# International Institute of Social Studies

*Puentes de Esperanza:*
**Participation in the Territorial Development Programs (PDET) as Transformation and Reparation for Positive Peacebuilding in Urabá Antioqueño, Colombia**

A Research Paper

by:

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# Acknowledgements

## Paz

Más allá de esta nube de ceniza
el hombre espera.

Espera que la sombra le devuelva
su herencia de esperanza,
su antiguo mapa transparente.

El hombre quiere un poco de silencio
para que el hijo diga su primera palabra.

Esa palabra
que nunca es guerra,
que nunca es muerte.

<div align="right"><em>Maruja Vieira</em></div>

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## Acronym Dictionary[1]

ART: Agency for Territorial Renovation

FARC-EP: Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia – People's Army

JEP: Especial Jurisdiction for Peace

PDET: Development Programs with Territorial Approach

PART: Action Plans for Regional Transformation

PMTR: Municipal Pacts for Territorial Transformation

SIIPO: Integrated System of Information for the Post-conflict

DANE: National Administrative Department of Statistics

CDR: Community-Driven Reconstruction

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[1] The names were translated from Spanish for clarity in the document.

# Abstract

Since 2016, after the signature of the peace agreement, Colombia has been facing a post-conflict process that, according to the Peace Agreement (2016), seeks for positive peacebuilding, contributing to the development of the areas that were most affected by the war, encouraging the reincorporation of ex-combatants into civil society, reducing the cocaine crops, working for transitional justice, recognition of victims, among other goals. This research paper will seek to analyse participation evaluating how the community contributed to the process of decision-making in planning and implementing the Rural Reform in the Territorial Development Programs (PDET for its name in Spanish) municipalities of Urabá Antioqueño. The PDET will last only for 10 years, and it has already been 7 years since they started, for which it is important to do research on them, to acknowledge some of the issues around them (only the participation in this case), and truly understand what has happened after the Peace Agreement was signed.

## Relevance to Development Studies

There are different positions and theories regarding the importance of citizen participation in public policy. In this case, the PDET developed a strategy in which the participation of the inhabitants in the regions was crucial to empower the communities, and that they could take responsibility for their territories and present their needs as the basis of the public policy, and then become a part it during the execution. This empowerment was proposed also to repair the communities for the conflict, putting them as the central axis, and as main actors. Therefore, it is important to understand how much participation can contribute to peacebuilding, how much a process that puts communities as the basis of its structurization can be effective during its planning, and how much can power structures be deconstructed, while achieving representativeness of all the communities in each region.

Considering the violent history of a country like Colombia and considering that the FARC-EP remained active for more than 50 years, it seems important to acknowledge how the Peace Agreement can transform territories that were affected by this group for so long, and where several generations had to live under violent conditions and forced recruitment. Moreover, to understand which strategies are being executed to contribute to the development of these areas and to reduce the big gap between the countryside and the urban areas. The Colombian case could serve as an example of other places with long conflicts, especially with guerrillas, and territories abandoned by the state due to those conflicts.

## Keywords

PDET, Participation, Peacebuilding, Reparation, Representativeness, Social Justice.

# Chapter 1 Introduction: About Peacebuilding and PDET

*Pido la palabra, quien quiera escuchar*
*Para alzar mi voz en medio de tanto miedo*
*(…) Para tejer conmigo un puente*
*Un Puente de Esperanza,*

- *Vuelve – Marta Gómez*

The Peace Agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia – People's Army guerrilla (FARC-EP for its name in Spanish[2]) has meant a new chapter in Colombian History. After more than 50 years of war, in 2016 it started a process for peacebuilding and territorial transformation in Colombia, as the Truth Commission (2022) claimed, "the country is trying to overcome the anomaly of a violent democracy' (Truth Commission, 2022, p.91). With six main points, the Peace Agreement acknowledges how the war affected specifically certain areas in the country, mostly rural.

For these areas, strategies such as the Development Programs with Territorial Approach (PDET for its name in Spanish) were created, to encourage the different communities – understood as women, Indigenous groups, Afro-Colombian groups, farmers, artisans, victims of the conflict, small business owners, inhabitants of the different regions, young people, LGTBQ+, fishermen and livestock farmers, disabled, and elders) all over the country to participate and contribute to the transformation of their territories and to peacebuilding. In this sense, the participation of different actors to build initiatives towards these goals was very important, and a goal itself, to empower people to become active participants in their communities and have a role in the decision-making process of the projects for development. However, from planning initiatives to turning them into projects and then implementing those projects, the roles of the actors changed, and not necessarily for good purposes. In this research, the main target is to understand the mechanisms of participation in two different stages, from planning to implementation, specifically in the region of Urabá Antioqueño.

Considering the violent history of Urabá, the importance it has due to its geographical location, and the active roles that members of the communities that inhabit the region, such as social leaders, have in different activities and government calls, it is a key region to understand and analyse how participation has changes and how it has contributed to recover governance and to peacebuilding.

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[2] The quotes and names from documents originally written in Spanish were translated by the author.

## 1.1. The Hope for Peace

In the Colombia's history, as claimed by the Truth Commission (2022)

> "The process of democratization to consolidate a nation-state, has come with pacification strategies. In the last three decades, there have been multiple attempts to build a stable and durable peace from which three are the most remarkable: The National Front in 1958, the constituent process that finished in 1991, and the Peace Agreement with FARC-EP in 2016" (Truth Commission, 2022, p.91).

For this last one, as InSight Crime (2023) mentioned, the FARC-EP guerrilla is the longest-lived guerrilla in Colombia and fought for the control of several territories, to gain political scope, and to obtain economic resources to finance their activities, especially through the drug trade at various levels.

Despite several attempts to achieve a peace agreement between the government and the guerilla, it wasn't until 2016, during the government of Juan Manuel Santos, that the negotiations for the Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP guerrilla culminated. Since then, Colombia has been facing a post-conflict process that, according to the Peace Agreement (2016), seeks peacebuilding, contributing to the development of the areas that were most affected by the war, encouraging the reincorporation of ex-combatants into civil society, reducing the cocaine crops, working for transitional justice, recognition of victims, among other goals.

However, as Calderon (2016) claims, the Peace Agreement is the starting point to achieving a stable and lasting peace in Colombia, but it does not guarantee that structural violence will end. It represents a search for peace and democracy including of sectors that did not participate in the past. The agreement's success comes with how it is implemented, and which strategies are introduced to guarantee peace.

For instance, peacebuilding in Colombia is a huge goal, considering that as claimed by Morato (2022), the country has gone through several violent scenarios with different groups that have had different political ideas and goals, from multiple guerrillas to paramilitaries and criminal gangs, as well as the drug trafficking cartels and the micro-trafficking bands, which has affected most of the country but especially certain regions in the countryside. In Urabá, for example, as shown by Monroy (2013), the conflict was more crude and violent, due to the presence of guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug trafficking cartels. The FARC-EP arrived in the 70s, taking advantage of its privileged geographical location, affecting the inhabitants of the region, not only by occupying the area and exercising power over it, but with constant disputes with different paramilitary groups and drug cartels, causing massacres that left an estimated 512.391

victims according to the Victims Unit, from homicide, forced displacement, kidnapping, and rape, among other human rights violations. The Peace Agreement meant a light of hope for regions like Urabá, and an opportunity to start healing from the conflict.

Furthermore, the Peace Agreement consists of six main points: 1. Towards a new Colombian countryside: Integral Rural Reform, 2. Political Participation: Democratic opening to build peace, 3. End of the Conflict, 4. Solutions to the illicit drug problem. 5. Agreement on the victims of the conflict: Integral System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and No Repetition, including the Especial Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP for its name in Spanish), and 6. Implementation, Verification, and Countersigning. Every point has different goals and mechanisms of implementation, but they are all linked together in the Implementation Framework Plan. For this research paper, the focus will be only on the first point (Integral Rural Reform), considering that the mechanisms of participation and implementation that will be analysed, and the areas in which those mechanisms are used, are based on the first point of the agreement and the proper execution of the Integral Rural Reform.

The Integral Rural Reform changes the legal frame of access and use of land to overcome poverty and inequality in rural areas, to provide better life conditions to the inhabitants of those areas. The main objective is to allow the production and provision of basic goods and services, increase job opportunities, and guarantee better conditions for the countryside, including security and justice, considering their dependence on land production.

Although the Rural Reform has a national scope, there are some areas where the conflict was more intense and where a more accelerated implementation is sought to reduce the gap between the countryside and the urban areas. To increase the response capacity of the government, according to the policy document CONPES 893 of 2017, the special programs PDET were created to prioritize those rural areas with a higher impact of the conflict (PDET is the name given to the strategy and the nickname given to all municipalities selected to be part of it). These programs are the mechanism to develop strategies and focus resources for the implementation of the Rural Reform. The programs PDET themselves have eight key points, as shown in Table 1 with the rest of the structure of the Peace Agreement.

**Figure 1. Structure of the Peace Agreement**
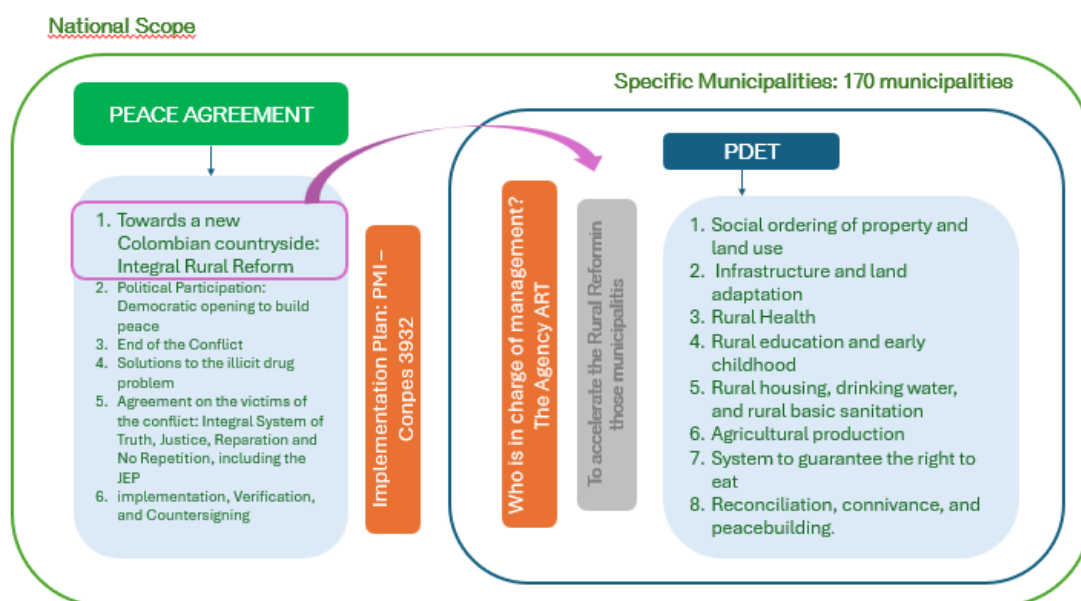
Source: Made by the author based on the Peace Agreement and the CONPES 893 of 2017

Moreover, according to the policy document for the Implementation Framework Plan – Equivalent to the legal document CONPES 3932 which is the official policy document established by the National Planning Department – the PDET were created to intervene in 16 subregions with the 170 most affected municipalities, selected based on the criteria of being the municipalities with higher poverty and inequality, presence of illicit crops, illegal mining and low institutional development. Furthermore, the PDET have a duration of 10 years, in which it is expected that the Rural Reform achieves satisfactory progress, improving the variables from the criteria, and with the participation of the communities.

On top of that, the Agency for Territorial Renovation (ART for its name in Spanish) was created to manage and coordinate all duties related to the PDET, and, according to Act 2366 of 2015, it has the mission to articulate and coordinate the intervention to the public, private, communitarian, and academic sectors, for the transformation of PDET municipalities, strengthening the participation of the community and the differential, gender, ethnic and population approaches.

To develop this task, the ART (2018) implemented the Action Plans for Regional Transformation (PATR for its name in Spanish) which are the documents that resulted from the planning process holding all the initiatives proposed by the communities and setting the baseline for the implementation. Every subregion has a PART, there are 16 PART, and every municipality a detailed document called Municipal Pacts for Regional Transformation (PMTR for its name in Spanish), with the information of the initiatives for each of the 170 municipalities. For the scope of this research the focus will be on one PART for

Urabá and eight PMTR for the PDET municipalities in that region. It is to be noted that these documents were the result of the participation process for the planning of the PDET, involving the different inhabitants in Urabá, where different communities live together, such as country dwellers, ethnic groups, victims of the conflict, women, and local government.

It is important to emphasize the different approaches the Peace Agreement and the PDET have. Both of them seek to have territorial, gender, differential, appreciative, ethnicity, and victims approaches, for which the participatory mechanism developed must intend to have an important component of intersectionality with representatives of victims, ethnic groups, women, LGTBQ+ community, farmers, territorial entities, and members of the community, participating in these spaces, who will follow the designated route – to be described in detail further ahead – to develop tools that can become projects and programs and can be presented to the government and completed in the future. Furthermore, every participatory space is developed under eight basic pillars, which helped the discussions to have order and each participant assumes a different and more relevant role depending on the pillar of their choosing: 1. Social ordering of property and land use, 2. Infrastructure and land adaptation, 3. Rural health, 4. Rural education and early childhood, 5. Rural housing, drinking water, and rural basic sanitation, 6. Agricultural production, 7. System to guarantee the right to eat, an 8. Reconciliation, connivance, and peacebuilding.

In addition, the first round of assemblies was done between 2018 and 2019 after the PDET were defined. According to the ART, around 33.000 initiatives resulted from these activities, of which 14.000 have active implementation routes, 12.000 are already part of development plans, and the rest remain as initiatives. This scenario is important given that as stated in the Peace Agreement, allowing the community to participate was a way to understand what was needed from the vision of the inhabitants who have to face everyday challenges related to the abandonment of the state because of the conflict, and a way to repair them and guarantee that their needs are heard and that they will be attended, as well as a recognition of their vulnerabilities and the particularities of each population group, from women to ethnic groups and country people.

Specifically in the region of Urabá, there are 1.641 initiatives, 324 ethnic initiatives, 105 gender initiatives and 56 regional initiatives, that apply to Urabá more than to specific municipalities. Of the total initiatives, 707 have active implementation plans, and 623 are part of development plans.

## 1.2. Description of the Problem: The Bridge

The 170 municipalities that were prioritized for the PDET are organized as shown in the following map:

**Figure 2. PDET distributed in Colombia**
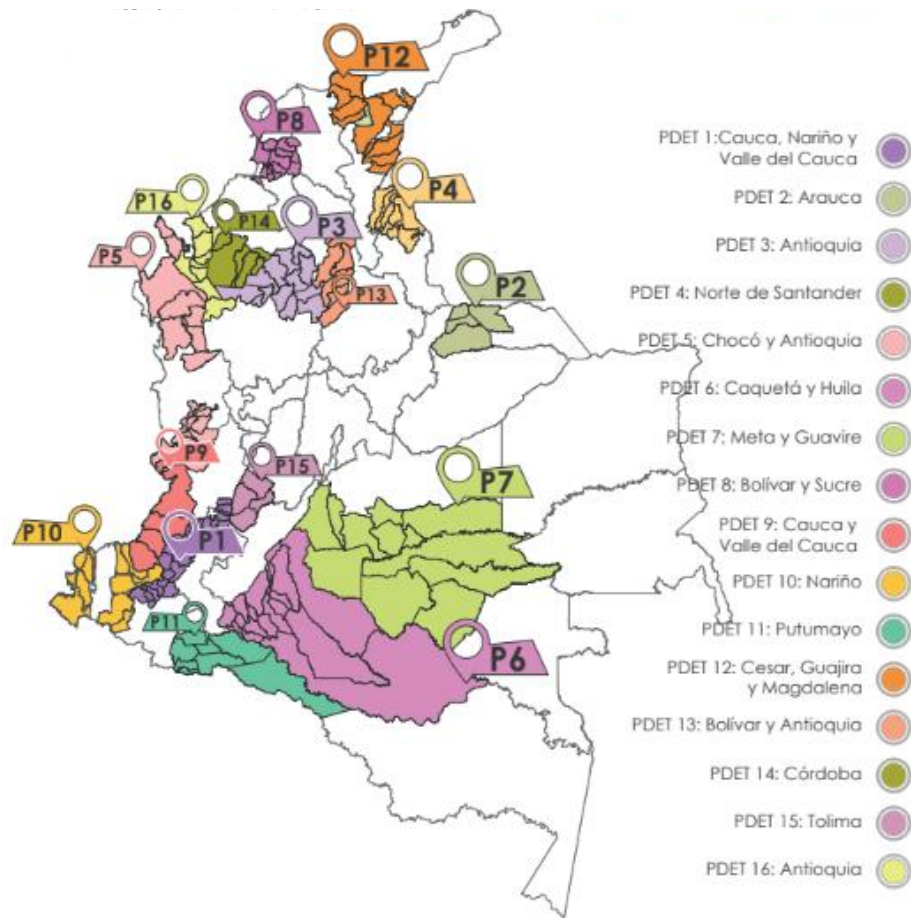
Source: Cespaz (2018)

The guideline of the PART, according to the ART (2017) begins with an enlistment stage, in which communication pieces are delivered in all municipalities and villages around, there is a prepared staff for each dialogue space, the actors are identified and analysed according to their characteristics, and the planning documents and material about programs and projects existing are explored to understand the baseline for each municipality. After that, there is a pre-assembly to arrange the schedule of the process, the participants are informed about the dynamic step by step, and some opportunities and challenges are already identified to facilitate the dialogues in a coherent way and with knowledge of the facts. With the identification of the actors, Motor Groups are formed for each municipality, which are groups made up of community members, and social leaders, both designated by the communities themselves. These groups represent the communities in the villages and validate the vision of the territory for 2028, they are also encouraged to meet periodically with the ART to verify the progress of the implementation. When the assemblies in the villages took place, with the moderation of the trained staff from the national al local government, a Community Pact is achieved. The next step is the municipal pre-commissions, dialogues with the municipalities, organized similarly to the previous assemblies but with more participants, where the PMTR is intended to be reached. With both

pacts, the community and municipal, a final assembly takes place with the participation of the motor groups and representatives from the municipalities of each subregion, a space to harmonize all pacts, and finally come out with a PART. The final step is called Devolution, where the government is now accountable for communicating the result of the process and the following steps to continue with participatory scenarios for the implementation and citizen oversight.

**Figure 3. Participation Scheme in the planning stage**
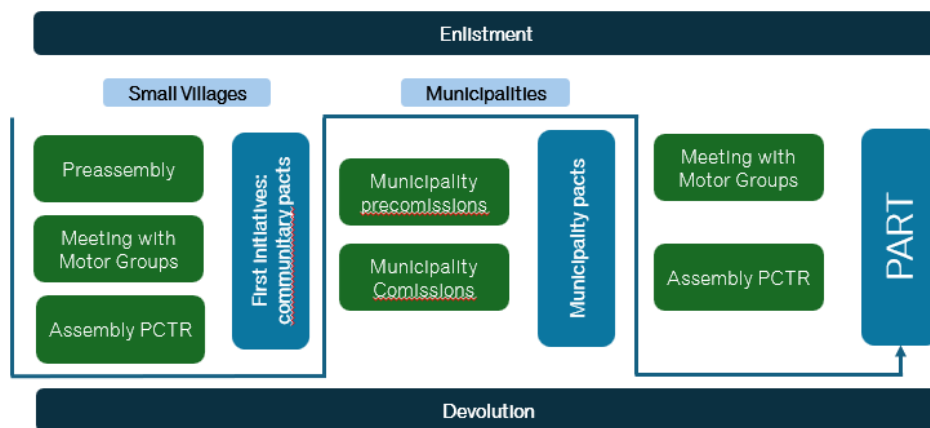


Source: ART (2017)

After understanding how the process works while building the PARTs, one gap arises regarding how the community was going to be approached to encourage them to participate and become an essential part of their own development, and who were the actors targeted to participate. Despite the details around the enlistment stage, there is not much detail on which incentives were given to achieve representativeness during the process, and to underline what the community understands as participation and how being part of this process was going to contribute to their transformative reparation of the regions following the path of a positive peacebuilding.

Moreover, the mechanism of participation during the planning process is clearly described, but the steps that follow to transform the initiatives into plans are not clear, especially on how the community will be involved in the decision-making process. According to the Implementation Framework Plan (2018), the PART were going to be integrated into the Territorial Development plan that each local government has to propose at the beginning of their time in office, to set the main guideline for all the activities and goals to be achieved during that government. This was a way to guarantee that the PART had linked programs that last for longer terms than the four years each governor has, and a way to strengthen governance and legitimacy during the implementation process. However, this also represents a gap considering that the Peace Agreement states that the community should be involved in this part of the exercise, and for

so, each governor should set a path for that participation to happen and to have continuous execution with all the actors well identified and the projects well defined.

As participation arises as a mechanism of transformative reparation for the community and a way to achieve social justice for the most affected areas, it is important to fill those gaps, or at least to understand what has happened behind the paper, guaranteeing no repetition and transformation for the regions, providing a guideline that will make the community know that they their voices mean something and will build the baselines to the programs and projects in which they are involved and that are built to provide a better quality of life, being this the main core in this research. The community is also addressed in the Peace Agreement with an essential role in monitoring and overseeing what the initiatives turn out to be, and how are they participating in this process as agents of transformation, who is participating, and contrast how those things were raised in the planning process.

In 2020, during the government of Ivan Duque, the ART came out with a guideline to organize and prioritize existing PDET initiatives, considering there are more than 33.000 initiatives proposed by the actors in the territories (ART, 2020). The path to make that identification and prioritize initiatives incorporating programs and budget is not clear, but, in this case, the actors targeted to participate were more explicit according to the ART: victims, women organizations, motor groups, private sector, international cooperation actors, entities, control entities, local governments, young people, ex-combatants, LGBTQ+ representatives, and academia.

From the definition of this guideline to achieving clear implementation plans, there is not much information, and is not clear how the community is being involved or if there is any advance on this matter. In 2022, when the government of Gustavo Petro started, a new roadmap was under consideration, and the way to approach the community is uncertain, as it is the future and proper incorporation of the PART and the transformation for peacebuilding that was promised.

## 1.3. Research Questions

Through this research, I seek to understand the participation process as an instrument of transformative reparation for the PDET municipalities, being the community the main actor of the process in the two different phases from planning and developing initiatives, to implementation when those initiatives are transformed into programs and projects. As there are just four years left for the implementation of the strategies from the PART, I intend to analyse the stages of participation where the community forms an essential part, comparing different sources of data and understanding it from different actors.

### 1.5.1 Research question(s)

**The main question:** How have the communities in the PDET participated in the planning process of the Rural Reform compared to the participation in the implementation process in the Urabá region?

**Sub questions:**

- Who was involved and what are the roles of the participants in both processes in the eight municipalities in the PDET in the Urabá region?
- What are the participatory mechanisms being used by the local and national governments to involve the communities in Urabá in the implementation of the Rural Reform for the PDET?
- What are the limitations and potentials identified by the actors involved in the PDET, to achieve the objectives of the PDET in Urabá through their active participation?
  How has the participation in the PDET contributed to peacebuilding in Urabá according to the communities?

# 1.4. Justification and relevance of this research

The conflict in Colombia with the FARC-EP guerrilla can be considered a long-term conflict as stated by Azar (1990) due to the difficulties in its resolutions, the time taken to achieve a peace agreement, and the absence of state presence in many areas, among others. The Peace Agreement is a big opportunity to move forward in the peacebuilding process, reducing the gap between the countryside and the big cities and offering the communities better opportunities.

However, considering the diversity that Colombia has, the strategies for a better life quality need to respond to that diversity and not promote that there is a special magical formula for development that works in every context. In this scenario only through understanding the positionality and perspectives of the communities and the needs that they identified in their own context, it is possible to develop better action plans that involve the community through participation scenarios. The Peace Agreement and the PDET were formulated considering active participation methodologies, but, as the PDET only last for 10 years, the methodologies and results from the participation processes should be precise and have clear paths on how the community is participating by now, how social justice is being achieved using participation as a way of reparation and transformation between the meetings, to the implementation of the plans that should be having place by now.

Despite there is concern about how well the peace agreement has been implemented and resulted in transformation for victims, affected communities, ethnic groups, women, rural women, and so on, studies like Nieto (2022) just

focus on the statistics of poverty, education, agricultural production, economic reactivation, or transparency, leaving behind building positive peace construction through reparation and social justice. One way to evaluate the reparation of the communities is by undermining if they became active participants in changing their stories.

Moreover, still today there are conflict zones and active groups against the law, that undermine the efforts to build a peaceful country, less unequal, with lower poverty levels and better life quality for all Colombians. Therefore, every lesson from the actual process also determines future possibilities for peace, involving the communities that have had to face violence for several years. As stated by the ART (2018),

> "Achieving sustainable transformations in the territories is a complex task that requires openness (to the new, unknown, and divergent positions), appreciation of the diversity (to foster creativity), new ways of thinking, feeling and doing (to develop and strengthening the capacities for peace and coexistence)." (no page).

For instance, in regions like Urabá where the conflict with the FARC-EP affected the communities with thousands of massacres – as Monroy (2013 detailed) – every effort made towards peacebuilding is necessary, but after decades of conflict it also becomes necessary to have effectiveness in those efforts, involving also the communities to empower them and to involve them in the public policy that is made for the transformation of the territory they live in, and where fear and violence was a daily reality.

# Chapter 2 Understanding participation, peacebuilding and PDET

## 2.1. About the PDET in Colombia and its contribution to peacebuilding

About the PDET and the implementation of the Peace Agreement, there has been a lot of research with different approaches. Specifically, regarding how the implementation process has been done, Nieto & Velasco (2021) made an impact evaluation of the implementation of the pillars of economic recovery and agricultural production, peacebuilding, education, as well as the transversal dimensions of municipal performance and transparency. The project presented a quantitative methodology mixing differences and differences for impact evaluation, and surveys made to street-level bureaucrats in the Majors of the PDET municipalities. These last ones were done to have more information about their perception of the implementation of the Rural Reform. The results show that the PDET reduce violence and victimization events, increase the eradication of illicit crops, but for the rest of the dimensions mentioned, there is not a significant difference. They suggest that the participation of the communities is important to strengthen the formulation and construction of the initiatives in the PART to be implemented. They also argue that collectively building public policy from the planning, monitoring, and implementing process, would contribute to adjusting the expectations of the citizens about the PDET and the real capacity of the local governments to achieve all the initiatives purposed. Added to that, they argue that the PART should be updated periodically with the participation of the communities so that they respond to the current needs of the communities as they change with time.

In the same way, the Foundation Ideas for Peace (2022), an NGO that works actively contributing to peacebuilding in Colombia, researched how to build new strategies to achieve the goals of the Rural Reform, without the same traps that kept the municipalities in the PDET abandoned by the state. They give a general overview of the progress of the PDET in the main goals of the Rural Reform and provide five key points to have a better performance. Three of the strategies focus on participation. One gives a pragmatic vision of citizen participation in which they suggest that there should be more clarity regarding who and in which moment the communities can participate, suggesting a methodology of participation circles in which there are three circles: one defines who are the active participants, the second sets who will cooperate and the third who will only receive information of the process. The second suggests that there should be a better connection between the local governments, the national government, and the communities regarding participation, creating new instances of

participation allows the local institutions and civil society to converge and acquire additional tools to implement the Rural Reform more efficiently. The third strategy is about repeating, iterating, and fluctuating the participatory planning process that was done, considering how big and new it was to include the communities directly into the planning process of their own territories.

Moreover, specifically for the Urabá region, Pedraza, Cadavid and Duarte (2024), analysed political participation in the post-conflict scenario, considering the social movements in Urabá, and the participation in politics of the communities before and after the Peace Agreement, in a context where fear and co-optation decimated the socio-political scene. This study was conducted using semi-structured interviews with social leaders with experience and knowledge about the situation of the subregion. The research explains how just after the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, the social manifestations in Urabá increased in relation to previous years but reduced again in 2017. About participation in mayoral elections, the authors found that it increased after the Peace Agreement, but not considerably. Participants manifest that citizen participation has increased, but there is still a lot of fear and the PDET was a good opportunity for people to be active participants, but it is not enough when it comes to political participation.

These different investigations all point to the importance of participation as a condition for the PDET's success. They also point to the need for participation to be a continuous feature of the PDET to develop connections between the government and communities.

## 2.2. Framework: Participation and other associated terms

### Participation

In development and humanitarian studies, the concept of participation became a base and a starting point to generate social transformation and empowerment, especially for vulnerable groups whose voices might not be recognized by the people in power who are accountable for the decision-making process. As described by Arnstein (1969) and White (1996), participation models can be an instrument for "citizen power" for whom he called powerless people to get benefits as citizens that the powerholders already have because of their position. The methodology of participation stated by the PDET seeks to give the different communities benefits to gain citizen power and be the ones who define what is needed and how can it be ideally done, empowering them not only to participate but to become agents of change. The PART are potential planning instruments built from the perspective of the communities, resulting from representative and transformative participation processes – following White's (1996) categories –

that contribute to peacebuilding, social territorial transformation, and empowerment of all participants.

Furthermore, it is important to understand effective participation and how it can be analysed in this research, considering participation as a way of social transformation. According to Wilcox (1994), in the Guide for Effective Participation, there are five stances for participation: 1. Information, 2. Consultation, 3. Deciding together, 4. Acting together and 5. Supporting independent communities' interests. Every stance sets different levels of participation in which it seeks to have common knowledge over the decision-making process and encourage the stakeholders to participate, while there is a proper understanding of where the process stands from the beginning, considering how power and power relationships develop in every context, understanding them as "the ability of the different interests to achieve what they want. Power will depend on who has information and money, and also depends on people's confidence and skills" (Wilcox, 1994, p. 6). Following this, the process of participation in the PDET can be understood as an effective participation model process that sets a chain of stages to understand the information, encourage stakeholders, and provide proper spaces to participate, but in which it is relevant to identify power relationships, as it this research intent in the analysis section, considering who was in charge of making decisions during the participation process and what was the role of that people.

### *About Governance, Decentralization and Participation*

According to the ART, the participation methodology used for the PDET was based on the Kerala Model of Development, in India, enhanced in 1996 as a decentralization model of planning to achieve sustainable development for the province of Kerala – south India – in which citizen participation is one of the main tools. According to Villasante (2012), the model achieved good results in increasing life expectancy, literacy, rural development, and gender equality, among other social indicators. Following Veron (2001), the model suggests that:

> "Sustainable environmental management can only occur where active local-level support and participation exist. Particularly in less developed countries, community participation is believed to be the most effective strategy because people depend directly on their local physical environment and thus have a genuine interest in protecting it" (Veron, 2001, p.604).

According to different authors (Harilal[3] & Isaac, 1997; Kannan & Pillai, 2004; Villasante, 2012), by decentralizing the planning process to develop strategies, potential synergies between the state and civil society could be created and

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[3] Harilal himself was invited to Colombia during the construction of the PDET strategy to adjust the Kerala model to Colombia's case, considering the conflict scenario.

for so, models of co-production in which citizen participation in decision making and implementation is sought. This happened by 1997 by creating participatory development programs in which decentralization as a model for governance was a centre point that allowed the province to overcome class conflict and party politics at the local level, including citizens, social movements, nongovernmental organizations, state agents, and the private sector, in a systematic process of decentralized planning. There were five stages for this process, starting from the smallest villages and always from the bottom to the top.

Thus, the PDET in Colombia follow a model of decentralization of the state power over planning processes, to promote citizen participation and allow the government to create systems of governance that empower communities, as it did in Kerala, to participate and become accountable for their environments.

In this case, following different authors, (Hufty, 2008; Hyden 2011), the concept and understanding of governance is as public management, which invokes issues such as building democratic institutions, promoting social justice, and strengthening human rights, by understanding the problems, the actors, the nodal points (which represent physical or virtual spaces of participation), the norms, and the processes, and the interactions among them that are moderated by governance. The actors influence the decision-making process, they also show how power structures work, and potentially determine the impact and mobilization of the possible solutions to problems identified, in the spaces dictated by the nodal points. Participation for so, is a way of governance and governance is a way of participation.

### Communities and Intersectionality

It is not possible to talk about participation without understanding what the communities are and who is involved in them. According to Kyamusugulwa (2014), for development and reconstruction, 'community' or 'communities', "refers both to geographical entities and to associations of people who shared interests or who live in the same area with the same culture, where reciprocity and mutual concern triumph." (Kyamusugulwa, 2014, p. 51).

Now, when talking about participation and considering the diversity of the communities that have a presence in the different regions of the PDET, especially in Urabá, and the issues of representativeness they arise, there is also a matter of intersectionality to contemplate. As Hill (2016) explains, the identities of every group that compose a community, relate to one another and produce complex social and interpersonal dynamics, which is the phenomenon of intersectionality. For the PDET and in the Urabá region, different groups are interacting with each other and living together, advocating for the interests in common and some individual interests for each community, which makes up the group of people involved and the particularities that characterize the participatory process of the chain of stages of the PDET.

*Peacebuilding*

The Peace Agreement in Colombia was developed considering the victims the main actors in the impact of the conflict, and for so, the basis of the peacebuilding process, and sets 'peace' as a "superior human right and as a prerequisite for the exercising of all other rights and duties" (Peace Agreement, 2016, p.189), which also involves some other fundamental rights such as physical safety and non-recurrence of the armed conflict, and "to build a climate of trust, (in which) the parties agreed to prioritise the rights of victims and establish accountability for abuses against them" (Piccone, 2019, p.10).

This model sets the concept of 'sustainable peace' as an "unparalleled, comprehensive and integrated approach to the victim's rights to truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-repetition." (Piccone, 2019). Through Point 5, the agreement incorporates the creation of an Integral System for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and No-repetition, in a way that contributes to peacebuilding. These notions together can be framed under the concepts of positive and negative peace, following Point 5 of the agreement, and Piccone (2019). As Hughes (2022) stated, negative and liberal peace only looks for the absence of violence to create proper scenarios to develop markets, extract resources and exploit labour, while instead, a positive peace seeks to achieve social justice and reparation. In Colombia's peacebuilding model, to have sustainable peace and build positive peace, involves having specific models of justice, from transitional justice to restorative justice. The first one refers to a set of judicial and non-judicial measures to address massive violations of human rights in contexts of political transitions (Teitel, 2000), while the second refers to restoring the relationships between the victims and the perpetrators, promoting forgiveness and reconciliation (Peace Agreement, 2016). Therefore, for peacebuilding, the agreement has an integrated approach to the components of transitional justice that goes further than other peace processes, by incorporating all four together and creating special entities responsible for delivering transitional and restorative justice, for finding the truth about the conflict and its complexity, for missing people, and by being accountable for developing strategies to guaranteeing non-recurrence and creating a system of individual and collective reparations to victims.

Furthermore, as a part of the reparation process, the Peace Agreement advocates for the importance of governance and effective state presence to "construct a new territorial-based welfare and development paradigm to the benefit of broad sectors of the population that have hitherto been the victims of exclusion and despair" (Peace Agreement, 2016, p.3), refereeing especially to the countryside and certain municipalities all over the country. In this sense, the PDET were developed as a tool for peacebuilding seeking to achieve that governance and state presence, but also as a way of reparation in which during the implementation there would be guarantees of reparation for the victims and the communities.

Finally, Point 5 of the agreement set particularly for the PDET that "active participation of the victims and their organizations with the local authorities will be the basis of the plans for collective territorial reparation" (Peace Agreement, 2016, p.179). In this way, the peacebuilding process in Colombia was raised also thinking of opening participatory spaces in which the communities could be involved and express the needs they identify as victims of the conflict, also as a way of reparation and recognition. This follows the theory of conflict resolution as the satisfaction of basic needs, as stated by Johan Galtung (1978), in which progressively satisfying basic needs allows development and reduces the risk of opening the space to new conflicts, and for so, one of the main goals of the rural reforms and the PDET is to identify and satisfy basic needs as seen by the lenses of the communities.

### The PDET Territorial Transformation as a Model of Community- Driven Reconstruction

Community-driven reconstruction (CDR) is a common concept in development studies that the World Bank acknowledges as an effective way of organization that with clear and transparent information and rules, can lead to identifying community priorities and local development challenges that can become potential projects to be developed in partnerships with local governments to reduce poverty and to overcome crisis or conflict situations. According to different authors (Kyamusugulwa, 2014; Dasgupta & Beard, 2007; Dongier, et.al.,2004) CDR is a decentralization strategy that allows to design contextually appropriate projects for the target population by giving the local communities and local governments a key role in project management, from planning to executing and monitoring processes. CDR tries to allow communities to have direct control over the decision-making of projects designed by them and for them, empowering them, and, also, making local governments stronger. This approach has been used in different countries such as Congo, Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Nigeria, in East Asia, etc, for different contexts including overcoming the effects of the pandemic.

In conflict scenarios, as stated by Barron (2011), CDR strategies:

> "Are increasingly utilized in areas affected by localized or escalated violent conflict and in post-conflict areas. (…) (where)poverty levels are usually high and welfare outcomes low. (…) CDR is viewed by its proponents as an appropriate vehicle for alleviating poverty and enhancing security in such environments." (Barron, 2011, p.1).

In this sense, the PDET projects can be understood as a model of CDR, in which the main objective is to achieve territorial transformation for the rural areas that were affected the most by the conflict, improving, among other variables, poverty, and reducing the risks of conflict scenarios escalating again. Ac-

cording to Kyamusugulwa (2014), in post-conflict scenarios, CDR not only develops activities to reconstruct buildings, schools or roads, but creates scenarios of trust and accountability, necessary in cases like Colombia in Urabá.

# Chapter 3 Methodology, Methods and Participants

## 3.1. Data Collection

Considering the scope of this study and its focus on the participation of different actors to build and implement the PDET initiatives in Urabá, this study follows a constructivist idea of the social reality in Urabá, because the participative process and the implementation dynamics are a product of the social relationships within the actors, the cultural context of the Urabá region and its population characteristics and shared experiences. These experiences influence how the planning process was made and how the implementation process is going, according to their roles and the decision-making process that shapes the reality of the PDET in Urabá. Following this, the methodology used for this study uses qualitative methods, such as interviews and document analysis, to understand those perspectives and interpret how they are understood and valued by the different actors. With this approach, the complexity and dynamics of the participation process from the planning to the implementation can be seen with more detail than with a qualitative more positivist view.

Subsequently, in this investigation, primary and secondary sources of information were used. For the secondary sources, there are minutes and attendance forms that were requested through petition rights to the ART. The objective is to review the information in the acts and the participants, getting information on the roles of the participants and more details on who they were, The minutes were requested to the ART using a petition right, and after 15 working days, the response arrived with nine minutes corresponding to the PART of the Urabá Subregion as a whole, and 32 minutes grouped by municipalities as follows: Chigorodó: 3 minutes, Mutatá: 3 minutes, Necoclí: 4 minutes, San Pedro de Urabá: 5 minutes, Carepa: 4 minutes, Apartadó: 4 minutes, Dabeiba: 5 minutes and Turbo: 4 minutes. Added to these, the public documents of the PART for the Urabá region and the municipal pacts for each of the eight municipalities were considered, because they represent the final product of the planning process, and the baseline for the implementation.

For the primary sources, I collected data through semi-structured interviews with participants from the local governments, the national government and the social leaders of the communities, to representants of the private sector and NGOs, using remote research techniques by gathering the data through phone calls and online meetings.

Social leaders were selected considering that they are actors who advocate for the interests of the communities, as stated by the Administrative Department of Public Function

> "They represent a diversity of profiles, and work across the full range of human rights issues, in the local and the national and international level. There is a strong coordination among them through formal and informal networks and they have structured their work in a participative and coordinated way" (Public Function, 2021, p.1)

for which their roles tend to be relevant in the communities. According to the Truth Commission, in Colombia "the violence has been directed against social leaders, because they are the greatest social capital of the regions, as they are necessary to guarantee good governance in the territories" (Truth Commission, 2022, p114). In Urabá's case, as Caritas Colombia has indicated, despite the violence it has had to deal with, social leaders had raised their voices to advocate for human rights for all the communities in the region, to rebuild the social cohesion and protect the communities from more violence. Some of that work is to connect with the government and build bridges between community members and local and national governments, for which they were active participants in the PDET and are still the main actors called to participate when the government needs to understand the communities' needs, they understand how power dynamics work within, despite them being also a representation of power, and they acknowledge the process of participation from the beginning and have insights on who is participating and how.

As for the local governments, they have participated not only as active actors in the process due to their duty to serve as coordination for the implementation – according to the CONPES 3932 (2017) – but have knowledge of the mechanisms through which the community can participate in both the planning and implementation. The national government is also an important actor as this is one of the most important efforts they have established to recover governance in the territories that were affected the most by the conflict with the FARC guerrilla, and, according to the CONPES 3932 (2017), every president, regardless of the political party they advocate for, has a duty with the Peace Agreement, and for so, with successfully achieving the PDET goals. As for the private sector, it will be understood in this research as consultants and researchers, considering that the Peace Agreement set in the sixth point that there were going to be private entities in charge of following up the implementation of the agreement, including all the matters related to the PDET, for which they have participated passively but understanding all the issues, such as the mechanisms of participation in the two stages mentioned before, and in every region, including Urabá, and therefore two of the selected participants are part of the organisations following up the implementation of the agreement.

Finally, NGOs are also important and active participants in the regions for different matters, and specifically in the PDET, the NGO selected is one that participated in the assembles for the planning stage and has actively worked with the government to do research, training and education, public opinion, advice, consulting, support and promotion with communities to promote development practices among those communities.

On another note, the method to contact the social leaders was done with a snowball method, first by contacting organisations and community groups that could be found online through the register of social movements on the Colombian Ombudsman webpage, some of whom were able to participate and some others who provided information of other people that could participate. For the local governments, most of the contacts were gathered online by searching the webpages of each one of the eight municipalities, and some of them referenced a couple of other participants and members of the local governments. For the national government, the private sector and the NGO, personal contacts who work or have worked within those entities, provided the information of the people working in the PDET in Urabá. It is important to acknowledge that both local government actors and social leaders, have socioeconomic conditions that allow them to connect online.

To guarantee the reliability and representativeness of the group of interviewees, I used an intentional approach while searching the information from the websites and the register of social leaders in the Colombian Ombudsman, so that there was diversity in the sample, including participants from all the groups of relevant actors. The snowball was useful to access to a bigger network, but to reduce the risk of having a homogenous sample, it was important to ask different actors for references, making those references more diverse, and considering the ones that could contribute to the investigation and to have a proper sample.

As a result, there were seven representants of the National Government, from which five were interviewed as a group considering that the five make up the ART area responsible for overseeing the PDET in Urabá, and they resolved to have the interview as a group to cover all the experiences from the area; there were also seven representants of the local governments in the PDET municipalities in Urabá, seven social leaders from the region, one NGO and two representants of the private sector. The details regarding how the interviews took place can be found in Appendix A.

**Table 1. Description of the profile of the participants involved**

| Participant | Sex | Role | Description |
|:---:|:---:|:---:|:---:|
| Participant 1 | M | Social Leader | Member of a Motor Group as the representative of the Indigenous groups in Urabá |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 2 | M | Local Government | Government worker head of one local government in Necocl |
| Participant 3 | F | Government | Ex-government worker from the ART central level |
| Participant 4 | M | Local Government | Government worker head of one local government in Mutatá |
| Participant 5 | M | Local Government | Government worker advisor of one local government in Necoclí |
| Participant 6 | F | Social Leader | Social leader representing an association for women's rights |
| Participant 7 | F | Local Government | Government worker head of one local government in Dabeiba |
| Participant 8 | M | Social Leader | Social leader representing the community in Turbo, member of the Motor Group |
| Participant 9 | F | Social Leader | Social leader representing victims, member of the Motor Group in Apartadó |
| Participant 10 | M | NGO | Leader of a NGO that works for social movements and promoting communities and ethnic groups |
| Participant 11 | M | Local Government | Government worker head of the PDET projects in Turbo |
| Group Participant | 4F - 1M | Government | Group interview with the members of the ART in the Urabá subregion |
| Participant 12 | F | Social Leader | Social leader representing an association for displaced families in Urabá |
| Participant 13 | M | Social Leader | Social leader representing an association for small farmers |
| Participant 14 | F | Social Leader | Social leader representing the community in San Pedro de |

| | | | Urabá, member of the Motor Group |
|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 15 | F | Local Government | Government worker head of the Ombudsman in Carepa |
| Participant 16 | M | Private Sector | Member of a private institution that investigates and advocates for the PDET |
| Participant 17 | M | Private Sector | Member of a private institution that investigates and advocates for the PDET |
| Participant 18 | M | Local Government | Member of the association representing all mayors in the Urabá region |
| Participant 19 | F | Local Government | Government worker head of council in Chigorodó |

Source: Made by the author

## 3.2. Case Selection: Urabá and the need for Peace

As stated by Creswell (2014) "Case Studies are a qualitative design in which the researcher explores in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case(s) are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period" (Creswell, 2014, p. 241). Also, there are three different possible approaches addressed by Yin (2009) which are descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory, differentiated by the purpose of each case study. The approach of this research corresponds to an explanatory case study, which aims to explain why and how a phenomenon happens and the sequence in which events occur or do not occur.

For this research and following the initial criteria used by the government to select the municipalities to be prioritise in the PDET, the selection of the case was done first considering the following variables, and the data for Urabá available through different governmental sources as follows: DANE, Victims Unit, Public Function, National Department of Panning (its data system is called Terridata), Ministry of Technology and Communications, Ombudsman, Ministry of Finance.:

1. Levels of poverty: 44% of Multidimensional Poverty Index
2. Levels of inequality: 0.46 Gini Index
3. Households with Unsatisfied Basic Needs (UBN): 26%

4. Victimization events (including homicide, terrorist acts, threats, crimes against liberty, forced disappearance, kidnapping, torture, forced displacement, and personal injuries): more than 500.000 events.
5. Institutional Performance: 55,5 score in the Institutional Performance Index.
6. Hectares of illicit crops: 114
7. Connection to the internet: 47,5% of homes with fixed internet subscriptions.
8. Early warnings: structural and imminent (Follows the definition of the United Nations (2023) of early warning systems, through which risks and vulnerabilities are acknowledged in advance, in this case, violent risks): 14 early warnings from 2018 to 2024.
9. Available resources for the implementation of the Rural Reform: More than 183 million euros.

**Figure 4. Urabá Municipalities**
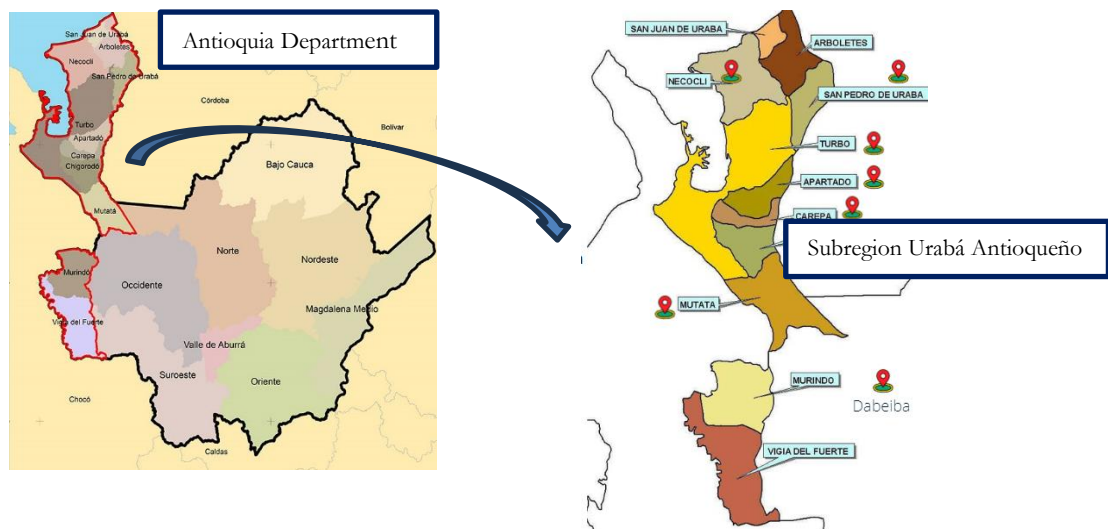


Source: Territorial Planning Council of Antioquia. (The municipalities marked with a location icon are the municipalities in the PDET)

Besides the data described, Urabá is an important and region to analyse considering the composition of the population and the territory, it is in Antioquia, one of the country's most important departments, which, according to the DANE, has the second-biggest GDP, surpassed only by Bogota, the capital city.

Moreover, Urabá is a region located in a privileged geographical position, very close to the Darien Gap, which according to Miraglia (2016), from the Council on Hemispheric Affairs, is the biggest path for migrants in South Amer-

ica moving to North America, breaking the Pan-American Highway as it is expensive and environmentally costly to build the road in its dense forest, and "Consequently, transportation across the Darién Gap is nearly impossible, and this inaccessibility has enabled the proliferation of drug smugglers and paramilitary groups in the region, including the FARC" (Miraglia, 2016, p.2). This situation affects Urabá as some municipalities in the region, such as Necocli – one of the PDET municipalities – receive hundreds of migrants, and the violence has reached the entire region. Also, following Pedraza, et.al. (2024) Urabá has a maritime access, good weather conditions, and fertile soil for plantain, cocoa, and banana production, and therefore, it has been a key point for industrial and agricultural development for Antioquia, but also for Colombia. The richness of resources has been another reason for the violent history of the Urabá subregion – which was previously described in section 1.1. and for so, according to Caritas (2023), the communities in the region have been constantly looking for a peaceful reality that allows them to rebuild the social structure and development. For a region like Urabá, having strategies such as the PDET for peacebuilding and territorial transformation in which their participation is key to building the mechanism for development, is very significant and represents hope for the communities, as well as the effectiveness with which those strategies could be implemented.

Moving on to the population characteristics of the region, according to the ART (2021), 15% of the territory in Urabá is occupied by indigenous reservations, home to 18 of the 56 Indigenous reservations for the Embera Katio ethnic group, one of the most important in the country. In Urabá there is also an important representation of the black communities in Colombia, holding 43% of the afro Colombian, Raizal and Palenquera communities in the department of Antioquia. Following the ART (2021), the population of women is higher than men, with 51% of women in the territory and 49% of men. Furthermore, according to DANE, the subregion of Urabá has one of the country's biggest proportions of rural inhabitants, with 43% of people living in rural areas. Considering these characteristics, the subregion is a good representation of all the population targets of the Peace Agreement, specifically the Rural Reform, including the ethnic and gender approaches it has.

In addition to this context, in terms of participation, as it was mentioned before, social leadership in Urabá has been important in the attempt to reconstruct the social cohesion of the region, and according to Diaz (2021), these social leaders have represented a way to recognize the cultural value of the communities in the region, but also a way in which participation is possible to make decisions as individuals but considering the collective. In this sense, there are multiple associations and organisations registered with the Colombian Ombudsman, some of them with decades of work in favour of communities, being one of the regions with the most active participatory representation in the country.

It is important to add that Colombia categorises municipalities into three categories: big, medium, and basic, according to their population, the level of income each one has for free destination, and their geographical location. In this sense, from the eight municipalities selected for the PDET, seven are considered basic municipalities, and one medium. One of the consequences of this consideration is that basic municipalities depend on the government of the Department of Antioquia to get money to execute projects and strategies. The PDET municipalities in Urabá receive money from the mentioned OCAD-PAZ, and from Antioquia's government, but as prioritised municipalities, they have more independence and flexibility to execute programs and public policies, and for regions like Urabá and its municipalities it's a way to reduce obstacles for development.

## 3.3. Analysis Methods

For the data analysis, the method used was thematic analysis to look through the information gathered from the interviews and the documents and identify keywords and trends among the participants to get to specific findings and conclusions. This was done considering the theoretical framework described above with the main concepts of the investigation and the case in which the participation methodology was based.

To make the analysis easier, I used Atlas.ti with axial coding, which allowed me to have a deductive approach, using codes such as budget restrictions, description of the planning process, who was involved in the meetings, political interests, security issues, post-conflict scenario, guarantees for participation, implementation process and opportunities to improve the PDET. The information was classified using these codes as references, identifying common ideas between the actors, words that were repetitive among them and the differences between the groups of actors, from the ones working for the government to the members of the communities and the private sector. It is important to note that the interviews were done in Spanish, as well as the initial analysis, and then translated into English. The interviews were transcribed from the recordings, with the help of two assistants who helped me exclusively with the transcriptions of ten interviews.

## 3.4. Positionality

As a young Colombian woman, I have witnessed the peace process through news and testimonies from people who work with victims and local or national governments, but never as an active actor in the conflict or peacebuilding process. However, I have read and tried to understand the conflict in Colombia and conclude that the disconnection between the urban areas and the rest of the country has been so big that many don't even consider Colombia as a country shaped by violence and by the constant hope for peace. In this sense, I was one

of those citizens who believed in the peace process and voted YES in the public consultation made in October 2016 to allow all Colombians to decide if they wanted to accept the Peace Agreement, but unfortunately, the result was NO. This was not the end of the peace process, and an agreement was achieved, but, considering the diversity of Colombia, I asked myself how the lives of the people in the countryside who felt the conflict directly, were going to be transformed.

I decided to go for this topic to be accountable for my country's violent history, which needs to be studied especially from the perspective of the municipalities that faced the war. I also think that as a person who has previously worked in the public sector, I understand how some processes work like, such as understanding what a CONPES is, what is the scope of different programs, how budget restrictions can undermine public policies and why participation processes are important for achieving certain goals. That means that I also must be accountable for the most important processes of transformation happening in Colombia, and the peace process turns out to be one of them. I believe that every effort to understand the conflict and the post-conflict scenarios will contribute to peacebuilding.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge that this position might lead to a bias during the investigation and through the analysis of the data. However, I intend to put a critical eye on the analysis, trying to add a constructive perspective on how this tool has been used and how it could become a potential tool for reparation and transformation despite its flaws. Also, I plan to focus on what the participants have to say about their involvement in the process, rather than giving any political view on it, and I aim to build a proper questionnaire for semi-structural interviews that helps to overcome the bias and reduce the risk of obtaining conditioned responses.

## 3.5. Limitations and Ethical Considerations

*Limitations:*

According to the Colombian Political Constitution (1991), every government, either territorial or national, has a maximum duration of four years, in which the first task is to set a development plan for those years with the goals and main projects that will be implemented for every sector. This is the main guideline for every government, and it is followed by sectorial development plans that each leading entity in each sector must come out giving details on the main goals, subgoals, budget and guidelines to be reached in that period. This applies to every project, including the PDET, and it can change once the government period – either territorial or national – is over and a new one starts.

Considering this, and that the conflict with the FARC-EP in Colombia has been studied for many years due to how long it was, there is a big amount of information available to understand the framework, the post-conflict and the

PDET. This was a limitation for the analysis and scope that can be considered in this research. Nevertheless, for the investigation, I have investigated with the most important and most updated documents available, so that the risk of bias is reduced, and the information exposed has more sustenance.

Moreover, considering that the interviews were conducted online, some questions must be addressed in a particular way or will not be possible to ask because, as Mena & Hilhorst (2020) claimed, they require much nuance and depth that via phone or video calls won't be easy to consider. For this, there is a limitation regarding what Chiumento et.al. (2018) called "high-speed internet access and computer literacy of all parties (…) potential technical challenges include sound quality or webcam issues, a time-lag in the audio/video feed meaning sound and/or video is relayed slower than real-time"" (Chiumento et.al., 2018, p.3). This limitation was navigated by giving the participants different platforms to connect, so they chose the one that was better for them.

Nevertheless, it is important to consider the limitation of non-verbal language that can be lost during online research. The way to navigate this issue was through actively observing the attitude of the participant, the voice tone, and writing down every detail of the non-verbal actions that happened during the conversation, things that might get lost or might be misunderstood due to not having a personal encounter with the participant.

*Ethical considerations:*

For the ethical considerations, following the guidelines for this research, it was considered the form attached in Appendix B. Considering that information and to avoid the ethical risks identified for the research, all the information provided in the interviews will not be shared and will be anonymous, and information related to the questions of the interview was not shared without the participant's permission, for which the participant agreed on a voluntary informed consent to address some questions related to the participation processes in which they were involved or were related to.

Furthermore, as the interviews were online, as Mena & Hilhorst (2020) claimed "it is important to consider whether informed consent genuinely has been obtained and how confidentiality can be guaranteed. In case of sensitive issues, face-to-face interaction allows one to read participants' body language to detect whether the interview creates discomfort. It also allows researchers to build a trust relationship with research participants. How can researchers make sure that enough checks and balances support remote interviewing processes to avoid interviews creating anxiety or discomfort?" As a part of the interview, I considered it very important to follow every question with another question about how comfortable the participant feels in the process, as well as allowing them to answer any question they might have about it before, during, and after the interview. The process of building the consent is very important in this case,

for which detailed information about the steps of the interview, the purpose, the goals to be reached, and what they can get for participating, was shared.

Online interviews also present confidentiality risks for the researcher and the participants. To avoid the risks for the participant, as mentioned before, consent was key in the process, as it ensured the privacy of the information and the location where the interviewer was at. However, as Chiumento et.al. (2018) mentioned, there are privacy issues in the conversation when there is no control over the location or knowledge about gatekeepers that might be witnessing the interview for their interests and perhaps biasing the results. To navigate this risk, Chiumento et.al. (2018) suggested that "prior relationships between researchers and participants play a role in shaping trust, underpinned by a sense of the researcher's integrity towards the protection of confidentiality and anonymity" (Chiumento et.al. 2018, p.4), for which I was able to gain trust from the participants allowing a safer space to overcome the mentioned risks.

# Chapter 4 Findings: Building Briges

From the interviews made and considering the scope of this research, the findings reveal details about the participation process of the PDET and some issues behind it that the actors agree on, with some differences considering their roles. There are two main findings identified, one about how participation was a bridge to bring back governance to the state in the areas that were affected the most by the conflict, and how that bridge broke when it came to the implementation stage; the second refers to the expectations for peacebuilding of the different actors around the PDET and the effectiveness of its implementation, that lead to disappointment and evidenced a series of issues that were not considered in the beginning.

## 4.1. About Participation as a Bridge for Governance and Peacebuilding and How it Broke

According to the Group Participant, in Urabá more than 19.000 people were participating in the planning process of the PDET, from kids to elders, with representatives from Indigenous groups, afro-Colombian, women, and minorities. Around 260 meetings were held to achieve the set of 1.641 initiatives for the subregion.

During this stage, following the Group Participant, the ART did a huge campaign to incentive people starting from small villages near the municipalities to participate, with the help of the local governments and the information they have from different social leaders, Community Action Boards, Community Councils, representatives of ethnic groups and representatives of different Associations in the eight municipalities who advocate for the rights of various groups in Urabá, among other community actors. For the ethnic groups, for example, there are four different Indigenous groups in Urabá, the Gunadule, Enues, Esyabidas and Chami, and one Community Council for the Afro-Colombian, who participated in the process and delegated and 22 representants, 14 Indigenous leaders and eight Afro-Colombian. Furthermore, the members of the communities also contributed to the campaign not only as expressed by the Group participant, as agents who went to the villages to tell people what was about to happen, but also as connecting with each other and rebuilding the social fabric to achieve a representative and effective dialogue:

> They also said that if we want to talk about land, the countryman should be here, and the countryman said but if we want to talk about distribution, the sugar guild should be here, I mean, among the communities, they were very critical of who had to participate because they knew that that the topics were very important and tough, especially when it comes

to land distribution and big investment projects. They were very strategic in contributing to the ART and very critical of who to call for the assemblies so that everyone felt represented. (Participant 3, central government, 2024)

The biggest challenge expressed by the participants was bringing communities and the state together, as in the Urabá region people didn't trust the state, and refused to participate before the Peace Agreement was signed, and the common feeling of the communities was fear and frustration, adding to the distrust of the years were the government allegedly had ties to illegal groups. The model of peacebuilding in Colombia states that "participation and dialogue between the different actors in the Colombian society contribute to building trust and promoting a culture of tolerance, respect and coexistence, which is the objective of all the agreements." (Peace Agreement, 2016, p.7), for which the ART did a big campaign considering all the most remote rural areas, opening the door to everyone to have representation and having different approaches so that the population could believe in the PDET and become a part of the territorial transformation.

In this sense, I identified that social leaders refer to this process as something that was made with love, something they truthfully believed in as it was a different program allowing many people to participate, some of them who never got the chance to raise their voices before, and for so, there was a chance there could be transformation this time. It was also interesting to notice that this feeling of the PDET as a 'dream' and a 'light for peace' was common among the different actors, which relates to the size of the campaign, but also to the atmosphere of security that was breathed once the FARC-EP laid down their weapons in 2016 with the Peace Agreement. This contributed to gaining the trust of the state back and allowing the government to be present in the rural areas that were controlled by the guerrilla, as Participants 13 and 17 expressed, there were no impediments for the meetings to take place, and the government covered transportation for some social leaders to give enough guarantees for the communities to participate. Moreover, some of the actors involved were unlikely participants, as Participant 3 explained, due to historical and violent issues in Urabá between Indigenous groups, Community Councils and the private sector, who regardless of those conflicts, agreed to participate and become a part of the PDET.

In the same sense, there were other guarantees given, as Participant 6, a social leader, claimed, referring to the lack of good connectivity in some of the rural areas and municipalities, so the communications were done through radio, the bishop of the church in the area, or the Victims Table (an organization established before the Peace Agreement that brings together representants of the victims of the conflict to the State). For so, the campaign turned out to be one of the biggest in the world after the Kerala model of participation described

above – Note that 80% of the population in Urabá is a victim of the conflict, according to the participants.

Following the Kerala model of participation, the process began with assemblies in the small villages near the municipalities, which are described by Participant 16, from the private sector, as a valuable strategy because it was the chance to reach very remote places. According to Participant 8, each community, identified by the local governments, had to select 20 members to participate, and then, the participants in these areas delegated two leaders to become part of the Motor Groups and, as the assemblies moved to larger towns, each small village was represented by those elected delegates. The assemblies went from small villages to a second level in the municipalities and then to a third level for the region of Urabá as a whole. As the Group Participant explained, the people helping with logistics and moderating the assembles, were also members of the communities, around 75 people distributed along Urabá, which allowed the government to "gain trust and break the schemes so that the methodology for participation could be applied" (Group Participant, Central Government, 2024). Following the Group Participant, there were around 97 leaders representing the communities in the assemblies for the region, at the third level, where the PART took form. Each municipality also had a PDET Manager, a member of the community hired by the local governments of each municipality to guarantee the continuity of the process from the planning to the implementation stage.

In the first assemblies, the community members from the small villages were organized in eight different tables, following the eight lines of the PDET described above, they chose the topic in which they wanted to participate and proposed the first initiatives. For this part of the planning, the narratives from the social leaders and private sector observers of the process contrast with the local and central governments. For the first ones, it was a very intense and fast process, that did not give enough space to educate the communities better on the Peace Agreement, the PDET and how the initiatives were going to become projects, but also, there was no clarity on how the assemblies were going to take place, what each of the eight tables was going to be about, and how it was going to work, "for example, many people thought that if they set in the table about housing, they were going to receive a housing subsidy, and that was not the point" (Participant 16, Private sector observer, 2024). Also, there was not much information about budget restrictions, the initiatives were too ambitious, and for some municipalities like Dabeiba, there were too many initiatives (357) for the size of the area and the inhabitants it has, adding to a lack of technicality in the process, and,

> "In municipalities like Apartado, because it is the biggest in Urabá, they wanted many community organizations to participate, and when you see the budget for the meetings, it was not enough for all the organizations in the area, that's where we started to crash with the reality of the budget,

for the future it was enough to have meetings maybe once a year, and that's not the idea, that was not the principle of participation, especially for monitoring what happens with the PDET." (Participant 9, social leader, 2024)

Meanwhile, the local and central governments advocate for the success of the planning, as it involved the biggest amount of people participating in Urabá's history, where they also tried to verify the viability of the initiatives proposed by the communities and achieve initiatives for every line of the PDET, and considering the intersectionality of the communities in Urabá, by incorporating gender approach, ethnic initiatives differentiated according to each ethnic group present in the region, young people and elders, and victims and ex-combatants.

However, the participants in general recognize the planning of the PDET as a pivotal historical achievement in participation in Colombia and a dream for peacebuilding and reconciliation in Urabá. Despite the lack of information and training, Participant 3, an ex-member of the central government, explains that even the social leaders and some other members of communities had a lot of ideas and had already made a lot of progress in promoting the development of the region, as they know it better than anyone, but the challenge was to transform them into policy, but considering the abilities and possibilities that the communities already had and that were evidenced among the social leaders, the initiatives the ended being in the PART were representing all communities in Urabá and were recognized as their tool for a new violent-free region.

Now, it is important to note that the local governments were not mentioned much during this stage, and according to Participant 4, a member of the local governments, their role during this stage was passive as they helped with logistics, supporting the assemblies, and calling the Community Boards and social organizations. The communities representatives were holding the main role during this stage, being the ones who gave ideas, negotiated, refined unviable ideas and built the PART. In addition, the central government was the organizational axis of the PDET, represented by the ART, who, in addition to organizing and proposing the strategy, trained the staff and offered information about its operation in the most remote rural areas. Also, it is important to notice that the private sector in this research, as observers of the process, holds many details about the process, but at the same time has a passive role, as they have been part of the assemblies and have followed and monitored the process to research and be critical on it from a non-political position.

As a result, the participation process during the planning was a vehicle for peacebuilding, territorial transformation and gaining back trust and governance for the state, but a bridge that broke down when the PART had to be im-

plemented and the question about how to transform those initiatives into programs and projects appeared and had no simple answer. Along this text, one might notice that the word 'initiatives' tends to be repeated frequently, but it has not been clear what they are. According to Participant 5, during the planning process, the community leaders were asked about their needs, and for so, the bag of ideas resulting from every assembly was called 'community needs', and the name transformed into 'initiatives' as the PART were taking form. According to the minutes of the PART, the initiatives could be from building a road to connect the municipality of Mutata to the small village of Pavarando, to improving the region's farms and productive lands. As one might see, the first example could be transformed into one project of infrastructure, but the second involved presenting different projects such as one project aimed at securing access to land, another focused on equipping farmers with efficient crops, another for enhancing distribution and sales, and even one for creating partnerships with major realtors.

Considering that from the 1.641 initiatives, there could be many more projects, the different participants identified different issues related to their implementation, from political issues to budget restrictions and the deterioration of the guarantees for participation that existed during the planning. To begin with, as participants 16 and 17, from the private sector, mentioned, the challenge of turning the initiatives in the PART into projects was big, due to the lack of information given during the planning which meant having complex and broad initiatives that required multiple projects and large budgets to be achieved. As participants 3, 10, 16, and 17, expressed, the budget for the implementation of the PDET initiatives, is not a new budget, but rather a part of the usual budget received in Urabá from the General Bonus System – a system established by the government through which regions receive monetary compensation for mining or oil exploitation conducted in each area – and another part is from the budget provided to city councils for the development plans of each administration, yet with a distinct expenditure approach in which each mayor must commit to prioritizing the projects related to PDET. According to the social leaders, this information was not provided during the planning, and the initiatives were developed not considering any restrictions, which explains the complexity and magnitude of them.

For example, Participant 8, a social leader, mentioned that in Urabá there is a need to build and/or intervene in around 4.500 km of tertiary roads, but the budget to build these roads is around four million euros for the entire country, which leaves a little proportion for Urabá. In another example given by Participant 11, one of the PDET delegates hired by the local governments, there is also a project that aims to build proper sewerage in Urabá but with a budget of around a million euros for an area of more than 11.000 km², which is not enough as expressed by the participant. Another example from Participant 6, a social leader from an organization that advocates for women's rights, described that

there are projects aimed at strengthening leadership in educational institutions among youth and children, but the budget given is around 2.000 € for the eight municipalities for different activities in several schools, giving short space to include all schools in the region.

Furthermore, the budget restrictions become more difficult as the participants described the resource bag called OCAD-PAZ, which as defined by the Ministry of Finance, is a part of the General Bonus System intended only for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, in this case of the PDET projects. To guarantee the participation of the communities in the implementation stage, the ART, as described by the Group Participant, enacted a regulation for the projects presented by the local governments that were seeking funding from this budget in the OCAD-PAZ, in which it was mandatory to socialize with the communities what those projects were about and which initiatives from the PART they were following. However, as different media informed (El Espectador, RTVC, La Silla Vacía, 2024), there are around two billion euros lost from this fund for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, including the PDET, throughout the country, allegedly due to corruption acts. For the social leaders and the private sector, this scandal marked a breach in the communities' trust, and a starting point for the violence to return to rurality, and for so, a break in the bridge towards peacebuilding and the recovery of the government governance.

At this point, one thing related to their roles arose in the testimonies of the different actors. As it was mentioned before, the local governments have the responsibility to present projects based on the initiatives in the PART either in the development plans of each administration or to the OCAD-PAZ. This reflects a transformation from having a passive role during the planning, to one of the main roles. According to the social leaders, the local governments decide what initiatives they are willing to prioritize, present a project and execute it, and the decision might be related more to their political interest than to the communities' needs. From their point of view, every time a major's administration changes, there is a lack of continuity in the implementation of the projects that responds to the point of view of the new people in each major's office, and to what they called political commitment. Participant 2, as a social leader representing ethnic groups,

> "They don't have political commitment. Sometimes you see that the local governments use the Indigenous groups only when they need them to vote for them, and when they hold the power, when they must promote the initiatives, they don't include them, they don't consider the life plans from the ethnic groups" (Participant 2, social leader, 2024).

Meanwhile, the local governments received information from the ART before taking office, on what the PART are and how they should consider those

initiatives, allowing communities to participate and present the projects. As participants 2, 4, 5, and 7, expressed, there were not many difficulties in introducing the initiatives into their development plans, as they already reflect most of the needs of the communities, but they acknowledge the budget restrictions and consider that it could be expensive and inconvenient to socialize every project with all the communities, as well as loss of time to carry out the execution of those projects. However, as expressed by Participant 7, from a local government, the PDET also meant a good opportunity for them to get resources faster, as most of the municipalities in Urabá are under a basic category (explained above) and having priority allows their administration to be more efficient. As a result, the transformation of their role is clear, and when it comes to implementation the part of the axis of the process depends more on the local governments and their priorities than on the communities' priorities.

In the same way, the role of the central government prevails with the ART as the organizing and managing entity of the PDET and extends to the different Ministries according to the projects. As the Group Participant and Participant 3 explained, one thing that was not clear during the planning was who was going to be involved in the implementation. The answer suggests that it depends on the projects, because the major projects resulting from the initiatives aimed at the entire region, required the Ministries to be involved in structuring and developing them, as the responsibility for the projects in each municipality shifts more towards local authorities. The size of the projects then becomes a variable to be considered within the roles of the different actors. Participant 3, as an ex-member of the central government, drew attention to how much bureaucracy it requires to develop the projects that involve the central government, in which sometimes, to avoid the bureaucratic process, a project arrives in the region under the PDET name without considering the initiatives themselves. For this matter Participant 14, a social leader, described an example:

> They barely socialized a project of plantain, and they said they were going to give farmers two hectares to crop, but the project came like that, it is not possible to modify any part of it, so they gave the farmers the seeds and the crops didn't work well at the beginning, so sometimes we have to reinvest and look how to change the seed to see if another crop might work, we are adjusting to what the central government gives, It doesn't seem to be a connection with us. (Participant 14, social leader, 2014)

It is to be noted, that participants from the local governments also have a critical position on the projects presented by the central government, as they also consider that the municipalities have been left out and have limited information about it. As a result, the central governments' role remains as an axis of the process but transitions from a communities-based approach to individual decision-maker. Despite the efforts of the ART to implement strategies to bring national entities closer to the territories so they could firsthand understand the

Motor Groups and consider communities in their prioritization, as described by the Group Participant representing the ART in Urabá, and other participants from local governments, the constant dialogue with the communities has not been achievable, nor has there been any cooperative effort between local and national entities. Then, the bridge of participation broke also as a lack of synergies between local and central authorities, each entity works individually giving very little space for communities to actively participate in the transformation of their territories. As mentioned before, there are also political interests involved that will be later explained as a part of the second finding.

As it might have been evidenced, the role of the communities was diminished once the implementation started. The idea after the planning finished was for the Motor Groups to remain having an active role by holding meetings regularly with the local governments and the ART, in which they were able to acknowledge the progress done, prioritize the initiatives and have information about the projects coming to the regions, so that members of the community could also be part of the implementation of the projects whether in leadership roles or as team associates, according to the size of the projects. However, as expressed by all the social leaders, the Motor Groups were sidelined, and the meetings they still hold with the local and central governments turned into a space to barely receive information about the PDET progress, and the decisions made by the authorities:

> "The procedure says that they need a signature from the Motor Groups to do something, so they invite us to a meeting, they ask us to register attendance, and then they say that we agreed on whatever they are doing, but they don't give us the chance to contribute according to the needs of the communities" (Participant 14, social leader from San Pedro de Urabá, 2024)

> "Once the majors changed, none of them wanted to consider the Motor Groups, none of the people who worked together during the planning of the PDET. We simply saw the banners about the road they were building and things that were taking place, but not much has been consulted to us or has been finished with the road properly built' (Participant 9, social leader from Apartado, 2024)

> "We go to the meeting, eat snacks, and we prioritize the initiatives, but in the paper, the ones who truthfully make decisions are the government employees (…) we just receive the information". (Participant 8, social leader from Turbo, 2024)

The guarantees for participation also changed when the time for implementation came. As expressed by the social leaders, keeping on track with the meetings is not an easy task, as they don't receive any payment for their job advocating for human rights, and the government does not cover transportation

or logistics to go to the remote rural areas and give information to the communities that selected them as leaders. Participant 9, as a social leader from Apartadó, called this as 'Operational Costs of the Motor Groups' that should be part of the budget for the projects guaranteeing there is a role and complete information for them, and the chance to inform the people that they represent to give them a voice during the implementation, the same they had while the planning was on. In terms of security, as will be discussed further ahead, the guarantees are different, considering the scandal for corruption and the lack of effectiveness in the implementation of the Peace Agreement in general, violent groups took place again in certain rural areas and started to have a role in this process. As Participant 5 described, paramilitary groups have an important influence not only in several small villages but also in the decisions made in the municipalities "The police are absent in the rural areas, they remain just in the municipalities, so over the rurality, there is not much presence of the state, so the meetings for the PDET, all that participation is co-opted by the paramilitarism" (Participant 5, from the local governments, 2024).

Moreover, the communities were promised that the involvement during the plan was not only to prioritize the projects but to become agents of change by implementing them themselves as a model of Community-Driven Reconstruction. Participants from the local governments and social leaders acknowledge the potential of this idea, as people from the communities have been construction workers, promoted strategies to protect women victims of violence, and even created development projects within the communities. However, the lack of training during the planning also translated into the implementation, as the communities do not have the skills and operational capacity for large-scale projects. On this matter, Participant 3 explained that

> "There are many legal restrictions for which an organization or a community actor, a local actor, can´t participate because the legislation states that they don't have the capabilities, they can't present proper budgets or execute the money. Some cases do have those capabilities, but the projects tend to be very close, and each project must have capacity building. That is why I think the communities feel used, the government called them and allowed them to be a part of a huge participation work, but there is no tangible outcome". (Participant 3, ex-member of central government, 2024)

According to the participant from an NGO, as an observer of this process, the issue is not only about the difficulties of the contracting processes that tend to be very restrictive and bureaucratic but also about the process of hiring people from the communities to be a part of the implementation of the projects. For example, most of the building roads use labour from the communities in which the administration provides concrete and heavy machinery, the communities provide the pick, the shovel, and the labour, resulting in an associative

work where the communities win, as well as the local administrations. However, once the project is done, hiring local labour is not continuous, as it depends on the next project, the next administration and even the companies who get the bids for major infrastructure works. Adding to this, training processes are necessary for the communities to get involved in certain projects, such as in the example, but as it was mentioned before, budgets are short, and training local labour only increases costs.

Despite the difficulties in implementing the PDET, it is undeniable that the big campaign to get initiatives from the communities marked a milestone for the communities in Urabá, and for the country in general. There are some projects that the social leaders from the community and the local governments, acknowledged have been done, but as seven years of the ten that the PDET are supposed to last, have passed, it is concerning for most of the actors how the bridge for territorial transformation broke, and how the communities stopped being the axis of the PDET and lost their role in the process.

## 4.2. From Hope to Slope

As participants described how the reality of the PDET changed in the implementation stage, I noticed a switch in the narratives from optimistic views to a sense of concern and frustration. The participation in the planning process allowed the communities in Urabá to have a voice for the first time, as they became the axis and the main target of the future projects coming to the region. But, as expressed by Participant 16, neither the ART nor the local governments, understood the magnitude of the initiatives, they didn't realise that people might be able to express their needs, but not necessarily in a way that can easily be transformed into projects unless there is clarity about budget restrictions and previous orientation about the scope and realities surrounding the PDET. Furthermore, it is important to consider how long the state abandoned these communities because of the conflict, and for so, how their needs exceed the usual budgets they receive. The time set for the PDET was also very ambitious and restrictive, considering that 10 years is a short time to make up for almost 60 years of conflict, and a part of those years was used just for the planning stage. Looking back, the participants are aware of these limitations the PDET had since the beginning but are also very critical and disappointed about added factors that made the implementation harder and the hope for territorial transformation even more distant.

In particular, the political interests of the central government were a constant variable through all interviews, even from the members of the ART, one that left most of them thinking that this scenario cannot be called 'post-conflict' but rather 'post-agreement', and their participation as an instrument for politics

and not for policy. This feeling is the result of the multiple changes that happened during the implementation, which contributed to the lack of implementation effectiveness.

The first assembles for the planning were done during the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos and by this time the Motor Groups were formed in Urabá. In 2018, Ivan Duque was elected as president, but as described by Participant 16, an observer of the PDET process, "Trust was broken when he came into office because his government and his party were against the Peace Agreement. However, the PDET kept on going but with a different approach" (Participant 16, from the private sector, 2024). Added to that, Participant 3, an ex-member of the central government, explained that "people from the communities did not see Duque favourably, as they believed that he wanted to abolish the Peace Agreement, they were very afraid of his government' (Participant 3, ex-member of the central government, 2024). During the four years of his government, the common feeling from the social leaders and the local governments was that the ART changed with its new director, the Motor Groups were left aside, and the view for implementation became more technical. Emilio Archila, the new director of the ART during Duque's government, organized the initiatives in the PART by setting a PDET Guideline for each region, prioritizing the initiatives and giving a step-by-step guide for the local governments. Nevertheless, the participants from the local governments, as well as the ones from the private sector and the NGO, agreed that the approach from the new government caused a distance between the communities and the government, as Archila prioritized the association with the local governments to set the guideline, leaving communities behind and not allowing them to participate. The PDET Guideline is also considered a very complex document of 200 pages that was not socialized with the communities, but given its complexity, even the participants from local governments considered it a difficult piece of paper to execute. It is important to note that the OCAD-PAZ corruption scandal started to take place during this government, for which from 2018 to 2022, the environment surrounding the PDET was distrust, frustration and disappointment.

Now, in 2022 Gustavo Petro was elected president and had the aim of recovering the relationship between the communities and the central and local governments, by reactivating the Motor Groups and creating a new form of organization for the communities in which the Motor Groups and the Victims Tables came together to create Community Tables, that would extend the reach of the leaders and recover trust in the government. With Raul Delgado as the new head of the ART, the social leaders expressed that they feel closer to the government, as he has had meetings with the Motor Groups and has returned some importance to the communities.

However, the disappointment of the communities also comes from the different interpretations of every national administration about the scope and

objectives of the Peace Agreement, and how it should be implemented. The meaning of peacebuilding, and how reparation will come to the communities, differs among presidential administrations, and for so the participation of different actors, creating obstacles to ensuring continuity in the projects and keeping communities as the central axis also in the implementation stage.

In a scenario in which reconciliation and reparation have not arrived yet in the communities, as expressed by Participant 8, the frustration leads to allowing the criminal groups to take place, and even perform governance duties such as building or repairing roads. Participant 5 expressed that trust, and peace will not take place unless there are processes of reconciliation in Urabá, with proper presence of the state and local governments that prioritize the communities instead of their political agendas.

# Chapter 5 Analysis and Discussion: The Politics behind the Bridge

As participants described their participation in the PDET planning set an important precedent in the way in which policies are done in Urabá, because it put the communities and their needs as the central axis of the planning. However, the implementation got lost in translation and undermined the building of positive peace, as well as the models of participation and Community-Driven Reconstruction.

First, developing Community-Driven Reconstruction projects required the active participation of the different communities in Urabá during the implementation, but as was evidenced by the different actor, their roles became blurred. It was explained before that the implementation had several issues related, some of them about things that were not considered during the planning such as the lack of capacity building of the communities in Urabá to develop projects and execute them. However, some issues have possibilities to be corrected, considering that the initiatives were not properly organized and categorized including the capacity building of the communities to be a part of them. It should be possible to identify subsets of initiatives that are not large-scale in which the communities can become leaders, as well as allow social leaders to identify members of the communities that can be local labour for bigger projects. This is a way to gain trust in the PDET and the different governments back and contribute to building stable and lasting peace as the Peace Agreement seeks.

Now, following the Kerala model of participation in which decentralization in policy is possible, the roles of the different actors should be clear and not change according to political agendas. The translation of the model, when it comes to implementation, requires associations and synergies among the actors, especially among the local and central governments, and the communities. The initiatives and the projects themselves do not guarantee decentralization if the objective of the PDET expresses that their priorities are not being considered and the decision-making process is under the hands of the central government, the opposite of the model that was formulated. As Participant 17 described, "The state failed to materialize the territorial approach and decentralization idea because they need to recognize the scope and limitations its presence has in the territories, and they failed in making the local governments understand what their role was" (Participant 17, private sector, 2024). In this sense, the actors involved are required to have a clear and proper role, followed by an organized set of initiatives that allows synergies and associativity among institutions, which breaks power dynamics, favours decentralization and guarantees the participation of the different actors.

The participation of the communities in the PDET did represent reparation in the beginning of the process, but should also be an essential part of the implementation and a cross-cutting element of this process, but also "Participation is not just about fulfilling a requirement and that's it, but under the community perspective it shouldn't be a co-government, because it doesn't work like that" (Participant 16, private sector, 2024). To set the debt of development in the rural areas in Urabá, the remedy is not to put the communities as the only decision-making actors but to create proper connections with the governments to negotiate and promote scenarios of reconciliation and peace.

Considering the importance of the synergies among the different actors, the participants also emphasized other things they recognised could be done better for the future of the PDET. For instance, added to those synergies, the local governments in Urabá should empower more in front of the national government, but also take the lead in the projects and take advantage of the priority they hold as PDET municipalities. Furthermore, to achieve proper participation communication is key, for which the empowerment of the communities will only come if they receive complete information, about the prioritisation of initiatives, the projects, and their chances to lead some of them, or to become part of them. Connecting with the communities and providing proper guidance, on how to assume their roles and how to develop capacity building to become active actors in the implementation, allows a scenario of Community-Driven Reconstruction to happen, and fosters the efficiency of the projects by combining the communities' knowledge of their territories and local conditions.

Furthermore, the information, as a part of the synergies and associativity among actors, should not be only in one way, as the communities themselves witness the process, and the social leader can provide information to the local and central governments to improve the effectiveness of the implementation. Furthermore, when it comes to participation in a model that seeks Community-Driven Reconstruction and positive peacebuilding, to guarantee participation is to ensure a specific budget for different meetings to take place, including the ones within the communities in which social leaders provide and collect information from the people they represent.

Participants also described that the implementation is not continuous or consistent, but the goals of peacebuilding and recovering governance in Urabá and the rest of the PDET municipalities, require a long-term commitment to happen, and processes of knowledge management. In this sense and considering that the PDET have only three more years to be implemented, the efforts surrounding what they achieved and because of the precedent it set in participation, the initiates should not be held in a database, but the baseline to other projects and to develop new participation processes with the communities that follow the successful mechanism achieved by the PDET, especially in Urabá with the improbable dialogues that took place.

Now, there are several ways in which the communities represented by social leaders in the Motor Groups – now called Community Tables – can participate and gain back their roles. As Participant 16 explained, after the pandemic the connectivity in Urabá improved, and tools such as Facebook Lives, or online meetings are potential tools to provide and collect information, some of those tolls can even be potential for the local and central government can take advantage of. These tools, however, require the commitment of the participants as it should not become a matter of attendance alone, but of the knowledge that each space can generate and contribute to the implementation.

Along with that, to build positive peace as the Peace Agreement seeks, with reconciliation, truth, justice, reparation and no repetition, the projects should not be only focused on infrastructure as the examples explained before. As explained by the participant 11, as a social leader,

> "There should also be equity among the lines of the PDET. Everyone wants infrastructure, they want the road and the sewerage, etc., because those are tangible, but other very importer things are not tangible. Peace and reconciliation, for example, there should be more spaces about forgiveness, for instance, that contributes to pilar 8, of reconciliation, connivance and peacebuilding. Those projects receive less attention and fewer resources. (Participant 11, social leader, 2024).

As a result, to build positive peace, beyond creating scenarios of no violence, even for the people their participation in projects that seek reconciliation is important, as it sets the basis for social justice, and for sustainable peace. Without considering all the actors in the communities and the reconciliation transformation they required after the war, it will not be possible to set proper scenarios for participation as the ones that happened during the planning.

Moreover, reconciliation scenarios create better chances for security, which is one of the most relevant factors in guaranteeing participation for all actors involved and contributing to the effectiveness of the PDET. In a scenario in which some small villages and municipalities are under the control of violent groups, achieving governance seems unlikely, and even more, achieving reconciliation and peacebuilding in the region. For this matter, the mechanisms of participation should be thought of in different ways, by, for example, allowing the communities to contribute their ideas or concerns anonymously.

For the last three years, the PDET have to be implemented, many transformations should be made from the institutions involved, to the communities and their capacity building, and to the projects that could come from the initiatives. Whether an extension in time is worth or not, is a matter of how willing the local and central governments are to give more continuity to them, avoiding their political agendas and prioritizing what is important, the communities' reparation and peacebuilding.

# Conclusions

The PDET were established as a strategy to have a faster implementation of the Rural Reform in the rural areas and municipalities that were affected the most by the conflict with the FARC-EP. In Urabá, the PDET were a light of hope for the communities considering that even the smallest most remote rural area, was called to be a part of the planning process. It was also an opportunity for the local governments as it allowed them to access resources faster without depending on the department administration. For the central government, it was the instrument to build governance, contribute to the reparation of the communities and allow communities to be a part of the transformation of their territories.

However, the magnitude of the initiatives in the PDET and the budget restrictions were not considered during the planning, which combined with political interest and corruption, made the PDET to be inefficient in the implementation stage. What was a big participation exercise, the second biggest in the world, and a bridge for peacebuilding and territorial transformation, is now a program with several difficulties in its implementation. Nevertheless, the progress made for peacebuilding during the past seven years should not be ignored and should set the beginning of other programs and projects that recognize the importance of the communities as active participants, because they acknowledge their needs and their territories more than anyone.

As a part of this, it is also important to consider how the lack of associativity among the different actors, undermines the effectiveness of major programs such as the PDET. In regions like Urabá where violent groups still a presence have, having synergies between the local governments, the central government, the communities, the private sector, and NGOs, could make a difference in the implementation of the PDET, deconstructing power relationships and empowering the communities. The potential exists, but determination cannot be lost.

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**Interviews**

Participant 2, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 11th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 3, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 3rd, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 4, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 6th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 5, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 3rd, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 6, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 12th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 7, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 13th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 8, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 10th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 9, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 12th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 10, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. August 10th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 11, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 11th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 13, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 13th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 14, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 11th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 16, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 16th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Participant 17, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. September 17th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

Group Participant, (2024). Interviewed online by Luisa Torres. August 26th, 2024. The Hague, The Netherlands

# Appendix

## *Appendix A: Interviews: Questions and Details*

On a different note, it is important to remark on how the interviews were conducted, in this case, 19 interviews were done online via Teams or WhatsApp calls, in which the participant was informed about the research, its scope, the main objective and the consent required to conduct the interview – some details about the limitations of online interviews will be addressed further ahead. For this last part, I read a consent explaining that the information gathered was anonymous, none of the names of people or organizations were going to be mentioned, and all the information would be collected for academic purposes. Following that, I asked the participants for permission to record the interviews, and the 20 meetings were recorded for further analysis. There was one interview that took place in Amsterdam, with a participant who used to work for the ART at the central level and who happened to be in The Netherlands by the time of the interview, the process was done the same way as the rest of the interviews. Most of the meetings were between 25 to 55 minutes, except for the group interview which was 70 minutes long. Considering that the interviews were semi-structured, some of the questions were done following the story told by the participant, but there were some base-line questions, adjusted to the type of actor, such as:

- How was the campaign to incentivize you to become a part of the planning process for the PDET in Urabá? Did you have information about the Peace Agreement?
- What was your role during the meetings of the planning process and when were you able to be a decision maker of the initiatives that were being proposed?
- With the initiatives defined, how have you been able to participate in the implementation of those initiatives, what is your role in during the implementation?
- Why is it important to have a participative process in the planning and implementation process of the PDET?
- Have there been guarantees of security and access to participate in both processes?
- How could the participation in the planning stage have been better and how can the implementation improve to involve all actors and achieve better results?
- Would you consider this process a post-conflict scenario that has contributed to peacebuilding in Urabá?

### *Appendix B: About Ethics*

For the ethical considerations, following the guidelines for this research, it was considered the following questions in two blocks, from low sensitivity to high sensitivity, and the ways to avoid the risks from the questions which answer was yes:

| B1: Low Sensitivity | Yes | No |
|---|:---:|:---:|
| 1. Does the research involve the collection and or processing of (primary or secondary) personal data (including personal data in the public domain)? | X | |
| 2. Does the research involve participants from whom voluntary informed consent needs to be sought? | X | |
| 3. Will financial or material incentives (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? | X | |
| 4. Will the research require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for access to the groups, communities or individuals to be recruited (e.g., administrator for a private Facebook group, manager of an institution, government official)? | X | |
| 5. Does the research include benefit-sharing measures for research which takes place with people who could be considered vulnerable? – please revise the background document (Guidelines) for more information. | X | |

| B1: High Sensitivity | Yes | No |
|---|:---:|:---:|
| 1. Does the research involve the collection or processing of sensitive (primary or secondary) personal data? (e.g. regarding racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, biometric data, data related to health or a person's sex life or sexual orientation) | X | |
| 2. Does the research involve participants for whom voluntary and informed consent may require special atten- | | X |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| tion or who can be considered 'vulnerable'? (e.g., children (under 18), people with learning disabilities, undocumented migrants, patients, prisoners)? | | |
| 3. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the research without their knowledge and consent (covert observation of people in non-public places)? | | X |
| 4. Will the research be conducted in healthcare institutions, in healthcare settings, or will it involve the recruitment or study of patients or healthcare personnel? | | X |
| 5. Could the research induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences for research participants, researchers, or persons and institutions connected to them?. | | X |
| 6. Could the situation in one or several of the countries where research is carried out put the researcher, individuals taking part in the research, or individuals connected to the researcher, at risk? Presence of an infectious disease such as COVID-19 is considered a risk – please provide information as outlined in the background document (Guidelines). | | X |
| 7. Does the research require ethical approval or research permission from a local institution or body? | | X |

### *Appendix C: Participants Consent*

**Title:**

*Puentes de Esperanza:*

Participation in the Territorial Development Programs (PDET) as Transformation and Reparation for Positive Peacebuilding in Uraba Antioqueño, Colombia.

You are invited to participate in an interview as part of project conducted by Luisa Fernanda Torres Garcia from Erasmus University Rotterdam. During the interviews, the following personal data will be collected from you:

- Name
- Email
- Phone Number
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Age
- Racial or Ethnic Origin
- Role in their community

At Erasmus University, we conduct scientific research. We do this to learn, help people, and contribute to society. Since we are an academic institution conducting scientific research, we process your personal data exclusively for research on the basis of public interest.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. All information will be kept anonymous and confidential. There will be no reference made in oral or written reports which could link you to this study. You do not need to tell us your real name or the names of other people other than your own signature on the Informed Consent Form. If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear.

This interview aims to understand the participation process of the people in Urabá in the PDET planning and implementation process. This interview will be conducted online. You will be asked to share your experience and perspective about the participation process of the people in Urabá in the PDET planning and implementation process.

Though no discomfort is anticipated while participating in this study, you can withdraw your participation at any time during the process without penalty and without loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You are not expected to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with. Further, we anticipate that the research process will be beneficial to reflect on your digital media use and its potential impact on mobilities.

It will be helpful to take audio-record of the interview and obtain digital screenshots without personal details for analysis. But if you feel uncomfortable about

taking records or pictures, we will shut down the equipment and take notes by hand instead.

We will store all your data securely and confidentially, accessible only to researchers involved in the project. Any identifiable personal data will be deleted. All data will be stored for 10 years before they are disposed of safely and securely.

This research has been reviewed and approved by an internal review committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam. This committee ensures that research participants are protected. You can send us an email at 654339lt@eur.nl to request a copy of the results of this study or any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data. Do you have a complaint or concerns about your privacy? Please email the Data Protection Officer (fg@eur.nl) or visit www.autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl. (T: 088 - 1805250).