is broad and complex, and that its' progressive transformation can occur through multiple paths, practices, and territorial appropriation, which implies that the diversity of the world is infinite, and that includes very different ways of being, thinking, feeling, and conceiving human and nature relationships.

Understanding that social reality is changing, transmutable and variable implies that the structural, political, economic, social, and environmental changes occur as a network of flows, vectors, and nuances and that relate to a multiplicity of causes and relations. So this, I consider that in order to build peace is extremely important to recognize the knowledge, needs and emergent agendas of the people. This is the only way to achieve territorial peace in the country.

In addition, from the idea of *reflexivity*, a deeper understanding of the complexity of the context were relationships must be built between researcher and the participants is key. The critical constructivist and the historic realism parading are useful to recognize the existence of multiple realities, constructed by different economic, political, social, and cultural relationships. (Valles, 1999; Guba & Lincon, 1994; Guber, 2004)

Lastly, I identify with the ideas of Valles (1999) when from the constructivist critical paradigm, recognizes the existence of multiple realities, constructed by different economic, political, social, and cultural relations. The context and history of Montes de María imply that the participatory construction of the PDET was going to be challenging (due economic, political, and social relations, that I will explain in the findings) and that in order to understand what peace means I had to take into consideration tensions, powers, unequal relations, and economic interests.

3.3. Qualitative approach

As Sampieri (2010) proposes, a qualitative methodological approach has advantages regarding the study of subjectivities, subject-subject relationships, and the capacity that they have to consolidate processes of agency, construction, and reconstruction of social relations. I chose a qualitative methodology since it allow depth, historical contextualization, interpretative richness, as well as details and unique experiences.

Studying about peace and how people perceived the PDET in the Montes de María mean that I had to grab different perspectives, understandings, and positions about how to build peace, what to

focus on, with whom and how. I am convinced that a qualitative approach, and qualitative techniques were indicate in order to collect different perspectives in the territory.

The dichotomy of qualitative and quantitative methods has been central in the social science debate, generating ruptures and divisions between numerical analysis and statistical methods and the approach to reality based on specificities and subjective realities. This imply debates about the way in which knowledge is reached, methods and reference frameworks.

The qualitative method is very important when it comes to interpreting and interacting in social science, since it gives a vision of the symbolic reality in which the objects of study are developed. It allows to establish interactions between that who investigate and those who are investigated. The researcher do not separate from reality, because this is an inherent part of the knowledge building process.

If that/those that we study are linked to social reality; and their interactions build and change it, a qualitative approach is the only way to understand it. In the Montes de María region, peacebuilding imply recognizing that there are economic, political, environmental, social, and geographical factors that made people and the territories experienced the conflict in particular ways, and that consequently, for them peace means specific things.

Following a qualitative approach, (based on interviews, participant observation and focus groups) allowed me to get a historical perspective of the conflict in the region; the perspective of social organization, social leaders, NGOs with presence in the territory and government officials about how the PDET was carried out; and what is important to achieve territorial peace.

Following Bryman's (2016) postulates, from interpretivism and constructionism, the qualitative approach seek to find explanations to the social phenomena, where the interpretation of the social

world is based on the comprehension of deeper complex relations. I believe that without a qualitative approach, I would not have been able to understand that people's projects, emergent agendas, and historical fights are key to build peace from below.

3.3.1. Historical analysis and causal imputation

From a sociological perspective, history is useful to question how social reality has been or currently is transformed. So, this, a historical analysis, (which is based on content analysis and the data about local implications of the conflict recollected) is necessary and pertinent to better understand the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and political causes that have led to the conflict in Colombia, and how their historical understanding contribute and relate to the considerations of peace and the development of the PDET.

I consider comprehensive sociology, the postulates of Max Weber (1917, 1996) and its causal imputation relevant to recognize that history as a transversal axis of scientific research, in addition to understanding how the multiple causes are essential for social reality. Causal imputation implies understanding the causes of the phenomenon to be studied. Social phenomenon should be explained from multiple causes, loaded with context and history.

In practice, the implications and causes of the conflict in the Montes de María greatly relate to what people expect peace to be. Human rights violations, historical unsatisfied basic needs, the problem of land and paramilitarism, gender, and the tensions between extractive and alternative development models are factors that have been present for a long time in the territory. For social leaders, organizations, and NGO members, it is impossible to build and achieve peace without recognizing these factors. I, therefore, consider causal imputation relevant in order to recognize that the causes and implications of the conflict in Montes de María are part of understanding what for people peace from below means.

3.3.2. *Epistemologías del sur focus.*

The *epistemologías del Sur* paradigm goes beyond theoretical considerations. Fals Borda (2001) Escobar (2003) and Quijano (2000) recognize that the classic duality of qualitative and quantitative methods imply and influence of European and North American study tendencies that have not been critically confronted. In consequence there are problems when explaining and interpreting the complex problematics from the south. These paradigms do not respond to the contextual reality of the South since they were initially consolidated for the explanation of other contexts. "Scientific frames of reference, as the work of humans, are inspired and based on specific geographical, cultural and historical contexts." (Fals Borda, Mora (2001). Pág.7)

Based on these scholars proposes, I argue that knowledge is a collective multiple construction, caused by different nuances, and historical processes that must be understood or even transformed. Do we study phenomena from a positivist, Eurocentric approach, or do we intent to take a more participatory role, in which we trust the opinions and perspectives of those that kindly are part of our reseach?

An *epistemologías del sur* focus imply rethinking what studying social reality means. In practice, it implies considering horizontal relations in which informants play a key role. It also means to keep in mind power relations put into practice into economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental relations.

Fals Borda's studies about Colombian Conflict in different regions of the conflict (1985,1986, 2002, 2008) show that knowledge should be built with the community, and that Building from the territory imply historically and contextually recognizing the problems of the regions and the different initiatives to solve it. As the findings will show, my considerations about the development of the PDET and the participation of social organizations and communities in it; and what peace means are the result of conversations I had with key actors in the territory, and my participation in dialogues between them.

3.4. Data collection techniques

In order to put in practice the qualitative approach that I have proposed above, interpretive observation, interviewing and focus groups were the techniques chosen. I believe that these techniques respond to the research objectives, the epistemological postulates raised at the beginning of the methodological framework, as well as to the corresponding paradigm. Likewise, these techniques work in harmony between each other. The analysis of results is based on methodological triangulation between them.

3.4.1. Semi-structured interviews

The technique that I consider most relevant for my research was semi-structured interviews. They allowed me, as pointed out by Bryman (2016), to get flexibility, while focusing on the point of view of the interviewed perspective; and ask new questions, change the order, or omit questions in order to get rich detail answers. They were key to provide insights of how research participants experienced the participatory process of the PDET, as well as relevant factors for achieving peace.

In order to conduct semi-structured interviews, I contacted some of my old colleagues (both from national and local NGOs), and acquaintances from organizations that I met due my previous work in Colombia. They put me in contact with key actors in the territory and offer themselves to be part of this investigation. Overall, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with social leaders from the region; members of national and local NGOs that currently work in the territory; and government officials from the present administration. As Guber (2004) reflects, interviews are an observation tool capable of understanding representations, notions, ideas, and beliefs. Participants were essential to identify perspectives about the implementation of the PDET, as well as commitments and their progress, tensions, and possibilities; visions of peace in the territory; how participation have been understood in Montes de María; and the general state of the participatory tasks contain in the peace accord.

Additionally, I formulated an interview guide that contemplated the development and start-up process of the PDET, both in more general/national perspective, as in a specific territorial view; the participation process of communities in its building; obstacles and advantages of the process and questions related to the particular views of peace and how to achieve peace from the territories. The guide was useful to establish conversation with the interviewees, but also help me to focus the questions and the interview process in order to answer to the research questions and objectives. However, the proximity and confidence that offered having a relation with the majority of the interviewees beforehand presented advantages to keep a more relaxed environment for the interviews, allowing them to have a natural flow.

I took the decision to use semi-structured interviews because of their ability to combine structure and flexibility. They allowed me (depending on the interviewee) to change the order of the questions or formulate new ones, without compromising the reliability or validity of the process. Qualitative interviewing is flexible and adjustable and responds to reading the context and each of the interviewees. (Bryman, 2016).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews offer advantages from both unstructured interviews and structured interviews, where the process of establishing an interview guide offers a set point where the researcher establish key questions and subjects in order to tackle the research questions, but also is able to avoid or formulate new questions, if necessary, depends on how each interview develops. (Bryman, 2016; O'Reilly, 2016).

The flexibility of this particular type of interviewing was important to catch the different views and perspectives of social leaders, that inhabit the territory and have experienced the conflict first-hand, and therefore are those that know what is needed in the territory. NGOs members offered a more general perspective and relations between the national panorama and the local problematic; and government officials that had insights about the PDET planning process.

3.4.2. *Participant Observation*

In the beginning of the planning process for my master thesis, I was considering focusing in one of the fifteen municipalities contained in the PDET Montes de María. My initial thought was to follow closely what happened there with the participatory process, how was the calling, how did the organizations and communities feel and act towards the PDET. As I mention above, in the *research context and field work* section, this was not possible due security conditions for both potential participants and me.

However, due my former work in Colombia, and my proximity with some national NGOs and local organizations, I had the possibility to actively participate in some of the collective exercises proposed to build regional peace agendas in the Caribbean Coast in order to influence the National Development Plan 2022-2026. My participant observation in these activities allowed, as Valles (1999) mention, to get involved in activities concerning the social situation and observe the situation in depth. This contribute to studying tacit micro and cultural aspects , the experience from inside and outside and the systematic record that emerges from that experience (Valles, 1999).

From a sociological perspective, observation is one of the most relevant tools, due to its efficiency to recognize social behaviours, analysis variables and social relationships. Thus, participant observation represents not only an exercise in recognition of the phenomenon, but it also implies an exercise in participation, in this sense a subject-subject relationship.

I chose participant observation since its relate and complement to other techniques, such as interviews and focus groups. Specifically, observing these exercises was useful for me to ask more informal questions about how people perceived the peace process in general; and the PDET participatory process (if they felt identified and included with it, and if the PDET could contribute to achieving peace). I also had the opportunity to get together with old acquaintances (social leaders and NGO members) which became informants in the interviews.

I believe that participant observation was important for my research, since it allowed me to reconnect with old acquaintances, remember the ties that we build in the past and regain confidence towards me. As pointed out by O`Reilly (2016) in order to conduct participant observation, a link between the researcher and the group should be build, since getting access to diverse groups, is key in order to observe the way they behave and interact. My participation in these activities helped to build trust and for social leaders to get used to me, which was also crucial for the interviewing and the focus groups.

Additionally, the idea of conducting participant observation, instead of just observation imply in a first place the epistemological focus that recognize relations subject-subject in the reseach process, but also due the potential of participant observation to “learn things from the “natives” point of view” (O`Reilly, 2016, pp. 96).

3.4.3. Focus Groups

Due to my participation in the building of regional peace agendas in the Caribbean Coast in order to influence the National Development Plan 2022-2026, I had the opportunity to propose to some of its participants the possibility to be part of focus groups. I wanted to take advantage of their specific knowledge about the construction of the PDET and peacebuilding agendas to explore in depth how was the process, its advantages, and challenges. Focus groups are a relevant technique due their advantages in order to generate of ideas, creativity, flexibility, speed, dynamism, group interaction and spontaneity (Valles, 1999), but also in order to identify how individuals discuss issues as members of groups. So, in how people respond to each other’s views and perspectives. (Bryman, 2016).

In total 4 focus groups where conducted. Three of them counted with the participation of local leaderships of organizations that inhabit the territory, and one of them counted with the participation of members of local and national NGOs. The purpose of these focus groups was to get insights of how the PDET was built in the municipalities, and how was the participation process

on them. Additionally, they were useful to comprehend visions of peace from the territory. However, they provided interesting data beyond the PDET process.

In contradistinction to the semi-structured interviews, that provided detail account of how was the PDET participatory process, and how to achieve territorial peace; the focus groups with participation of social leaders offered data regarding local implications of the conflict, such as a the land problematic and tensions between the development model and emergent agendas.

In the beginning I consider focus groups due the possibility to study collective perspectives, constructions, and senses of a phenomenon; as well as that I could get different perspectives and insights when people often argue or challenge each other's views (Bryman, 2016; O'Reilly, 2016). In practice, they allowed me to grasp worries about the security conditions, the need to tackle unsatisfied basic needs; and that peace means respecting differences and celebrating the diversity and plurality in the territory.

Ibanez, (2003) advises to formulate focus groups thinking about its participants, duration, size, and analysis. I kept this in mind and assured that the participants had appropriate knowledge about the PDET process and peacebuilding. Participants have been relevant in the construction of peace and represented communities and organizations that have been trying to build peace for a long time.

For focus groups, the approach should not be structured, on the contrary, a small number of questions or very general questions should be formulated to help guide the conversation. In this sense, I simply proposed large themes (peace in the territory, peace from below, participation and the PDET) and moderate the conversations, allowing the participants to freely state their opinions or discuss the opinion of others. Researcher intervention simply was to help keep track of the general subject of the focus group, which in some cases was the PDET, its construction process and following up; or challenges and advantages to achieve territorial peace.

3.4.4. Content analysis

I consider content analysis relevant to contrast the perspectives and opinions of individuals regarding the PDET building process, and its relation to territorial peace building with a general/national approach of the implementation state of the peace process and the PDET as tools of territorial peace.

So on, content analysis of reports both from local and national organizations, and from verification bodies were key to get a general picture about the state of the implementation of the 16 PDET and to set an initial perspective for a more focus analysis. But also, to contrast and question the national perspective of the relevance and development of the PDET and participation in the Peace Accord, with the visions and opinions of people that actually inhabit the territory.

Content analysis was in this sense useful and interesting to understand how some of the advantages and challenges while building the PDET were recognized in a national level, while others were not. In concrete, the informs of the Kroc Institute, The Organization of American States (OAS) and the International Verification Component CINEP/PPP-CERAC were key for the comparison and joint analysis.

In addition, the informs of the Observatory of citizen participation in the implementation of the peace agreement (OPIAF) about the state of the participatory tasks proposed by the peace accord complemented the information obtain by members of NGOs and social leaders about how social participation has been understood both from a general perspective and in the development of the PDET Montes de María.

3.5. Ethical considerations

A thorough and thoughtful ethical consideration is maybe the most important element when planning a research project. The principles of *respect, good consequences, fairness, and integrity*

must be considered before and through the research process. Making sure to take the appropriate measurements in order for participants to feel comfortable, and conscious of their participation on the research is essential.

Researching about Colombian Peace process and specifically about the actual scope of the implementation of the Peace Accord is both necessary and pertinent. There is a social responsibility with those that inhabit the territories part of the PDET, and that somehow have expectations or hopes with the development of territorial focus development plans. This research hope to provide elements for the understanding of the setup and implementing of the PDET, that may be useful for the continuation of the process. Additionally, wondering about the understanding/understandings of peace, and researching about what could peace be understand as, could be useful not just for Colombia, but also, for other societies that reflect about conflict and peace.

Doing social research imply a social responsibility with those that are being researched, and therefore, the duty of the researcher to be clear with the participants about the objectives, scopes, methodologies, and the use of data is something that should be achieved. The informed consent is a key tool to achieve this.

This research has the NSD approval, and I declare that for this research, research questions and objectives, and a suitable methodology have been chosen in order to assure quality in the results and process. Additionally, *impartiality, integrity, confidentiality, anonymity* and *good reference practices* are being put in practice to guarantee that the research follow ethical principles and considerations, and that the security of its participants is guaranteed.

3.6. Challenges faced.

I consider two main challenges faced during the investigation. The first one relate to the scope of the research, and my position towards the research subjects. As expose before, mostly all the people involved in the fieldwork process were old acquaintances of mine. The position that I had when I

established a relationship with them was determined by my capacity to influence and bring their preoccupations and initiatives to a governmental level. I have consider from the beginning of the research that coming back to work with them could generate a different expectative in the participants, than the one of a researcher for a Master thesis.

For me, it was very important that the participants knew that the interest of the reseach is mostly academic, and that even though it hoped to give elements that help to take actions in the development of the PDET, the scope of the reseach is not to transform the conditions in the territory per se.

Secondly, it is important to assess the security conditions of the participants and for myself. Social organizations and national communication media have been denouncing that since the signing of the Peace Accord the killings and disappearances of social leaders have been increasing. Particularly, in the beginning of 2022, the numbers increased significantly, and 50 social leaders were killed in less than 3 months (El Espectador, April 5, 2022; EL País, February 3, 2022; OpenDemocracy, April 20, 2022).

Although the majority of cases are in the departments of Antioquia and Cauca (Indepaz, October 19, 2022; Pares, October 7, 2022; Caracol Radio, October 21, 2022), security conditions for the participants of the reseach had to be achieved.

As a positive factor, the Congress of Colombia approved on October 26 the public policy of *Complete peace (Paz Completa)* that present mechanisms and actions for the defence and safeguard of social leaders in Colombia, as well as the negotiation of peace with the criminal bands that are presumably responsible for the killings and disappearances. This new political context, that relate to the triumph of the democratic candidate Gustavo Petro in the last political elections and to the majority of the Colombian congress in pro of the achievement and implementing of the Peace Accord present opportunities for the killings to stop.

In the moment of the fieldwork the *Paz Completa* policy was still in process, and even though social leaderships saw it with good eyes, the security conditions were still problematic. As exposed before, I was advice to not travel alone, be very careful at night and always by around members of NGOs with certain legitimacy in the territory.

I had the impression that the members of the organizations with which I had contact were laxer about their own security, since as some of them explained, they have been in the territory for a long time, during many different difficult periods and nothing had happened to them yet. However, for me it was very important to established measurements to guarantee their security.

Due the high security risks for social leaders, anonymity, confidentiality and transparency about the roles and responsibilities were established. The identity of those that decided to participate in the reseach was secured, both in the publication as well as in other forms of dissemination. (The Norwegian National Research Ethics Committees, 2021) Information has therefore been handled in a way that remove the connection with the participants, their gender, age, geographical location, organization affiliation or personal description. Data has been treat confidentially, after informed consent and agreement with the participants.

On the other hand, I recognize the methodological limitations of using interviews and focus groups as the main source of information. I share the ideas of a qualitative approach with an *epistemologías del sur* focus, that acknowledge that observing practices would be better to understand the notions of peace from peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people and the economic, politic, social, cultural an environmental relations in and with the territory. In that case, an anthropological focus or an participatory action reseach (IAP) focus (Fals Borda, 1985) with participant observation as the main reseach tool would be ideal for a richer analysis, and for exploring what territory and peace means for organizations and communities deeply. This was not possible due time and security (both for me and my participants) conditions.

Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis

4.1. Local Implications of the conflict

Historical analysis is key to understand what the participants of this research understand for peace. For each of them, peace is only going to be achieved when the causes and affectations of the conflict are acknowledged and tackled. Their reflections towards the building of the PDET Montes de María and how to achieve peace relate to historical causes and facts that date from the beginning of the 1900. As shown in the theoretical section of the *background of the conflict in Colombia* and the *rural implications of the conflict*, problematics such as poverty, institutional abandonment and inequality relate to how the complex long lasting conflict has left traces and created sores that have deepened the problematics in the region.

Overall, informants recognize how the local implications of the conflict relate mostly to land distribution, corruption in the institutions of the state and the strong influence of paramilitarism in territorial control and how armed conflict was experienced in the region. This section will explore what participants recognize as implications of the conflict. I consider this key to comprehend the different visions of peace from the territory and the proposals made by social leaders in the participation phase of the building of the PDET.

4.1.1. Land Problematic

Montes de María is a region where the influence of Spanish colonization in land management and distribution is clearly visible. For as long as the social leaders from the territory can remember, land conflict has existed, and their perspective is that landlords or local elites, with a historical control and power over land and the institutions of the State have managed to acquire land by both “legal” and illegal means. This including either collaboration with institutional actors (placed in office by these local elites), or in complicity with armed actors, more specifically, paramilitaries. A social leader reflects that “for land, we have fought forever...Since I have memory, politicians

and businessmen have illegally appropriated our land... The hardest thing was when the paramilitaries were here. Most of us had to run and lost everything we had”.

The strategic geographic location of the region made Montes de María a desired area for armed actors. In the 1960s guerrillas had control of the Alto Sinú and San Jorge, that historically never counted with institutional presence. In the 1980s, drug dealers installed themselves in the area, especially in Zona Costanera, to export drugs, and then the paramilitaries arrived at the area, in 1997. One of the most experienced leaders remember how armed actors have been present in the region for a long time, and how they have played an important role in how the territory is comprehended. Territorial control and unequal land distribution are consequent with the history of the region, and the territorial reconfiguration caused by the armed conflict deepened the conditions of inequality and exclusion.

These observations confirm the thesis of Gutiérrez (2015), Fajardo (2015) and Giraldo (2015), which agree on that the conflict in Colombia has strong roots from the 1920s, and that the localized violence and inequality have mainly affected the rural populations and led to a configuration of armed actors in the territory, which is deeply related to the problematic of land in the region. As evidence by the interviewees, land accumulation and concentration of land ownership have affected deeply the rurality in the Montes de María.

These thesis are also supported by the empirical evidence shown by Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016) that indicate how the fight for land and the bipartisan violence (between conservative and liberal parties) implicated tensions in the agriculture (by forced displacement, land abandonment or theft of land, and killings of peasants), a deep disorder in the forms of appropriation of waste land, a weak legitimacy of property titles, and the concentration of the rural property.

For the scholars, the State did not seek the redistribution of land, but rather the control of peasant mobilizations. Private armed groups (such as paramilitaries) have been a lever for the expulsion

and displacement of peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian peasants from their territories to develop agroindustry in the countryside.

As a consequence, the social and territorial order caused by the incursion of armed conflict in the territory excluded most of the population to have access to land, territory, and equal access to politics. Even though the region counts with a strong peasant and indigenous tradition to fight for their territory, the crushing weight of war over more than 60 years have had an effect over the resilience of people. Fight for land in Montes de María is not just a matter of farmers. Drug dealers and paramilitaries sought their control as a strategic asset for illegal business.

As Molano (1995, 2011, 2015, 2016), Guzmán, Umaña Luna and Fals Borda (1962), Giraldo (2015), and Fajardo (2015) recognize, land grabbing and dispossession have been a common denominator in the history of the conflict in Colombia, experienced through physical violence (with the intention to displace or force land abandonment), legal figures and institutional complicity (agrarian authorities, notaries, judges), that facilitated the transfer of ownership and changes in the use of land grabbed, such as the expansion of monoculture, extractive and mining projects.

Land grabbing in Montes de María is an example of the postulates of David Harvey (2003) about accumulation by dispossession, a concept that define a political project concerned both with establishing the conditions for capital accumulation and the restoration of class power through original practices of accumulation, such as commodification and privatization of land, expulsion of indigenous and peasants from their territories, conversion of various forms of property rights into private property rights, suppression of alternative forms of production, and appropriation of assets (land and natural resources). The State promote these processes, and it's an accomplice in the active repression of social movements and the destruction of cultures.

The data recollected show how this happened in Montes de María. A social leader reflect how “They took as out by force, but also in complicity with the State... Of course, violence and

paramilitarism made us lose our land. But the State had a lot to do with it as well... It gave false property deeds of our land to landlords and businessmen, that then turn it into mining or oil palm project... To whom where we going to claim, knowing that the State was complicit?"

This testimony evidence that land grabbing and dispossession does not happened just trough physical violence, but also that the institutions of the State activated legal and institutional mechanisms to achieve the dispossession of peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombians land. Through agrarian laws, fake sales contracts and illegal property deeds, local elites (which hold control of the State Institutions) monopolized the ownership of land with the goal to boost extractive projects.

Moreover, and as indigenous organisations and NGOs members argue, the illegal armed control of the National Natural Park *Nudo de Paramillo*²³, affected municipal aqueducts and the irrigation system, that in the end also relates to the expansion of the agricultural frontier and land conflicts, and creates problematics regarding access to water sources for production, but most importantly, for living.

As recognized by Roca-Servat & Palacio Ocando (2019), extractivism has set the tone of Latin America economy as provider of raw materials. Natural resources are seen as assets, and extractive economies as a motor for development. In Montes de María, the influence of mining projects as Cerro Matoso and Carbomax, and the consolidation of the monoculture of oil palm relate to the development of law and institutional reforms to benefit the extractive sector.

²³ The national natural park *Nudo de Paramillo* in the Alto Sinú and San Jorge has been a strategic area for conflict, and therefore key in the understanding of the armed conflict in the region. The park, that is the most important source of water in the region, allowed armed actors to have control and movement in Úraba, Chocó, the Atlantic coast, Antioquia, and the south of Bolívar.

The process of concentration of land ownership in Montes de Maria, demonstrate the argument presented by Perreault (2013), when explaining that the complicity of the State in land-grabbing relate to physical violence, reclassification of land (protected or collective), re-allocation and other ‘technical re-mapping’ strategies. In addition, Fajardo (2015) and Fals Borda (1962, 1963, and 1986) evidence how in Colombia land grabbing and dispossession is a circular process. Peasants were violently expelled from their land, which passed illegally (and with State complicity) to local elites and businessmen. As a consequence, peasants were forced to colonized protected areas, forest or collective land. Then, they were violently expelled again from those lands, and so on and so on. This cycle repeated itself for years, expanding the agricultural frontier and causing ecological problems, such as soil degradation, water contamination, intensive use of chemics, deforestation, lack of communitarian ties, and loss of costumes and traditions.

This context expresses itself today by the lack of support to farmers and small producers by the State. There is a lack of land for peasants, and a land titling problems. There are productive projects that don’t fit the needs of the territory or the costumes of those that inhabit it. Other problems are vacant land grabbing by local elites; corruption; low agricultural production; deforestation; illegal mining; increasing monoculture, and the incursion of agro-industrial multinationals.

As some of the leaders in the region agree on, medium and large producers opted for monoculture, particularly of Palm Oil, which is export-oriented, high-profit and degrades the soil. While small producers and peasants, opt for peasant economy and traditional seasonal crops²⁴ that they commercialized in local and national markets, are better for the soils and the water use, are used for self-consumption and promote biodiversity and environmental conscious practices.

²⁴ such as guava, lemon, coconut, mango, papaya, passion fruit, sapote, eggplant, pumpkin, chili, cabbage, beans, cucumber, cassavas, and yams.

Overall, forced displacement and land concentration are still problematics in the territory; and the dispute over restitution of land and vacant land allocation, which was a commitment of the Peace Agreement, is still a peasant and indigenous fight.

4.1.2. Paramilitarism and territorial control

Understanding the causes and implications of the conflict in Colombia means reviewing which actors play a relevant role in the development of war, and how they play such part. As exposed by different scholars in the *literature review*, four main actors are essential to understand Colombian Armed Conflict. Guerrillas, paramilitaries, agents of the State and third opportunist. In the region of Montes de María all four actors have had a say in the expansion of the conflict, but two of them have a determinant role: Paramilitaries and local elites, which have had control of the institution of the State and the economic, natural resources and land.

As Pécault (2015); Gutiérrez (2015); the Colombian Truth Commission (2022) and the Historical Memory Centre (2013) have pointed out, paramilitarism relates to accumulation of land, territorial control, and political power. The logic of paramilitarism implied getting territorial control through fear, land dispossession, accumulation of land and violence, but also by making alliances with local and national powers. For Montes de María, the alliances with local elites, that happened to control the institutions of the State were extremely strong.

Hence, paramilitaries did not just torture, kill, and disappear those that were considered enemies; they also co-opted the State institutions and public resources, through alliances with local elites. This articulation promoted violence against political detractors and social leaderships. Specially those who were against the hegemonic development model and the accumulation of land.

As one of the interviewees discuss “paramilitary groups were beneficial to defend the monopoly of public resources, establish territorial control, and intimidate or eliminate political adversaries”. The well established colonial territorial model carried on by local elites and characterised by a very

high concentration of land and resources conformed paramilitary groups to counteract the advance of the guerrillas in the region. Over the whole Caribbean region, local elites held control not just of private armies, but also of lawyers, notaries, and governmental officials. Indigenous leaders point out how these practices have affected the Alto Sinú and San Jorge, where the control of land and natural resources have had the goal to expand extractive projects.

The para-politics (*parapoítica*), is a concept that is used in Colombia to describe a social phenomenon where paramilitaries formed alliances with politicians at both local and national level with the interest to foment extractivist economies and achieve territorial control. Since 2006, 139 congressmen have been investigated for colluding with paramilitaries in order to achieve their agenda in the totality of the country.

One of its most atrocious examples is the 'pact of Ralito'. Politicians, government officials, local elites, local entrepreneurs from Córdoba, Sucre, Bolívar, and Magdalena illegally agreed on a plan to keep paramilitary control in the Caribbean Coast. As a consequence, violence, forced displacement, and land grabbing intensified in the region. Territories, from which people were driven out were used to fence the enemy, transit and transport weapons, food, medicine, and other implements for war. They were also used as military bases, training, and communication centres, hold kidnappees, torture, disappear and abuse.

The implications of this phenomenon in Montes de María imply alliances between paramilitaries and local power groups with the intent to favour the expansion of agribusiness. Territories from peasants, indigenous and afro-Colombians were also destined to agroindustry, mining, and forestry projects.

Communities and territories in the Alto Sinú were extremely affected by paramilitarism and its alliances, that due the natural resources potential of the area were considered key for their agenda. Violence was experienced brutally, specially to indigenous communities, and peasants and

environmental organizations. The Presidential observatory for human rights and International Human rights (2009) found out that 87% of the population of the Alto Sinú and San Jorge were forcibly displaced between 1997 and 2008.

The territorial control achieved by paramilitaries in the Montes de María imply that the territory was transformed and associated with violence, massacres, killings, and displacement. Places that used to be associated with festivities, conversation, friendship, ceremonies, and rituals became symbols of sadness, pain, destruction, and war. Informants mention that for people in the rural areas, forced displacement, massacres, killings and disappearances means that their territories were no longer safe, since they did not belong to them anymore.

The memories attached to these spaces have radically changed because of the violence. Where people used to have memories from the spaces where they shared, relaxed, created community ties, spoke about their illusions and worries, where their everyday life happened, where they cooked for their families and friends, where their kids play and grew up, where they grew old became associated with fear, loss and melancholy.

4.2. PDET

As discussed in the literature review, the PDET present the challenging task of facing agrarian disparities and the rural implications of the conflict. In this sense, the PDET, is presented by government officials as an innovative and participatory planning tool supposed to tackle poverty and inequality. The 170 municipalities that were chosen to participate in the PDET, were the ones with most poverty, inequality, inexistent State presence and where the conflict had hit the hardest.

As stated in the decree 893 of 2017, the PDET supposed to be one of the most important tools to achieve territorial peace, materialise the needs and wished of people in their territories and overcome the vicissitudes of the conflict. Have they manage to fulfil these goals?

The 170 municipalities were gathered in 16 zones, each of this zone by today counts with an Action Plan for the Regional Transformation (PATR²⁵). The PDET were build based on 8 main categories: 1. Social Regulation of rural property and land use; 2. Infrastructure and adequacy of land; 3. Health; 4. Rural education and early childhood; 5. Rural housing, drinking water and basic rural sanitation; 6. Economic reactivation and agricultural production; 7. System for the progressive guarantee of the right to food; 8. Reconciliation, coexistence, and construction of peace.

Interviewees explained to me how the 8 categories used to develop the PDET were restrictive, and left behind important discussions, as the inclusions of alternative ways of plan the territory or deliberations about economic models in the territory. Some specific considerations come in hand for the participation process:

-Gender in PDET: Informants members of women organizations argue that during the participatory process it was difficult to identify the needs, interests, barriers and problems of women and LGBT people in the territory. They express how government officials in charge of the participatory process did not comprehend the impact of the conflict for women, that had to for example, take care of the family economy and survival, or hold fights for individual or collective land. They also claim how the presence of woman and LGTB leaders and organizations was almost inexistent, and how the call to women from the communities was insufficient. At the same time, gender in PDET was explicitly excluded from the 8 main work categories.

The impacts of the conflict on women and LGTB people are horrifying. Systematic sexual violence was a common practice, and they were understood as 'spoils of war'. When an illegal group claimed a territory, women or LGTB people were seen as trophies, with which they could do whatever they wanted. In addition, the extermination of males from land organizations, meant that in addition to the unpaid domestic and care work carried out by women, they had to be in charge

²⁵ From the Spanish acronym Planes de Acción para la Transformación Regional

of the fight for land restitution and collective rights. Persecutions and violence towards diverse gender expressions and women are a common characteristic of Colombian conflict.

Women organizations argue how the everyday work of women (domestic work, cooking for the workers, the work of the land or the commercialization of agricultural products) is not recognized, and rural women had to suffer state neglect, and situations of marginality greater than those suffered by men in the countryside. Recognizing that they have suffered more just because they are women imply recognizing gender inequality, and therefore, the revindication of women rights.

Peacebuilding for women organizations means the recognition of the gender inequality and its main factors, recognizing that gender is socially constituted in a binary way, and that it is constructed in a hierarchical manner (Conway, J, Bourque, S and Scott, J, 1987). But also, that the conflict was differential, and that women have suffered the most.

For women and LGTB organizations, the PDET should have included guiding questions with gender perspectives that should be addressed in the different moments of deliberation and decision-making; and the capacities of officials regarding a gendered approach should have been strengthened. As a social leader states “ the process should have verified the attendance of women and their organizations, and included the needs, limitations and how to overcome the obstacles or barriers that rural women face for access to rights and land in the PDET”.

-Call: In some of the municipalities the call to participate was not broad enough. NGOs members that accompanied the participatory process affirm that it was concentrated in some sectors (as the Community Action Boards) , creating difficulties for relations with other sectors that were not part of them, such as indigenous or ethnic organizations. Community Action Boards are an institutional participatory mechanism, and therefore interviewees question why the calling process did not do a better effort to convene organizations and sectors that historically have been away from institutional means.

-Context conditions and installed capacities: NGOs informants explained that the participatory process of the PDET took a long time to initiate. The Territorial Renovation Agency (ART)²⁶ had to meet the due dates proposed by the government, making the officials carry out the participatory process on the rush, without properly summoning relevant actors for the territory, not having assigned meeting places, transport or alimentation.

For the interviewees this could explain why in some cases, the discussions about opportunities, problems and initiatives took place in contexts in which the people who participated did not have idea about the contents of the agreement, the methodology proposed by the ART, or even what the PDET was about.

-Government officials in charge of the participatory process: It was identified by NGO members that the officials of ART already held positions in the municipal administration or in other national entities with territorial presence, which presented advantages in the relationship with the authorities and with territorial organizations, but created difficulties for the process to reach sectors and organizations that were not close to previous institutional dynamics.

Officials suggested to exclude issues that the communities considered priorities because, according to them, they had nothing to do with the PDET or did not fit into any of the 8 methodological categories. One example is the environmental impact of mining and monoculture, that relate to soil degradation, water contamination, deforestation, land grabbing and dispossession.

Social leaders argue how this issue is especially problematic. As one leader say, “keeping government officials that have had the responsibility to do something for the territory, but that had not done much [referring to how they were sceptical about the capacity of an official that over the

²⁶ The State Institution in charge of developing the PDET.

years did not show results in what the communities demanded] its useless". My interpretation of this statement is that for social organizations keeping the same officials implied reproducing power structures or the alliances between paramilitarism and local elites.

-Security: Although this is not an exclusive matter of the ART or the formulation of the PDET, social leaders, NGO members and government officials coincide in the importance of making visible the extent that even though the participatory planning exercises were not cut short by acts of violence, the risk of participants to be identified and then threatened, forced displaced or even killed was always there.

- Articulation with other planning exercises or building on what has been built: In some cases, the participatory exercises did not consider other previous planning exercises developed in the territories by both the communities and by the institutions. Social leaders are specifically critical towards this, since their work over the years trying to collect diagnostics, needs and proposals from and with the communities was not taken into consideration as an important tool for building the PDET. The planning exercises were very closed to suggestion or different themes, and simply followed the methodology and categories proposed by the ART.

-Articulation with other entities: Within some of the municipalities, various entities with responsibilities for the implementation of the Final Agreement come together, such as the National Land Agency, the Rural Development Agency, National Natural Parks of Colombia, Directorate for the Substitution of Illicit Crops. There was not always evidence of an articulation between them, even though the Peace Accord establish that they have to work jointly.

This could be problematic since their articulation and communication is key for the development of the PDET. For example, regarding land restitution the Land Restitution Agency (URT) is in charge of identifying and assigning land. The Territory Renewal Agency (ART) in charge of the

PDET, should work together with the URT to effectively assign land to the projects and communities recognized by the participatory process as urgent.

--Ethnic approach: The Ethic chapter of the Peace Accord link the PDET to its fulfilment. Government officials value the participation of indigenous and Afro Colombians in the process as positive. However, although ethnic representation has increased, my informants from indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations criticised that there had been a gradual decline in the rate of ethnic initiatives included in the PDET.

Ethnic organizations argue how their visions and proposals regarding a different understanding of development and the relations between people and nature were not even considered for the building of the PDET and how their knowledges in favour of horizontal relationship with nature was not materialized in it.

For them it is problematic that many of the proposals, regarding economic reactivation and land management do not consider the importance of collective land or alternatives to a classic extractive model of development. A social leader reflected about this, when telling me that “Development means that nature has rights, and that us, who share our existence with it must protect it rather than destroy it”, what implies a different way pf understanding nature and relating to land, as not only an economic resource, but a living entity with rights, and that relates to different understandings of development which will be discuss more in detail below.

4.2.1. The PDET during the government of Ivan Duque

The PDET participatory process started in 2018, and government officials calculate that it finished in 2019. In Montes de María it was subscribed in the end of 2018. The following years after the subscribing of the PDET were crucial in order to define budgets and start to launch the programs and actions for the PDET to happen. So on, the National Development Plan 2018-2022 of the right-

wing president Ivan Duque was key not just for the PDET, but for the building of peace in the country. Sadly, the advance of the PDET through his presidential term was almost nonexistent.

The PDETs were compacted into Strategic Integral Intervention Zones (ZEII²⁷) that prioritized a classic approach to security and economic development, increasing the number of soldiers in the territories, monoculture, and the agroindustry, leaving on the side the PARTs and the effective start-up of the PDET.

4.3. Visions of Peace in the territory

In this section, I will explore what people consider key elements to reach peace. In the region *Montes de María* peace and peace building relate to human rights, development, social participation and ending armed conflict. For some, properly implementing the *Peace Accord* and tackling its causes and consequences is key, while for others this also implies dealing with armed actors that still have presence in the territory.

From a governmental perspective, building peace means dealing with the growing poverty, especially in rural areas, and creating economic practices that respect and cooperate with the development visions in the territory, while creating sustainable conditions for peace to actually happen.

Overall, recognizing the deep wounds caused by the armed conflict in the cultural, political, economic, social, and environmental spheres is a key step to achieve peace. As I described in the *local implication of the conflict* section, this region is characterised by land grabbing, accumulation, and dispossession, forced displacement, and a very violent territorial control by paramilitarism in complicity with local elites. Hence, in this region, achieving peace implies dealing with the conflict and how it affected those inhabiting the territories.

²⁷ From the Spanish acronym Zonas Estratégicas de Intervención Integral.

Territories subjective dimensions are also transformed by the conflict, and territorial identity has been displaced at the same time as people and communities. Land dispossessions imply multiple dispossessions and ruptures in farmers and the lives of peasants and ethnic minorities.

From the data recollected, I found some categories that cluster what people believe peace means. They will be explained bellow.

4.3.1. Economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights

One of the most recurrent topics when researching about how to achieve peace, or what peace means in the Montes de María relates to the guarantee of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. The effective enjoyment of rights is a historical debt from the Colombian State with the communities, and as long as health, education, land, water, and participation rights are not guaranteed, peace will not be achieved.

For social leaders, the right to water, the recovery of popular knowledge and local memory, the rescue and reproduction of native seeds; sovereignty, autonomy and food security, and the preservation of the environment and ecosystems are also key issues. These matters relate to strengthening the economy of the peasantry, as well as the recognition of ethnic and cultural diversity. All these matters relate to each other.

Water has been a right taken away from communities by paramilitaries, particularly in the Alto Sinú and San Jorge, where the inflow of water was diverted to supply monoculture of oil palm and mining, instead of letting follow its natural course towards traditional crops, as leaders of ethnic and peasant organizations argue.

The discussions about water and access to water sources imply reflecting about control over population and their territories. As Franco, Mehta & Veldwisch (2013) point out, water grabbing influence the dynamics around food, climate, energy and agriculture. In a world where agrobusiness and mining are seen as more important economic activities than smallholder agriculture, water grabbing is driven by State- private alliances, with no geographical limitations, happening in diverse agro-ecological contexts, and violating land property regimes.

Perreault's (2013) empirical evidence about water and land grabbing in Guatemala show how oil plantations had resulted in various forms of dispossession and poverty. The palm oil expansion in Guatemala relates to land control, power relations and accumulation by dispossession, which brought negative consequences for indigenous people. Their ways of life, livelihoods, and costumes has been affected by the expansion of the palm oil industry.

The postulates of both scholars relate to what experienced in Montes de María. Paramilitaries dispossessed land and water, and in complicity with local elites and state institutions, gave it to palm oil and mining projects, which require an immense amount of water to subsist. Riverbeds were altered, property lines changed, fake property deeds created, and 'technical re-delimitation' established. The natural flow of the water was altered in order for it to arrive to the land where 'it is needed the most': palm oil monoculture and mining projects.

Sovereignty, autonomy, and food security imply that traditional seasonal crops should be into consideration, not just as an economic source, but also as community relationship tool. Peasants used to exchange crops, use the best part of the harvest for the next one and don't rely on pesticides or pest control for its success. Without access to water, the peasants face critical challenging conditions for their harvest, their main economic activities, and food security and sovereignty for their people.

For indigenous and afro-Colombians traditional crops and seasonal agriculture is a cultural matter that has been passed from generation to generation. One of my interlocutors explained their agricultural practices like this: “respecting the soils, the rivers, the cycles of earth means being in harmony with nature, living among each other”. These practices are relational, and imply a mutual inter-dependency link between humans, land and water. They also have positive outcomes for the environment, contribute to recover and protect local, indigenous and Afro-Colombian memory, and return to the territory its meaning, Hence, the meaningfulness of the territory that was lost in the conflict, could be recovered.

Peasant education, oriented by ancestral practices and knowledge is a proposal by peasant leaders that focus on eliminating the gap between country and city and contributing to the transformation of the region based on ecology, economy, and politics. They propose formal and informal academic programs that rescue ancestral practices and knowledge, contribute to organizational strengthening, and encourage the social, ecological, economic, and political transformation of the countryside. Peasant leaders mentioned various areas that would be useful for building community: agronomy; engineering; peasant, family, and community economy; ancestral and veterinary medicine; pedagogy; and traditional and modern administration.

Victims’ rights are another recurrent subject that require especial care. People claim for truth and acknowledgment of responsibilities by local elites; memory; restitution and reconciliation, and have high expectations for the work towards truth, justice, reciliation and guarantees of no repetition proposed by the Truth Commission and the Peace Accord.

4.3.2. Land Restitution

As I have argued throughout the thesis, land is a key element in the understanding of causes and impacts of the *Conflict in Colombia*. In that sense, people in the region consider that land restitution and redistribution are essential for achieving peace and reconciliation. So on, guaranteeing the access to land (both new for those that do not have it, but also returning properties to those that were displaced) is a subject of mayor importance for individuals and organizations.

Land ownership, either individual or associatively, is a fight that social leaders and communities have been fighting for decades, and consider critical for territorial peace, since it will contribute to solve historical problematics related to land grabbing and ownership; to peasant economies; and over all to restitution and reconciliation measurements.

For indigenous and Afro-Colombian people, the restitution of collective property also contributes to rebuild their historical memory and as a reparation mechanism. For peasant organizations it plays a part in stopping or decreasing the expansion of the agricultural frontier and the ecological devastation. They argue that land grabbing and the expansion of the extractive agribusiness affect the environment when changing the natural flow of the water, and almost drying up the rivers and water sources to exploit natural resources and produce a large amount of just one product (oil palm), without benefiting the community or the environment.

Based on the data recollected, I argue that returning the land to their original owners imply that they are not going to destroy it or use for the production of monoculture. On the contrary, they will rehabilitate it, based on soil management and natural pesticide techniques, returning the water to its natural flow, and reviving the peasant economy and traditional seasonal crops such as guava, lemon, coconut, mango, papaya, passion fruit, sapote, eggplant, pumpkin, chili, cabbage, beans, cucumber, cassavas, and yams.

Accumulation of land and extractives industries are indispensable to the success of capitalism, where degradation of the environment is inevitable. Following Guerrero (2018) in order to tackle environmental depletion, the degradation of the environment (which is the focus of capitalist accumulation) needs to stop. This imply changing social and economic relationships, such as putting the palm oil and mining projects above the well-being of communities and territories. As the scholar argues, there is a need to transit from fossil fuels, deconstruct the existing order and reconstruct it based on an alternative paradigm and focus on social movements and communities as a key agent in the shifting process.

Returning land to social organizations and communities in Montes de María will contribute to sovereignty, autonomy, and food security, nature and people's rights, and the recovery of the ways of being of peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian. Ultimately, it will contribute to building peace from below.

4.3.3. A different understanding to development

One of the main critics from social leaders and NGO members to the PDET building process, and the main 8 analysis categories proposed by the ART was the impossibility to discuss the economic and development model for the region. My informants argue that the expansion of mining and energetic and monoculture industries as the road to follow to achieve development goes against the needs and wishes in the territory.

On the contrary, The goal of indigenous and peasant communities and organizations is to preserve the territory, its cultural integrity, and the autonomy of the communities. Peasant economies play a key role in this understanding, since they focus on exchange instead of economic enrichment, the protection of nature and water, and the strengthening of communitarian ties. Sovereignty and food security are also key for peasant economies, since it choose seasonal crops; native seeds; and a holistic approach of soil management, pesticides, crop variation and water uses.

A social leader reinforces this proposition, when affirming that “sovereignty and food security means recovery of our traditional crops, such as yams, beans, fruits, a variety of chillies, but also our ways of managing them... My grandparents didn't have to use pesticides and weren't worried about not producing enough [making a reference on how peasants need to use a vast number of pesticides to guarantee crops success, and struggle to commercialize their products] ... We should focus on producing native foods, not only for our consumption, but also to send to the cities.”

Several scholars working with decolonial thinking, such as Escobar (2003,2010), López (2009), Girola (2008) and Quijano (2000) have discussed alternative understandings of development and argue that these understandings imply confronting the tensions between Eurocentric development and modernity paradigms and the ways in which people understand and plan the future for their territories.

Latin America has historically been seen as a provider of raw materials, which could explain the expansion of palm oil and mining in Montes de Maria. Consequently, the extractivist model of development, that for decolonial theory has been connected with how the global north accumulate resources from the global south and promote as principles domination, secularization, order and control, see territories as heterogeneous masses of resources. This relate to how local elites and paramilitaries have dispossessed, forced displaced, killed or disappeared communities and social leaders in order to accumulate land and natural resources for the expansion of extractivism.

Escobar (2003, 2007) argue that colonialism and the development of the capitalist world system constitute a modernity that is de-territorialized, hybrid, unequal and heterogenic. That is based on the domination of others outside the centre of Europe; and that present eurocentrism as the form of knowledge of modernity/coloniality. As I have discussed in the *local implication of the conflict* section, in Montes de María the land displacement and grabbing practices relate to the postulates of Rivera Cusicanqui (2010), that explain how coloniality imply multiple paradoxes. On one hand, elites have used colonization and the myth of development to impulse processes of recolonization, as well as strategies and mechanisms of new ways of colonization.

More specifically, the methods of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003) in the region reflect colonial practices and processes or recolonization. Examples are moving the agricultural frontier, coinciding illegal property deeds, creating laws that benefit local elites and the agro-industry, and violent displaced peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian from their territories.

Based on this obscure panorama, as Escobar (2003) wonders: Is it possible to think outside the modern world system? To imagine alternatives to modernity and coloniality?

His studies in the Colombian Pacific (Escobar, 2010) show that *a different understanding of development* means that territories are not equal, and that development for people does not necessarily mean economic enrichment. On the contrary, it encourage traditional and peasantry economies, local memory, and practices, such as those related to enjoyment and feeding, and the way humans relate to the environment. *Emergent agendas* from indigenous, peasant and Afro-Colombian organizations could be an answer.

4.3.4. Emergent agendas: Alternatives to the extractivist development model

From the conversations I had with indigenous, Afro-Colombians and peasant leaders, alternatives to the extractivist model of development discussed above emerged. Their agendas and proposals relate to the connection, respect and safeguard of nature, the reconciliation with traditionality and the autonomy of the organizations. Indigenous organizations from the region emphasise that traditional knowledge should play a key role in how to understand the world.

Traditional knowledge imply recognizing the history, culture, relation with the territory, beliefs and ways to live of the indigenous, Afro-Colombians and peasants. Their knowledge about medicine, biodiversity, agriculture, and language, relate to the world in a holistic way and horizontal relations with the environment and decolonization strategies. As Jacanamijoy (2001) and Escobar (2007) recognize, are an alternative to colonization, and the knowledge eurocentric paradigm of science and development.

I acknowledge that traditional knowledge should not be romantized. On the contrary, like any kind of knowledge, is never static and not just one. It is mutable and alterable, and it transforms and reinvents based on political, economic, social, cultural, and environmental relations in and with the territory. It is simply the knowledge of peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people in their territories.

Traditional knowledge emerge from the experience and relations with the territories, and to how those that inhabite it have particular ways of interaction between them and the environment. As Montañes (2001) and Mignolo (1996) argue, territories are multable and alterable. So, is the knowledge of the people that inhabite them. Knowledge it is dynamic and created in human-environment interaction, that understands the consolidation and transformation of complex social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental relations, shared tradition, appropriations, and collective memory.

This also implies a project in the territories and communities, based on the autonomy of the social agents and complementarity. An indigenous leader said: “the territory is alive, is part of us and we are part of it. It is the legacy of our ancestors and our happiness... The water, the land, the rivers are connected between each other and with us. Our job is to protect and recover that connection”.

Based on this reflection, I argue that the ways of living and doing of the people in Montes de Maria imply a relational, inter-dependent and mutual care and respect with others and the environment. It means that the territory, as recognized by Santos (1997) and Mignolo (1996) is multiple, in constant transformation and mutation based on a complex system of structures, relations and ways of living. As Jacanamijoy explore (2001), this could be languages, rituals, customs, arts, practices, and collective memories.

Organizations and indigenous movements celebrate the concept of *Buen Vivir*. In Ecuador and Bolivia it has been used actively for political mobilization and even included in the constitution by indigenous governments. Informants brought the concept up to refer to the unity between humans and nature. They are learning and putting in practice traditional knowledge from indigenous communities to propose a horizontal relationship with nature, differing from traditional western conceptions that consists of destroying the nature for the benefit of humans.

Hortart (2014), Mejía (2013) and Jacanamijoy (2001) explain how *Buen Vivir* result useful to propose a different alternative to traditional colonial development ideas, that imply poverty, disintegration of social relationships and with nature, and a focus on the global instead of the local. In this sense, *Buen Vivir* invites to rethinks social relationships based on respect, understanding of the other and harmony, with other living beings and with nature. So on, local, and territorial ways of planning and rethinking the territory are essential to achieve peace. This relates to the environment defence and care for the land, but also involves recognizing multiple relationships of construction, transformation, agency, and resistance, relationships of building peace from below.

On the other hand, Afro-Colombian organizations speak about “*Vivir Sabroso (Living tasty)*”, their interpretation of *Buen Vivir*, which means enjoying life, their territories, and costumes (celebrating music, food, parties) but also achieving political, social, and economic conditions for their people and their territory.

As on leader said: “territory is a life space. We create and enjoy our culture, in our particular way. From our way of seeing the world”. Recognizing that traditional approaches to governance, paramilitarism and local elites relate to the destruction of the nature is key. The way the territory is processed now have colonial structural causes, gender and class hierarchies and political conditions that justify its destruction and mistreatment. As an answer, another Afro-Colombian leader expresses that “we bet for defending, sharing, dialogue, and building from the base”. Which I interpret as the need to recognize *Vivir Sabroso*, not just as a simple enjoyment of music, party and food, but also as a political project of recovery of rights and culture, that fight against the colonial structures of gender, class and race, and against environmental destruction.

Indigenous and Afro-Colombian organizations are committed to claim their region, work towards their rights, recover their ancestral identities, and build from the autonomy of their forms of government.

Peasant organizations do not speak about *Buen Vivir* or *Vivir Sabroso*, but their stories relate to respecting and protecting the environment, celebrate the traditionality and recovering their territory. A peasant social leader support this argument when commenting that “We are from the countryside, are made for the countryside. Resist from the countryside, that give us everything we need, it means being solidary, remember our traditions and work side by side between communities.”

These different agendas can be analysed in light of the postulates of Blaser (2004) about life projects. Peoples’ experiences, visions of the world and emergent agendas relate to a completely different way of understanding development, far away from modernity and coloniality. Their ways of development imply different understandings of what land is, are closer to nature, and commemorate socio cultural projects, were memory, autonomy, justice, and environmental rights are essential. Stensrud’s findings from Peru (2019) show, the proposals of territory connect with notions of belonging and inter-dependant relations based on mutual respect between water, land, human and non-human beings. People’s projects are distant from extractive development models, and instead bet for traditional and seasonal harvesting, and the respectful interaction with water and land.

Indigenous, Afro-Colombians and Peasant organizations in Montes de María want not just to heal individually, but also to heal as a people, collectively. They propose that, in a territory where armed conflict hit that hard, there is a need to retake the spaces and reconnect with the community and the nature. Recovering their cultural ways, their costumes, languages, memory, water management, traditional medicine, music, myths, and legends goes beyond the recognition of their culture. It implies their political posture, their bet to build government from the communities and to face the current extractive development model in the territory.

4.3.5. Diversity and plurality

One of the main consequences of paramilitarism its territorial control is that the right to be different was exterminated. Those that did not fit into conservative views, either by political opinions, sexual

preferences, identification processes, cultural expressions; skin colour or ethnicity; were punished, banished, or exterminated. Peace implies highlighting and celebrating the diversity and plurality in the territory and respecting the differences. In this sense, women, indigenous, Afro, organizations, and sexually diverse people, carry on actions for the expression of diversity, moving towards equality.

Despite this, informants from women, indigenous and LGBT organizations expose the need to create spaces, public policy and measurements that promote diversity and plurality. There are factors that threaten the recognition of rights, such as the still existence of armed actors in the territory or the rooting to traditional culture. In addition, the term period of Ivan Duque, in maybe a key period for the development of the peace accord, and measurements towards the guaranteeing of rights and safeguard of plurality and diversity, reflect negative appreciations by the interviewees. As exposed in the section of the PDET, the government of Duque focused on a 'traditional development and security' approach, that left on the side the recognition of rights and the commitments of Colombian State to achieve territorial peace.

4.3.6. Gender and peace

Women organizations play a very important role in the territory, due their efforts towards women rights, peasant economy, land restitution and memory. For them, peace imply guaranteeing the recognition and full exercise of women's rights in rural areas and in their ethnic and generational diversity, as well as comprehensive reparation for the violations historically received as women, through mechanisms that promote equality and dignified a life free of violence.

Moreover, rural heal; land; right to food; political, economic, and organizational empowerment; documentation of local experiences as examples that could be replicated; actions to stop violence against women; guarantee participation of women in spaces of territorial construction; and strengthening community media are specific proposals from the informants. Actions should focus on women heads of households and seniors, women in business, purchase of land and protection for female leaders who assume environmental struggles and social.

4.3.7. Security conditions and human rights enjoyment

Security conditions play a key role in peace building and territorial peace. Achieving security in the territories is therefore key to achieve peace. Although, security conditions do not just imply the increment of soldiers in the territory, but a complex interlocking system, that should cooperate with measurements of enjoyment of human rights, and guarantee of what people consider structural conditions for peace, such as *economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights, land restitution and diversity and plurality*.

Furthermore, the difficult security conditions for social leaders and human rights defenders imply that a strategy that effectively protect those that are actively promoting peace must be put in place as soon as possible.

4.4. What have happened with citizen participation in the development of the Peace Accord?

Citizen participation is a general approach of the *Peace Accord*, especially regarding planning, following and execution of plans and programs contained by it. The accord exposes that participation as a principle is key for peace building and transparency, and that contemplate the dialogue between different actors in the territory in order to build trust, respect, and coexistence. (Mesa de Conversaciones, 2016). At the same time, the *Peace Accord* acknowledge that the lack of participation has been a cause and consequence of the conflict, and therefore, to achieve a long-lasting peace it is necessary to promote effective participation. This should be interlinked with a territorial approach. Citizen participation should be an essential driven in the decisions particular decisions taken when implementing the agreement. So on, a key element for the PDET.

Consequently, and as exposed by members of the OPIAF, the *peace accord* presents participation as a general approach, but also have specific measurements regarding political and citizen

participation²⁸ and formulates detailed participation tasks in the agreement as a whole. The OPIAF has identified 114 of them and have tracked their progress since 2018.

Interviewees from this Peace Observatory expose how overall citizen participation measurements and tasks have been relegated, and their level of implementation is considerably low. Citizen participation is key to build public scenarios, where exercises of deliberation and collective action set a route to confront the challenges to build peace. They imply understanding and accepting differences, building based on togetherness and strengthening organizations and social networks. However, the development of the opportunities consigned in the *peace accord* is disappointing and imply that one of the core approaches of the *accord* as a whole is not being fulfilled. Without citizen participation, the implementation of the *peace accord* will remain weak.

By 2018, just 33% of the 114 participatory tasks had a level of development; by 2020, just 8 of the 114 tasks were fulfilled, and 36% of them did not have any progress. By 2021, 28% of these tasks didn't count with any progress, 64% had a certain level of progress and 8% were done. (Observatorio de la Participación Ciudadana en la Implementación del Acuerdo Final, 2018,2020,2021)

My Informants from NGOs agreed on that the point of political participation is the one that has more flaws. There is some advance in normative implementation regarding this point, but in practice, not much has happened. Guarantees for citizen participation, participatory planning and citizen control have not been formulated and there have not been substantial changes in the general law of participation. For them, the government of Ivan Duque have great responsibility in the delay of important cores of the peace accord, such as effective citizen participation and the application of the Framework

²⁸ Contained in the point of political participation of The General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace

Plan of Implementation²⁹ An example of this is the nonexistence of the Law of Guarantees for organizations and social movements³⁰.

The draft of this law exist since 2017, however it has not been elaborated. National civil organizations where mandated by the *peace accord* to conduct regional and national forums in order to create the guidelines of the law, which contained measurements for participative planning and budgeting, the national planning system, institutional and non-institutional participatory spaces, and a differential focus.

4.5. Did the PDET Montes de María achieve a Territorial approach?

As I have tried to show along the different chapters, the PDET were established as mechanisms of planning where the territorial approach would be the most important driven. The *Peace Accord* has established how building peace means including the people that have suffered the conflict the most, and that in the end should decide what is the road to follow to overpass the vicissitudes of the conflict, achieve reconciliation and build the long road to reach a lasting and stable peace.

The PDET were in theory proposed as tools for the communities, social leaderships, and organizations to plan side by side with the local government and the institutions of the State what would be of their territory in the next ten years. In Montes de María, this was from the beginning, a very challenging task. The Colombian State had the difficult task to do what it had not been able to do since the beginning of the nineteen hundreds: establish institutional presence, listen to demands from the people, and build participatory alternatives to tackle poverty, human rights violations, and unsatisfied basic needs. Confronting the local causes and implications of the conflict in the territory implied dealing with the land problematic, paramilitarism and environmental depletion.

²⁹ In Spanish: Plan Marco de Implementación PMI.

³⁰ Contained in the point of political participation of the Peace Accord.

Planning and developing the participatory process of the PDET implied that Colombian State had to put in place a pretty much inexistent institutional infrastructure; deal with the local elites, and their historical territorial control by questionable means; foster alliances between social organizations, communities, and the private sector; and gain the trust of a citizenship tired of unkept promises.

Building a participatory planning tool, as the PDET, with a territorial approach, that as the *peace agreement* acknowledges, means recognizing the needs, characteristics, and social, economic, politic, cultural, and environmental particularities of each territory. (Final Agreement to end the armed conflict and build a stable and lasting peace, 2016) As one social leader states, the territorial approach of the PDET should mean that the communities, which are those that inhabit and understand the territory, but more importantly, those that had live and suffer the conflict, decide what peace means and how to build it.

The PDET were supposed to be the instrument to build peace in the territory, so to speak to propose solutions to the causes and implications of the conflict, but also a concrete plan of how to do it, which State institutions should be involved, specific measurements and actions, duration, and a follow-up plan. As I have insisted, the participation of the organizations and communities in the Montes de Maria had to be a must in the planning, development, and following-up process.

However, and as the informants who are members of social organizations in the territory have shared with me, the participatory process of the PDET was not as participatory as it should have been. The PDET were built with in a way that in theory defended the territorial approach, but in practice had many challenges to fulfil it.

As shown in the subchapters above, social leaders criticised how the Territorial Renovation Agency (ART) had problems articulating with different State Institutions and with other pre-existent peace agendas and plans from the organizations, and additionally, the also had problems with summoning

a number of representative organizations and communities from the Alto Sinú, Sand Jorge, Montería, Medio Sinú and the Costanera region. Leaving behind organizations from key areas of the Montes de María meant that the PDET proposed in the territory did not count with the opinions and proposals from actors that have experienced the conflict in their territories, and that therefore have been working for many years in order to build peace.

The methodology has also been criticised by social leaders and NGO members. Agreeing with the preoccupations of Sánchez Iglesias & Sánchez Jiménez (2019) and Medina Bernal (2018), the informants recognized how keeping the same methodology in the different 16 PDET was completely against the territorial approach proposed by the agreement. Formulating the same procedures and analysis categories, or as the ART calls its “pillars”, invites to reflect about the scope of the “territorial approach” proposed by the state, when the conversation categories were already defined from above.

As I have shown, based on the findings and analysis of different scholars, territorial approach and building peace from below involve recognizing local agencies and agendas, as well as diverse realities. It implies dealing with different economic, ecologic, cultural, political, social, and economic perspectives and how inequalities and conflicts have happened differently in diverse territories. (Fals Borda, 2009; Garzón, 2014; Sanchez Iglesias & Sanchez Jiménez, 2018, Escobar (2010)

As the data recollection shows, in order to achieve a territorial approach, the 8 pillars proposed by the ART should have been less restrictive, allowing organizations and communities to dive outside rigid categories, exploring different ways of planning the territory, gender or deliberations about economic models.

A territorial approach means recognizing that the territory is complex multiple, and charged with symbols, configurations, and tensions. (Montañez, 2001; Mignolo 1996; Santos, 1997; Delgado,

2001 Giménez, 1999; Jacanamijoy, 2001). These particularities should have been celebrated and put in practice when building the PDET. The opinions of social leaders and members of NGOs shown otherwise.

I argue that it is impossible to achieve a territorial approach without building together with those that inhabit the territory. This mean truly involving them in the process from the building of the methodology until the step of following up. The PDET process in Montes de María applied the same strategy as in the rest of the country, following a generic participatory approach, that left behind the good intensions of a territorial approach proposed by the *peace agreement*. (Harto de Vera, 2018; Restrepo & Peña, 2019; Sanchez, Gallardo & Romero, 2017; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; and Hirblinger & Simons, 2015)

A territorial approach goes hand by hand with building peace from below, where recognizing the particular social struggles, ancestral and traditional ways, and communities' projects and agendas in the territory is the only way to effectively build peace. (Cruz, 2018). In this case, a territorial approach should have considered questions of sustainability, the land problematic in the region, territorial development, the effective enjoyment of rights, peasant economy and ancestral rights.

Social leaders point out that an effective territorial approach in the PDET should have proposed an alternative to the current development model in the territory, different to agroindustry, monoculture, illegal mining and deforestation. However, the incapacity to discuss the development model did not allow organizations or communities to present their agendas.

A territorial approach in Montes de María imply rethinking the relationship between local elites, natural resources, territorial control and paramilitarism. This was a challenge that the PDET could not achieve.

Achieving a territorial approach, where social leaders and communities more affected by the conflict could for the first time decide the course of their territory implied dealing with a very well-established model of territorial control, and a few actors that during the long duration of the conflict had absolute power of natural resources, institutions of the State and the decision-making process. Social leaders and members of NGOs agreed on that the PDET should be recognized as an initial exercise of territorial peace, but that the promises contained in the agreement regarding the development of a territorial approach fell short.

So on, I wonder if the interest of local elites and those that historically had been in charge in the territory were put above the illusions and desires of the communities in the building of the PDET. Did the lack of an effective territorial approach have any relation with preserving the agro-industrial development model, the monoculture, the environmental depletion? In the years that the PDET has left, will it be able to challenge the power of local elites and the growing risk of the spectre of paramilitarism to come back? Will it be able to build tackle poverty and inequality?

4.6. Tensions between classic peace models vs peace from the epistemologías del sur

Peace building could be understood from different theoretical approaches. For Colombian peace building, the *peace accord* indicates that peace should be built with the communities and organization that inhabit the territories. In addition, peace building should approach the causes and implications of the conflict. As I have mention before, Colombian conflict is complex and multicausal, and it was experienced differently in different regions and by different groups of people. The *peace accord* acknowledge this, and therefore presents the need to build peace from the territories, with the communities, from below.

This approach relate with the *epistemologías del sur* vision, that overall relates with the idea of peace from below, so to speak, recognizing the differences and diversity. For scholars that theorize about peace from the *epistemologías del sur* this imply deconstructing the classic paradigms of peace studies, and on the contrary embracing the ways in which the local build and understand peace.

The evidence recollected suggest tensions between a classic view to achieve peace and the ideas of peace from below, encouraged by the *epistemologías del sur*, but also by the *peace agreement*. For social leaders the road to follow is one based on citizen participation, building with togetherness, respecting, and complying with previous agreements and taking into consideration their agendas and historical claims.

The *peace accord* agree with this vision of peace building, but as one social leader puts it “del dicho al hecho hay mucho trecho” meaning saying is one thing, doing it is another. The experience of the PDET, and the data recollected shows how it has been more challenging for Colombia State to deploy exercises of peace from below, than what it was theoretical suggested.

In reality, it seems like peace building in Colombia have been following a different approach. Members of NGOs indicate how overall, the experience of building peace could be associated with the postulates of Galtung (1969,1996,2003). The six points of the *peace agreement* were created following the direct, structural, and cultural spheres proposed by the scholar. In order to build peace, the Colombian State and FARC agreed on first, eliminate violence from the picture, hence the points of *end of conflict*. Second, on dealing with the structural dimension of the conflict: *Comprehensive Rural Reform, Solution to the problem of illicit drugs and Political Participation*. Third, measurements towards the cultural sphere, *Truth, Reparation and Guarantees of non-repetition*.

This classic way of viewing peace building imply thinking of peace as an ordered and linear process, whereby following the steps in the correct order peace would be achieved. It presents risks when not understanding that the dimensions of the conflict are interconnected, and that in order to tackle one is necessary to tackle another. Additionally, this approach present difficulties when thinking that peace building is like a recipe, were no matter in which conditions, where or with whom its replicate it will be the solution to the conflict. On the contrary, the *epistemologías del sur* approach, proposes understanding peace building as a complex and differential process, where

territoriality, and diverse social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental factors are entangled and imply different ways to deal with conflict.

On the other hand, the data recollected regarding the PDET Montes de María suggest that the focus to build peace was not the one of peace from below, which I link together with the *epistemologías del sur* postulates, proposed by the *peace accord* and recognized by government officials as what in theory should been done. On the contrary, I associate the exercise of the PDET in Montes de María with the concepts of liberal and hybrid peace, explained in the *literature review and theoretical framework* chapter.

Liberal and hybrid peace relate to set core elements for globalized and liberal powers such as security, stabilization, and the extension of free market in the building of peace. Based on the work of Mac Ginty (2010) and Mac Ginty & Richmond (2013), I argue that liberal and hybrid peace imply technocratic solutions build with a top-down approach that in the end does not recognize the needs of the communities, and the rights of their territories and nature, but on the contrary present “solutions” that maintain the status quo as it is.

The critique of the PDET presented by social leaders (problems of calling, articulation with organizations agendas and specially regarding the land problematic and the discussion about the development model) invite us to consider that the participatory process of the PDET in the territory followed the ideas of a liberal and hybrid approach to peace.

As I have mention in the subchapter above, a territorial approach when building peace in Montes de María should imply discussing and presenting alternatives to paramilitarism, land dispossession, environmental depletion, and the implications for the people. It seems as this did not happen.

The data recollected invite to associate the PDET and the peace building in the territory with the models of hybrid and liberal peace, that as Mac Ginty (2010) refers to, do not tackle structural causes of the conflict, and on the contrary is interested in keeping the economic, social, and political structures as they are. For the PDET Montes de María, not discussing the ecological implications of the monoculture, agroindustry, and mining, especially in the *Nudo del Paramillo* and the still hidden relationship between paramilitarism and local elites, could relate to protect the economic interests of those that have had control over the territory for a long time.

Peace from the *epistemologías del sur* means decolonizing peace. Peace is a concept full of hegemonic and colonial burdens (Cruz, 2018; Fontan, 2013) that materialize themselves by concepts such as security, stabilization or economic development through monoculture, mining and agroindustry, as it is happening in the Montes de María, and as the data from the period in office of Iván Duque shows.

Decolonizing peace imply reflecting about decolonizing power and knowledge. As Maldonado (2007) argues, coloniality of power refers to the interrelation of forms of exploitation and domination, and coloniality of knowledge discusses the role of epistemology and the production of knowledge based on a colonial perspective. Following this perspective, knowledge has been built based on a Eurocentric perspective which related to strategies of colonialism and imperialism that have impacted differently the global north and south. Knowledge has been a tool for alienation, domination, and exploitation. Therefore, peace from the *epistemologías del sur* means rethinking peace from the territories, social organization and communities.

Rethinking peace *from the south* in Montes de María should take into consideration what peace means for the people. Peace means the effective enjoyment of economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights; access and restitution to land to live and work; embracing different development projects, such as *Buen Vivir*, *Vivir Sabroso*, *life plans or life projects*; measurements for gender and peace; and celebrating diversity and plurality.

From the perspective of decolonization and *epistemologías del sur*, peace means a long socio-cultural, political, economic and environmental construction process, in which differences and tensions are processed and overcome. It means a process based on respect and deliberation, the diverse actors in the territory effectively work together to build visions of peace. This also means acknowledging the complex causes of the conflict, and the challenges that imply to surpass them. (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Cruz, 2018; Fontan, 2013; Sandoval & Capera, 2020; and Martínez Guzmán, 2000)

Building peace in Montes de María imply processing tensions between a classic liberal model of peace that deep down is not interested in changing the structures of power and that do not consider peoples inputs as key vs an *epistemologías del sur* model, that plan from below and its deeply interested in recognizing social movements, organizations, and communities as key actors for peace.

4.7. Building peace from below

I have been linking building peace from below with *the epistemologías del sur*, that as I have explained, imply thinking about peace from a decolonial perspective. Various scholars have theorized about how classic development and modernity models, related to liberal and hybrid peace, depart from principles of domination, order, control, market and economic growth and environmental devastation associated with colonial perspectives. Critics to this approach relate to how economic interests are put first, and how peace means eliminating armed actors from areas with great economic potential. Montes de María has high natural resources and convenient routes for illegal economies, as well as presence of agroindustry, mining, and monoculture, which imply a great value for both local elites and illegal actors, that have been having control of the territory for a long time. (Escobar, 2003,2010; Girola, 2008; López 2009; Fals Borda, 2001, 2009; and Quijano; 2000)

Peace from below means changing the colonial approach related to economic interests and building a peace without content. Peace can't be achieved without tackling the causes of the conflict, which

for Montes de María imply challenging the agroindustry and its ecological destruction; the alliances between local elites and paramilitarism, the eradication of diversity and the land problematic. This won't be achieved from a perspective of peace that is not able to build from below, from the autonomy of communities and organizations, from an active and effective participation. (Sanchez Jiménez, 2018; Lederach, 2017).

Building peace from below implies decolonizing peace, ergo recognizing the diversity of views, practices and approaches to peace in the territory. Following the postulates of Cruz (2018) building peace from below involves high active and effective citizen participation, and conversation between different actors and projects. Peace should be the result of comprehending and confronting social struggles, historical causes of the conflict, and the projects of ancestral communities. For Montes de María, building peace from below implies a huge challenge, where the development model needs to be discussed; where truth and reparation should be achieved, and where the voices of the communities and leaderships must be heard.

As different scholars recognize, territories are multiples and complex, always in constant transformation; with shared traditions, sets of appropriation and collective memory. Building peace implies recognizing their richness, and the connections between them and the people. Recognizing local agendas and agencies; ethnic perspectives; women and social movements proposals; subalternity and identity are what make it *peace from below*. (Montañez, 2001; Mignolo 1996; Santos, 1997; Delgado, 2001; Giménez, 1999; Jacanamijoy, 2001).

4.8. Decentralization and participation, key to build peace from below?

Colombia has a tradition for decentralization and participation. As Velásquez (2010) shows, since the constitution of 1991, the country has tried to create an institutional apparatus for participation and decentralization as key elements for how the State operates. In addition, the Law 1757 and other public policies have established measurements towards citizen and political participation. However, and as evidenced by Velásquez (2010), Asela Molina (2015), Maldonado (2010) and Rengifo (2012), in reality decentralization and effective participation measurements stay on paper

and it is hard for them to reach the territories. The vast normative framework related to participation and decentralization in Colombia has not been able to assure that the decision-making process would be built side by side with the communities and organizations.

Members of social organizations are critical when referring to how participation have been understood in Montes de María. The State is to blame for people distrust and scepticism towards participation process. Many “participatory” processes have been conducted over the years, were people diagnosed and proposed solutions to different problematics in the territory, including land dispossession, *economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights, diversity and plurality, gender and peace and security*, all included in what people consider elements for peace. However, as one informant mentioned “there are just broken promises and disappointment”.

As different scholars recognize, participation can be used to strengthen democracy and good governance, but it can also be used as a formality for governments to argue that people agree with the plans and projects that they impulse. In the case of Montes de María, participation has been used in a complicit way with the agroindustry, mining, and monoculture. Participation has been either null, due to paramilitary control; a simple requirement to fulfil; or an illusion to make communities and organizations believe that they had a saying in the decision-making process.

The PDET and the *peace accord* in general presented an opportunity for participation and decentralization to actually happen. However, as explained by members of NGOs and the OPIAF, the development of these measurements is considerably low. Colombian State has not been able to settle its historic debt to properly implement citizen participation in the decision-making process. The peace process presented an opportunity to promote accountability, transparency, local participation and challenge the traditional political power in the regions. The challenge is still valid.

In addition, the non-existence of the Law of Guarantees for organizations and social movements and the delay in core measurements for participation in the term of Ivan Duque make it more

difficult for organizations and communities to leave behind their scepticisms towards the effective implementing of citizen participation when building peace.

Decentralization and citizen participation are key to build peace from below. I argue that the only way to change the socio-economic, cultural, political, and environmental conditions of the communities is by including them in the decision-making process. Effective participation is key to strengthen democracy and *peace from below*, and a long-lasting peace cannot be achieved unless civil society actively participate in its building.

4.9. A renewed political environment: Paz Total and the National Development Plan 2022-2026: Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida

In 2022 Gustavo Petro was elected president of Colombia. Social leaders and members of NGOs considered his election a show of optimism for peace building, after the four-year term of extreme right-wing Ivan Duque. Petro comes from the union and student movement of the 70s, was a member of the M-19 guerrilla, and has a long political career. In the modern history of Colombia, is the first left wing politician to become president.

For being close with social fights, there are high expectations regarding what his term can achieve towards peace building and tackling inequalities and human rights problematics. The optimism of the informants towards this new government relate to his commitments towards a decarbonized economy, sustainability, and the reduction of poverty.

Hence, the 2022-2026 national development plan *Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida* present a renewed political environment with opportunities to build peace from below. The planning tool present: a territorial ordering around water, were environment and safeguard of biodiversity are essential; measurements towards the right to food; decentralization, participation, and regional alliances; and a proposal for peace building, *paz total*.

Paz Total is a subchapter of the national development plan composed by 5 axes: territories, de-escalation of violence, dialogue, a government of peace, and peace culture. It propose is to achieve the implementation of the *peace accord*; effectively protect human rights and the security of social leaders, communities, and organizations in the territories; strengthen social participation, collective reparation, and land restitution; put into action the recommendations of the CEV; and carry out negotiations with the illegal actors that still have presence in the regions.

Members of NGOs have a positive outlook on the chapter of *paz total* due its commitment to peace building and the recognition of the *peace accord* as an essential tool to achieve peace. However, they propose the linkage of these measurements with the national budget through the actualization of the PMI; the inclusion of the public policy of peace, reconciliation, no stigmatisation and coexistence and the law of Guarantees for organizations and social movements; and the possibility to modify the PDETs, in regions where their participatory process was insufficient.

The Paz Total and the National Development Plan 2022-2026: Colombia, potencia mundial de la vida presents opportunities to build peace from below, were communities and social organizations could play an important role in deciding the future for their territories. In the end, as all informants agree to, peace without effective participation and a territorial approach won't be long and lasting. The challenges to the current government and the implementing of this ambitious development plan imply achieving cohesion and articulation between the institutions of the State; breaking the historical debt of taking the state to the territories; making effective citizen participation a reality and process the hidden powers with economic interests in the territories.

Chapter 5 *Final Considerations*

In the introduction section, I mention that armed conflict have exacerbated poverty, inequality, and violence in Colombia, and that the PDET could be a relevant tool in order to tackle these problematics. At the same time, I argue that a territorial peace and peace from below focus is the only way to achieve peace. In this chapter I will show the main findings of my thesis, and how they relate to these postulates. I will also briefly discuss areas of future interest.

5.1. Local Implications of the Conflict

Colombian conflict is complex, and imply tensions between economic, political, social, cultural, and environmental factors. As a consequence, the conflict has been experienced differently in different areas of the country. It relates to political and citizen participation issues, and a very unequal distribution of land, that is reflected in excessive concentration of rural property, land grabbing and exploitation, lack of property titles and agrarian reforms that benefit those in power.

In the Montes de María, the conflict relates to an unequal land management and distribution; strategies of local elites and powers to achieve and hold power; the control of key natural resources areas, as the ‘Nudo del Paramillo’; and the terrible consequences of paramilitarism as a key factor in the territory.

Landlords and local elites have deployed different strategies to hold and achieve political and territorial control, including controlling and manipulating the state institutions, making alliances with paramilitaries, and elaborating public policy that allow them to hold the uneven land distribution. Social movements and citizen participation has not been wanted, and paramilitaries have been key in the expulsion and displacement of peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian peasants from their territories to develop agroindustry in the countryside.

Land grabbing and dispossession, and its implications in the communities (forced displacement, killings, disappearances, massacres) relate to accumulation practices from local elites and powers

in order to increase monoculture, mining, and agroindustry. These practices have ecological consequences in the ways of life of peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people; the agricultural frontier; the National Natural Park 'Nudo del Paramillo' and Colombian rainforest.

5.2.PDET

One of the main focus of my thesis was to assess how the PDET Montes was build, and if it managed to put a territorial approach in practice. This implied that the PDET should have counted with the effective and active participation of organizations and communities that inhabit the territory; developed plans and initiatives to achieve peace with them; and propose routes of control and verification that involved participation as a key component.

In theory, the PDET is a valuable participation tool for the construction of territorial peace and the transformation of inequities, violence, and poverty, with the potential to promote territorial development, the effective enjoyment of rights, decentralization, and citizen participation. However, the data recollected both from Montes de María and in the national level show that in practice there were problems of calling, articulation with other State Institutions, recognition of a gender a peace component, and articulation with alternative plans from the territories and its organizations and communities.

One of the biggest critics from social organizations and NGOs is about the restrictive methodology proposed by the ART. Using the same methodological categories all over the country goes against the participatory spirit of the PDET and the Peace Accord and made it difficult for the organizations and communities to reflect about territorial specificities.

The PDET is a valuable exercise for Colombian planning, since it opens the doors to planning from below initiatives, where communities and organizations have the chance to decide the priorities for their territories. However, effectively assuring building peace from below imply a better

articulation between State institutions, with alternative development plans, and with the diversity in the territory. Tackling these challenges is essential to build peace in Colombia.

5.3. Participation

Citizen participation is a general approach of the Peace Accord, especially regarding planning, following and execution of plans and programs contained by it. It is also materialized in 114 participatory tasks, including the PDET. The findings of this research show that the participation measurements is very low. Just 8% of them were completed in 2021, after 5 years of implementation.

This is worrisome, because the Peace Accord consider citizen participation a key element for the success of peace in Colombia. Peace from below, and a territorial focus means that those that inhabit the territories, are the ones who know what is needed to achieve peace. If citizen participation strengthen democracy, good governance and facilitate bottom-up development interventions, its effective implementing implicates challenges about accountability, transparency, budgeting, and overall, a question of power.

5.4. Visions of peace

The findings show that there are different visions of Peace in Montes de María. From the Peace Accord and the PDET, peace have to be built from below, recognizing the needs and wishes of peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombian people in the territory. From a governmental perspective, building peace means dealing with the factors of the conflict and creating economic alternatives in the territory. My impression is that this vision focus more in creating economic growth than in tackling the causes and implications of the conflict in the territory.

For peasant, indigenous and Afro-Colombians in the Montes de María peace means tackling the causes of the conflict, and recovering their economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights. A human rights perspective in peace building seems essential to achieve peace for them. Additionally,

peace imply recognizing diversity and plurality; a women an LGTB and peace focus, and a real land policy. Without land restitution it is impossible to build peace.

There are also tensions between different understandings of development, and how they relate to build peace. For organizations and communities, emergent agendas such as *Buen Vivir*, *Vivir Sabroso* or life projects focus on a collective understanding of the territory, celebrating language, culture, memory, and water. This emergent agendas fight with traditional understandings of development that in order to expand extractive projects destroy the environment and do not care about the relations with and in the territories.

5.5. Peace

I argue, based on the findings, that peacebuilding in Colombia should be understood from *epistemologías del sur* paradigm, embracing the ways in which the local build and understand peace. Visions of peace from the territories can be different and multiple. Therefore, building peace imply recognizing differences and particular economic, social, cultural, environmental, and cultural factors in the territory, instead of following a recipe step by step.

Liberal and classic approaches to peace propose technocratic solutions build with a top-down approach, that instead of recognizing the needs and rights of communities, territories and nature, present “solutions” that maintain the status quo. The Montes de María case shows that this approach benefit the agroindustry and the powers that have had territorial control over the years.

Peacebuilding should have effective and active participation as a key component; recognize causes and implications of the conflict and use historical analysis in order to tackle problematics such as poverty and inequality. Peace can't be achieved without tackling the causes of the conflict. Hence, building peace from below imply decolonizing peace, ergo recognizing the diversity of views, practices and approaches to peace and acknowledge the complex economic, social, political,

cultural, and environmental relations in the territory, the colonial influence, and the uneven relation between global south and north.

Territories are multiples and always in constant transformation. A territorial approach to peace needs to recognize and celebrate these differences and put them in use when proposing alternatives for peace and peacebuilding.

5.6.Areas for further reseach

My master thesis focus on the PDET, and if their implementation and construction contributed to achieving territorial peace, which is one big focus of the Peace Accord. I was also very interested in researching about the visions of peace in the territory. What does peace means for social organizations and communities? Are they recognized in the PDET?

I noticed that what peace means for peasants, indigenous and Afro-Colombians is not necessarily shared in the Montes de María. There are tensions between the way social organizations understand the territory and the mining and agro-industrial projects. They don't see it as the rich geographical space, full of complex social, political, cultural, economic, and environmental relations, but as an empty vessel, where natural resources are available. This notion imply ecological problematics that affect the territory and the people that inhabit it.

I argue that in Montes de María extractive projects and how they have been processed by local elites and the Colombian State relate to land grabbing and dispossession, forced displacement, killings, disappearances, and massacres. In this understanding, the 'Nudo del Paramillo' plays an important role, due its concentration of natural resources for extractivism, and the amount of water sources that flow into different areas of the region and bigger rivers in the country.

I would like to explore more the connection between water and extractivism. The findings shown that the inflow of water was diverted to supply monoculture of oil palm and mining. Water is key for food, climate, energy, and agriculture, but also for how people understand and relate to their territory. What could be the ecological implications of changing its inflow? How does water relate to building peace?

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