Growing Sustainable Peace: Starting at the Roots?

A case study on the influence of grassroots leadership and top-down infrastructure interventions on local peacebuilding processes in Medellín

THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Medellin has seen a rapid decline in violence over the last 20 years, which is often attributed to large-scale urban interventions that have taken place in some of the most marginalized neighbourhoods. It has been argued that the so-called megaprojects, initiated by the municipality, have not only changed the appearance of the city, but have also contributed to the decline of violence through the improvement of transportation, the promotion of the local economy and the creation of public space. However, this explanation is found to be contested at the neighbourhood level, as it ignores many local peacebuilding efforts, but also because the megaprojects bring with them new forms of conflict. Therefore this study takes into account both bottom-up and top-down initiatives that could influence peace at the local level and particularly questions how grassroots leaders and urban interventions can support sustainable peace in Medellin.

Based on interviews with 54 grassroots leaders and key stakeholders, the study finds that the capacity of grassroots leaders to enhance sustainable peace at the community level lies mostly in their ability to: 1) create consciousness and support empowerment; 2) defend rights and satisfy certain needs of the community; and 3) to provide opportunities for the population. Nevertheless, grassroots leaders are found generally defenceless against the armed forces in the territory. The megaprojects, on the other hand, seem to create a form of negative peace, in which physical violence is reduced, while the structures of illegal armed forces are often maintained or even solidified. The study argues that this type of ‘peace’ is not sustainable and needs further attention, if future conflict and violence is to be avoided.

Key words: sustainable peace, grassroots leadership, structural violence, urban interventions
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PICTURE: JAIRO MAYA DURING COMMUNITY GATHERING. The banner says: Forum (of) Memory, Megaprojects, and Community Initiatives.
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I. INTRODUCTION

December, 2015: Comuna 8, Medellín

As we were walking back from the building sites, the sites where residents’ settlements had been demolished in order to make space for the ‘megaprojects’, a girl, about 16 years old, came running up to Jairo. She hugged him and told him proudly that she had passed the grade in school. After saying ‘hi’ to me as well, she hugged Jairo again and ran off. As we kept on walking, I noticed a satisfied smile on Jairo’s face. Few seconds later, he told me that the girl we had just met, had escaped her old lifestyle that involved drug-use and prostitution... I did not want to know how old she must have been when this started, nor did I even want to think about how she had been forced into it, but I was happy to see that she seemed to be doing fine now. Although Jairo did not tell me anything, his smile and her hugs somehow revealed that he had been, at least partly, responsible for the fact that she had gone back to school and had escaped from a very harmful and violent environment.

On June 23, 2016 the bilateral and definitive ceasefire between the Colombian government and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) was signed in Havana. After more than half a century of armed conflict, this agreement is an important step towards a more peaceful future in the country. Nevertheless, the Government and the FARC are only two of the many actors that have been responsible for all types of violence and rights-violations in the country through recent decades. Over time, the complexity of the social and armed conflict has increased to such an extent, that rather than talking about a ‘post-conflict’ situation, the signing of the peace-agreement should preferably be regarded as a ‘post-agreement’ situation. With high levels of uncertainty about the future of the country, as well as on-going conflict in many of its regions, the word ‘peace’ can be a misnomer for the current state of affairs. This study focusses specifically on the meaning of the word ‘peace’ in the urban context; a context that has not been given much attention during the negotiations in Havana. Starting from the idea that peacebuilding processes can only be effective and sustainable if they are inclusive and focused on meeting the needs of the affected population (Evans-kent, 2002; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013), this study analysis how both high- and low-level leadership can affect peace at the local level.

Comuna 8, Jairo’s place of birth and the location of this case-study, is one of the most marginalized districts of Medellín. Besides the lack of basic services and adequate infrastructure, it has been plagued by violent disputes over territorial control ever since the 1980s. Nevertheless, the many social organizations and community leaders have been struggling against conflict and violence and have worked to meet the needs of the community ever since the beginning of its construction. The first and primary aim of this study is to
explore how peace can be understood and promoted in the urban Colombian context and questions how grassroots leadership, such as that of Jairo, can play a role in peacebuilding efforts at the local level.

While local ownership of peacebuilding practices and the role of civil society—mid-level leadership—has been found to be important in supporting the sustainability of peace (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013; Peake et al., 2004; Pearce, 1997), the role of (grassroots) leadership to contribute to sustainable peace has remained under-researched (Peake et al., 2004). It is considered that grassroots or low-level leaders (Lederach, 1997) can occupy a special position in society, as they are not necessarily bound to fixed rules and can be relatively free in their actions—especially when they work on a voluntary basis (Reychler and Stellamans, 2005). Therefore, this study takes up where other research has left off and is particularly interested in some of the agents that make up ‘civil society’. In particular, it focusses on the actions and strategies that are used by grassroots leaders to—either intentionally or not—support local peacebuilding processes.

Simultaneously, this bottom-up approach to peace is complemented with an analysis of the possible influences of so-called ‘megaproject’ on peace at the local level, as well as their possible influences on the peacebuilding capacity of grassroots leaders. These megaprojects, regarded here as the outcomes of high-level leadership (Lederach, 1997), aim at upgrading the physical environment through large-scale interventions in some of the most marginalized parts of Medellín and are found to have been effective in reducing homicide rates in the impacted areas (Cerdá et al., 2012).

After homicide-rates dropped drastically after 2002—just before the first megaprojects were implemented under the banner of ‘Social Urbanism’—the city started to draw international attention and the rapidly changing city was later even referred to as the ‘Medellín Miracle’. This miracle consisted of two parts: first, the homicide rates had declined from 185 per 100,000 in 2002 to 32.4 in 2006 (Fajardo & Andrews, 2014) and second; Medellín had seen a drastic physical makeover in the North-Eastern part of the city, where the first ‘metrocable’ line had been constructed. This metrocable, among the first noticeable megaprojects, was the first in the world to be used as a public-transportation method and was placed in two of the most marginalized districts of Medellín. Cerdá et al. (2012) argue that these large-scale interventions, such as new transportation systems and public library parks, can have a significant effect on violence, as they found that the reduction in homicide-rates was 66% higher in intervened neighbourhoods than in neighbourhoods that were not intervened.

According to Cerdá et al. (2012) the reduction in homicide-rates can largely be attributed to the improvement of public spaces and the creation of new institutions, that led to higher levels of trust and interaction amongst the community and subsequently to a higher willingness to intervene if social order was threatened. However, the researchers also recognize that possible unobserved factors could have caused this decline in homicide rates and noted that the study was “not equipped to explain the mechanisms responsible for the decline in violence” (p. 1051). The second aim of this study, therefore, is to elucidate some of those
‘possible unobserved factors’, in order to understand how the reduction in homicide rates can be interpreted as a contribution, or not, to peace. It is questioned how these megaprojects can influence peace at the local level, and subsequently how they may influence the peacebuilding capacity of grassroots leaders.

While Medellín’s homicide-rates are currently the lowest in over 40 years, this study questions the sustainability of the current ‘peace’ that has been developed over the last two decades. It has been argued elsewhere that, rather than a situation of sustainable peace, there seems to be an ‘apparent calm’ in the city; where violence may not always be directly visible, yet present in different forms (Colak & Pearce 2015; Serna 2012; Velásquez 2015). By building on the work of Johan Galtung, this study regards peace not merely as the absence of physical violence, such as homicides, but rather as the absence of all types of violence, including structural and cultural violence. Furthermore, the analysis particularly focuses on structural violence, that relates to issues such as exclusion, discrimination and oppression; which are seen as some of the underlying causes of direct violence. Sustainable peace, then, is regarded as an ideal situation in which the possible root-causes of violence are minimized and positive relationships between the members of a community are enhanced (Bond, 2012; Galtung, 1967; Peake et al., 2004; Pearce, 1997).

I.I OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

In order to get a better understanding of how the concepts of violence, peace and high- and low-level leadership are applied in this research, the first chapter will outline the general theories that are used in this study. The second chapter explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which the research is based, as well as the methodological approach that is used and finally discusses some ethical considerations. In Chapter 3 several important contextual aspects will be discussed, as well as some key characteristics of Medellín, in order to explain the relevance of the investigation within a larger frame.

Through mainly qualitative inquiry and the use of semi-structured and open interviews, with grassroots leaders from Comuna 8 and external experts, this investigation explores and supports the meaning that respondents have given to the concept of ‘peace’. In Chapter 4, this interpretative approach is combined with several measurable indicators, in order to assess the types of violence, seen as obstructions to peace, that are present in Comuna 8. The subsequent chapter lays the foundation for analysing how peace can be understood at the local level, and is followed by a reflection of how grassroots leaders may be able to influence this peace, in chapter 6. The last two empirical chapters focus on several effects of the megaprojects on peace at the local level (chapter 7), as well as on their relationship with grassroots leadership and the way in which these megaprojects may affect their peacebuilding capacity (chapter 8).

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to the ‘local peacebuilding’ debate and its practice, by demonstrating how grassroots leaders and government infrastructure interventions interact in this emblematic urban case. It explores the under-researched role of grassroots leaders in local peacebuilding processes and aims to better understand how peace is perceived by those who have suffered from violent conflict. While Medellín has seen significant transformation during the last two decades, the city is also
known for its contrasts in both social and spatial segregation (Medina et al. 2012). It is also the city which hosts the second largest share of Colombia's six million internally displaced people (CNMH, 2015). This displaced population overwhelmingly lives in the most marginalized areas of Medellin and has suffered greatly from violence in the country. Comuna 8 has been one of the principal recipients of internally displaced people and is historically known for violence and conflict. Now that the eyes are focussed on the megaproducts that are changing the aesthetics of this part of the city, there is a need for deeper understanding of how these interventions might influence the construction and sustainability of peace in the community.
1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While homicide rates have dropped rapidly over the last 20 years, it would be too optimistic to argue that Medellín can be considered as ‘peaceful’, considering the city is still largely controlled by increasingly complex narco-(ex)paramilitary structures and criminal gangs (combos, or bacrim) that are involved in extortion, murder, displacement, threats, intimidation, kidnappings and drug-trafficking (CORPADES, 2014). However, besides the presence of physical violence, there are other types of –non-physical– violence present in the city that form important threats to the citizens’ rights, well-being and dignity, and consequently to peace in the city. These types of violence are expressed in restricted access to basic needs and services, as well as high levels of social inequality and spatial segregation (Echeverri & Orsini 2011; Medina et al., 2012; Torres, 2009).

Following Galtung, this study defines peace as the absence of violence (Galtung, 1969). Consequently, it is argued that attaining and maintaining peace in the city of Medellín, requires the absence of the expressions of violence that were mentioned earlier. Based on Galtung’s distinction between direct and indirect (structural) violence, this study applies a broad concept of violence that encompasses all types of threats to human rights, wellbeing and dignity. This broad definition allows for a holistic approach to analyse not only the outcomes, but also the root-causes of different forms of conflict and violence. Subsequently, it is suggested that only through understanding and targeting these root-causes of violence, sustainable peace can be supported. Peace, it is argued, can only be sustainable if it is ‘embodied’ by the people that have suffered the most from the expressions of both direct and indirect violence, especially the most marginalized (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

After having discussed the theoretical approach to violence and peace in this research, this chapter discusses the importance of examining the role of local actors, especially of low-level leaders, in local peacebuilding practices. Moreover, as it is presumed that local peacebuilding practices will inevitably be influenced by high-level leadership (Lederach, 1997), attention will also be paid to this last kind of leadership. These types of leadership are studied through the examination of the roles that respectively grassroots leadership and government infrastructure interventions can play in either reducing or augmenting direct and structural violence at the local level.
1.1. VIOLENCE

This study is based on some of the fundamental ideas of Galtung, who has distinguished different types of violence and peace in his holistic approach, that has laid the foundations of modern peace thinking. In order to understand peace, however, it is first necessary to explore that which obstructs it, namely violence (Galtung, 1969). According to Galtung “violence is present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations are below their potential realizations” (Galtung, 1969: p168). This broad definition of violence underlines the idea that violence can be seen as the cause of the differences between potential and actual realizations. For example, a potential somatic realization for a person in a good physical condition is to live at least twenty more years, yet due to murder the person dies, and is not able to live longer; the actual somatic realization is lower than the potential. In this case, we can speak of personal or direct violence, as there is an actor (perpetrator) that is directly responsible for the death of another person and for the lower actual realization of her or his lifespan. However, if there is no actor directly responsible for the death of another person (e.g. due to a terminal disease where a patient cannot pay for treatment) but this death could have been avoided by applying the right knowledge and resources, Galtung argues that we can still speak of violence; this time, however, understood as structural violence (Galtung, 1969). This study is particularly interested in this latter type of violence, for which the next section will explain how it is understood in this research and why it is regarded as an important factor for examining the possibilities for sustainable peace.

1.1.1. STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

When insights and resources are available and could bring potential and actual realizations closer together (e.g. curing a patient's disease for a longer life) but are used for other purposes or being monopolized, Galtung suggests to speak of indirect- or structural violence. The idea behind this is that when the actual realization is lower than the potential, it is by definition avoidable and can thus be seen as a form of violence (Galtung, 1969). For Galtung, structural violence is closely related to social injustice and he sees inequality as the source of structural violence by arguing that an uneven distribution of resources will inevitably lead to a decrease in the potential level of realization for some part of the community, especially the marginalized (Galtung, 1969).

To illustrate this, Paul Farmer (1996, 2001) describes how social and economic structures in Haiti, that have led to structural poverty and consequently to low health expectations for a great part of the population, are rooted in the colonial history of the country. He argues that “[the] distribution of AIDS and tuberculosis – like that of slavery in earlier times – is historically given and economically driven” (Farmer, et al., 2001: p. 317). In other words, the staggering of numbers of AIDS patients in the country cannot merely be explained by personal characteristics of the patients, but should be seen as a result of historical factors (especially of slavery and economic oppression of the country) that have led to a heavily uneven distribution of resources and opportunities. Similarly to Galtung, Farmer sees inequality as the major source of structural violence.
Now, if Galtung’s structural violence can be seen as a consequence or expression of inequality, the question that arises is: ‘inequality of what?’ Considering that there are uncountable types of inequalities that could affect ‘potential realizations’, but also the idea that total equality might come at a very high cost\(^1\) (Boulding, 1977), research on structural violence has to make choices on what types of inequalities to include. Although some forms of inequality can be measured to a certain extent (e.g. income inequality by using the Gini coefficient) other forms of inequality (e.g. freedoms) are harder to grasp, especially when they involve perceptions of the subjects. Initially, Galtung and Høivik (1971) and later Köhler and Alcock (1976) have looked at one specific aspect of structural violence, namely premature death, and have provided statistical methods to measure the deaths caused by differences in respectively social position and wealth. The deaths caused by these inequalities could, according to the authors, be seen as structural violence. However, both studies explicitly recognized that premature death is only one possible outcome of structural violence and that social and psychological damage are other possible outcomes that deserve attention. The problem, however, is that these types of ‘damages’ are not as easily measurable as, for example, the age of death.

Gleditsch et al. (2014) show that although the term ‘structural violence’ was popular for a decade or so, it is –perhaps due to its complexity– now rarely used explicitly in peace studies, yet it does regularly occur in other social sciences, including anthropology, clinical medicine and sociology (Gleditsch et al., 2014; Ho, 2007). More recent studies on structural violence have predominantly focused on gender issues, inequalities in education and the distribution of diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, as a result of social, economic and political inequalities (see for example Farmer, 2004, 2006; Osler, 2006; Rhodes et al., 2012).

What has been suggested here, is that structural violence can refer to a variety of inequalities that produce negative effects for (specific groups of) society, that could have been avoided by reallocation of knowledge and resources. These inequalities, however, can lead to equally negative consequences (e.g. premature death) as direct violence, and should therefore be considered equally as (possible) obstructers to sustainable peace. Due to the complexity of the concept of structural violence, it is necessary for this study to define what types of inequalities are regarded as possible obstructers to peace. In order to do so, this research builds largely on the perceptions of violence and peace of the concerned population. The epistemological assumptions and methodological tools that underlie this approach will be described in more detail in the following chapter (2.2).

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\(^1\) Boulding (1977) warns for the possible negative consequences of a total egalitarian society, such as a loss of liberty and a loss of quality – of art, literature and science for example. He illustrates that behind the idea of structural violence there is a normative rationale, based on ‘structural thinking’ that prefers equality over inequality (Boulding, 1977: p.81).
I.2. PEACE

For Galtung (1969) peace can be defined as ‘the absence of violence’. Initially, he distinguished two forms of peace, which can be traced back to the two different types of violence, as described above. Accordingly, the absence of direct violence amid the persistence of structural violence can be defined as negative peace, while the absence of both direct and structural violence can be regarded as positive peace (Gleditsch et al., 2014). In his later work, Galtung also introduced the term cultural peace, understood as the opposite of cultural violence, which refers to "the symbolic sphere of our existence [...] that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence." (Galtung, 1990: p. 291). In other words, it is argued that expressions of religion, ideology, language, art and science can be used to legitimize different forms of violence. Examples of the legitimation of direct violence can be found in radical religious groups that do not tolerate any other religion and are prepared to use physical violence in order to enforce their own religion upon others, or in ethnic struggles in which the superiority of one ethnicity is supposed over another and used as a tool to legitimize discrimination and oppression.

For Galtung, there is often a causal flow from cultural, to structural, to direct violence, in which the first type of violence 'preaches' and 'teaches' the acceptance of certain forms of exploitation and repression, that can in turn lead to expressions of direct violence. Subsequently, he suggests that the three types of violence (cultural, structural and direct) can reinforce each other and create a vicious cycle of violence. An example of this vicious cycle of violence are the Mano Dura, or ‘Iron Fist’ policies in El Salvador. The ‘left-overs’ from the civil war in the country have led to what has been denominated as a ‘culture of violence’ in the country (Garsd, 2015). This culture of violence has been reproduced by gang cultures, that have originated from discriminatory and exclusive (structural violence) practices in both the United States and El Salvador (Wolf, 2013). The Mano Dura policies, that were based on repression and violence, rather than on the logic of conflict-resolution, were a violent response to these gangs and aimed at eradicating them. Nevertheless, ever since their implementation, these policies seem to only have added to the violence in the country and the gang phenomenon has all but disappeared (Ávalos, 2015; Wolf, 2013). In contrast to this vicious circle of violence, Galtung suggests that different types of peace (negative, positive and cultural) can also be reinforcing and possibly lead to a ‘virtuous cycle’ of peace.

Some critics have argued that Galtung’s definition of peace is too vague as it describes only what it is not, without giving a usable definition of its opposite: violence (Barnett 2008; Boulding 1977). Furthermore, it has been claimed that Galtung’s ideal type of peace is not attainable, nor desirable, as it would imply a total egalitarian society (Barnett, 2008; Boudling, 1977). Indeed, Galtung’s broad definition of peace remains open to interpretation and does not provide hard measurable variables to grasp it. Yet the strength of his approach to peace is that it allows for context-specific understanding of the root-causes –that produce and reproduce specific forms– of violence. I argue that understanding these root-causes is a necessary requisite for effective efforts in supporting sustainable peace.
1.2.1. SUSTAINABLE PEACE

What seems rather contradictory, is that the focus on peace in Peace- and Conflict Studies is relatively little. According to Gleditsch et al. (2014) most peace literature focuses on violence, conflict and war; normally with a focus on negative peace. Although this research looks closely at issues of direct and structural violence, the essential question is about how sustainable peace can be supported. However, as peace has been defined as ‘the absence of violence’, any research that accepts this idea will inevitably have to indicate first where violence occurs; knowing what will bring sustainable peace means understanding the structural factors that prevent it.

Building on the idea that peace is a multi-faceted concept and requires the absence of direct, structural and cultural violence, I will use the term sustainable peace to refer to an ideal situation in which all three types of violence are reduced to the extent that the probability of either one to increase is minimized. Sustainable peace, here, is understood as a collective effort, rather than a static situation, where the root causes of conflict, such as oppression, discrimination, exclusion and high levels of inequality, are being addressed by increasing the positive relations between different actors, while minimizing the negative ones (Bond, 2012; Galtung, 1967; Pearce, 1997). Some examples of these positive relations include: freedom from fear and from want, absence of exploitation, and the presence of cooperation, equality, justice, freedom of action, pluralism and dynamism (Galtung, 1967; Peake et al., 2004). While each of these examples deserve a dissertation of their own, the main idea here is that in order to be sustainable, peace must be ‘rooted’ in positive interactions between different actors. Building on the idea that sustainable peace cannot be ‘signed’ in a peace agreement, but can only be created through a continuous effort of the actors involved, the next part will discuss the importance of including local perspectives in peacebuilding efforts, in order to make them ‘rooted’ and more sustainable.

1.3. THE LOCAL TURN IN PEACE RESEARCH

Recently, there has been an increased attention to local peacebuilding processes and it is worth asking why this is the case. As Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) point out, the ‘local turn’ in peace studies offers a critical perspective to the dominant Western rationality that influences peace building practices. They argue that peace agreements around the world are often "negotiated in 'Western bubbles' (geographically in the West or within a 'green zone' in the conflict environment), according to Northern rationalities with a few local elites involved who have a controversial claim to represent local constituencies" (p. 763-764). As a consequence, the ‘local turn’ is often still restricted to the margins of peace thinking and practice, and the changing conditions of peace at the local level are often poorly understood (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013).

Evans-Kent (2002) distinguishes peace-making (formal structures that end in resolution) from peacekeeping (implementation of formal agreements through use of troops) and peacebuilding (rebuilding structures of [civil] society). She argues that the formal system of peace-making dominates international politics and is usually preoccupied with creating stability (making peace agreements) and less with peacetime needs of society (peacebuilding). According to Evans-Kent, this is due to the fact that peace-
making is often an exclusive (elite) approach, driven by the needs of the international community, rather than by the interests of the people. Going back to Galtung’s distinction between *direct* and *structural* violence, it appears that high-level negotiations usually focus on reducing the first type of violence, rather than the second one. This leaves us with the question of how sustainable this type of ‘peace’ can be. The underlying preoccupation here is that without addressing the needs of grassroots communities, peace-making remains an “incomplete and hollow process” (Evans-kent, 2002: p303).

By focussing on locally based agents within conflict or post-conflict environments, there is more room for aspects such as culture, history, identity, agency and resistance in the peacebuilding processes, making them more context-specific than the mere implementation of ‘external blueprints’ (Mac Ginty & Richmond 2013). John Paul Lederach was one of the first scholars to emphasize the importance of involving local resources in peacebuilding processes, in order to make them sustainable. Building on the work of Lederach (1997), Mouly (2013) states that local peace initiatives are “important to ensure ownership of peacebuilding processes and contribute to their sustainability” (p. 48) and further argues that “grassroots initiatives are significant since they originate from those most affected by direct and structural violence, who have more incentives to resist it, but also face more challenges” (p. 48). Furthermore, the role of civil society in peacebuilding has been examined by various authors (see, for example: Evans-Kent, 2002; Mouly, 2013; Pearce, 2007 and Racioppi & O'sullivan See, 2007) and it is widely recognized that local non-state actors, or *middle-range actors*, occupy a special position within conflict affected areas, as they are able to act beyond the formal structures of national and international politics; may have gained trust by the community; and are able to cooperate with and include local-level leaders (Lederach, 1997; Mouly, 2013).

Considering that there exists a discrepancy between ‘local’ and ‘non-local’ peace thinking and that top-level peace negotiations generally fail to address the local communities’ needs for peace, this study questions the sustainability of top-level peace-making practices and examines the role that *low-level leadership* (by grassroots leaders) can play in the construction of sustainable peace. However, as it is assumed that top-level decision making, based on *high-level leadership*, will inevitably influence these local practices (Ledarach, 1997), additional attention is paid to the influence that *high-level leadership* can have on sustainable peace, as well on the peacebuilding potential of *low-level leadership*. While top-level peace-making is usually associated with national or international peace negotiations (Lederach, 1997; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013) this study applies the same logic to a lower scale and analyses one particular outcome of top-level decision making, in this case by the municipality, within the urban context; namely the implementation of so-called ‘megaprojects’ (see 1.3.2).

1.3.1. GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

While ever more literature on peacebuilding and conflict resolution is being provided, with ever changing foci (Peake *et al.*, 2004; Gleditsch *et al.*, 2014; Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013) the role of *low-level or grassroots leadership* in both conflict and post-conflict scenario’s has largely been neglected (Peake *et al.*, 2004). It is not clear why such little attention has been paid to *grassroots leadership* in situations of
conflict, but, for example leadership author Barbera Kellerman attributes this lack of attention to the implicit assumption, often made by scholars, that ‘to lead’ is to ‘do right’; which might lead to the conclusion that leadership automatically supports peace (Kellerman, 2000 in: Peake et al., 2004).

Before examining the potential role of grassroots leaders in peacebuilding practices, it is necessary to define leadership. Reychler and Stellamans (2005) describe leadership as “the influencing process of leaders and followers to achieve objectives through change” (p7). Furthermore, they make a distinction between informal and formal leadership. While the latter is granted by formal rules, such as job descriptions and legislated mandates, the former is rather based on trustworthiness, ability and civility (Reychler & Stellamans, 2005). According to Heifetz (1998), these informal leaders “–perceived as entrepreneurs and deviants, organizers and trouble makers– provide the capacity within the system, to see through the blind spots of the dominant viewpoint” (Heifetz, 1998 in; Reychler and Stellamans, 2005: p7). The idea here, is that especially informal leaders can occupy a special position in society, as they are not restricted by formal rules and are relatively free in their actions. However, as Heifetz notes, these leaders can be entrepreneurs and organizers, but also deviants and trouble makers. The question that arises then, is if and how these leaders can be seen as possible peacebuilders.

1.3.1.1. Transactional and transformational leader behaviours

Burns (1978) was the first to make a distinction between what he called transactional and transformational leader behaviours. Where the first type of behaviour is based upon an exchange process in which predominantly or exclusively the leaders and followers are rewarded for their efforts, the latter type of leaders are able to transcend the boundaries of their own community, possibly leading to a positive influence on the wider community (Burns, 1978 in: Peake et al., 2004; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Persons like Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Marin Luther King can be seen as illustrative examples of transformational leaders. However, the modus operandi of many (political) leaders today appears to be more transactional, rather than transformational, as the stakes of (political) survival are high and (appearance of) loyalty to one’s followers is necessary for survival in the game. From this point of view, the argument that “good leaders are not necessarily formally elected ones” (Peake et al., 2004: p22) can been given some credibility, since elected leaders will generally have a feeling of responsibility to one particular group that supports the leader, which sometimes may lead to a clash in interests between the ‘represented’ and the ‘wider’ community.

1.3.1.2. Peacebuilding leadership

What remains to be discussed is how leaders can actually influence (parts of) society and enhance sustainable peace. As mentioned before, the literature on this topic is surprisingly light, for which there are few general theories to build on. The literature that is used here, focused on general theories of leadership and created different hypotheses on the basis of different ‘ideal types’; exemplary ‘peace leaders’ such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, but also on ‘terrorist leaders’ such as Osama bin Laden. What
leaders generally have in common is their potential to offer two basic functions; 
*inspirational guidance* and/or *organizational direction* (Freeman, 2014).

Inspirational guidance can be linked to charismatic leadership and ideological vision, and can be used to overcome the collective action problem. This means that the leader is able to mobilize people or change their behaviour in a certain way that would not be considered as rational from an individualistic point of view. In order to do so, the leader must have a certain capacity to “provide vision and sense of mission, instil pride in and among the group, and gain respect and trust” (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003 in; Freeman, 2014: p5). The organizational guidance involves a certain control over resources, strategy, tactics and organizational issues, as the means to achieve common ends. In some cases violence might be used as one of those means.

Reychler and Stellamans (2005) propose to make a distinction between *peacebuilding leadership* (peace builders) and *peace inhibiting leadership* (peace spoilers). Nevertheless, they warn us for falling in the trap of believing that a person, that is either a peace builder or spoiler, will always fulfil this same role, as their roles or attitude might change over time. Therefore, it is suggested that rather than seeing peace building leadership as an inherent quality of an individual, it should be seen as the quality of an intervention initiated by a person. The Reychler and Stellamans study focused on four aspects of peace building leadership, including: values, analytic style, change behaviour and motivation and personality. The table in Appendix 1 shows some general characteristics and hypothesis that can be formulated from their analysis.

In their analysis, Reychler and Stellamans provide a large range of individual attributes that can be ascribed to either peace builders or peace spoilers. For example, it is suggested that the personality of a peace building leader includes courage, humility, hardness, a sense of humour, personal integrity and the ability to cope with personal stress and complex situation (p52). While these assumptions seem acceptable, Reychler and Stellamans do not sufficiently demonstrate the mechanism through which peace builders can actually enhance peace, as the research is more focussed on personality rather than on actions and strategies. In order to know how grassroots leaders can actually contribute to sustainable peace, however, I argue that there is a need to examine precisely these actions and strategies that can contribute to peace.

### 1.3.2. HIGH-LEVEL LEADERSHIP: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF URBAN INTERVENTIONS

As indicated above, this research looks at how both *high- and low-level* leadership can influence peace at the local level. However, as the overall focus is on *low-level or grassroots leadership*, this study only includes one specific outcome of *high-level leadership*, namely state-led urban (infrastructure) interventions in violent neighbourhoods. A common way of dealing with direct violence at neighbourhood level is by using sector specific violence-reduction interventions (Moser et al., 2006). These interventions can broadly be categorized into two groups; those that build on *conflict theory* and those that build on *consensus (or systems) theory* (Hyman, 1990). Where *consensus theory* assumes social order to be a result of a dominant
set of shared values, *conflict theory* asserts that the social order is a product of constraint and domination (Hyman, 1990).

It has been argued that in the case of Medellín urban interventions, in some of the most marginalized and violent neighbourhoods, have led to a significant reduction in homicide rates, i.e. direct violence (Cerdá *et al.*, 2012). Following Moser (2006), these interventions are regarded here as CPTED (crime prevention through environmental design), that focus on upgrading physical structures, such as transportation facilities, schools and public parks, in order to strengthen social cohesion in violent communities and support peaceful coexistence at the local level (Cerdá *et al.*, 2012). The urban interventions conform most closely to the consensus theory (Hyman, 1990). The idea here is that broad goals, related to the overall community, are set by those who are part of the overall power structure (in this case the municipality) and are executed in a top-down manner, with the assumption that these changes will create benefits for the whole community. However, as has been argued above, there can exist a discrepancy between ‘local’ (grassroots) and ‘non-local’ (elite) peacebuilding efforts (Evans-Kent, 2002), for which it is worth examining the effects of these *non-local* decision-making processes and to analyse their effects on peace at the local level, as well as their effects on the peacebuilding potential of *grassroots leadership*. The next chapter will discuss what methodological approach was used to analyse these relationships.
The previous chapter has clarified the essential theoretical ideas on which this research is based. This chapter will first shortly illuminate the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underlie this research, which allow to understand the foundations of the methodological approach that has been used to conceptualize and operationalize the concepts violence and peace. As it was argued that especially structural violence (let alone cultural violence) is difficult to measure, the approach that is used here hopefully overcomes some of the difficulties of researching this type of violence. After a short clarification of the ontological and epistemological assumptions on which this research was based, the chapter continues with a brief recap of the main concepts that are used in this study, followed by the central and sub questions that structure this investigation. Subsequently, the use of a case-study design, as well as the used sampling technique and ultimately the most important ethical considerations will be elucidated.

2.1. ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

While not always made explicit, research paradigms provide insights on the foundations of the researcher’s assumptions about reality and how it can be studied. The following part is meant to clarify the underlying ontological (what exists and what can be known) epistemological (how it can be known) and methodological assumptions, yet there is only space here to briefly overview the implications of choosing one way of approaching reality over another.

By adopting a critical realist ontology, I will implicitly apply theories of structure(s) and agency, corresponding with the realist assumptions about the social world, which presumes that both the natural and the social world are “comprised of a stratified ensemble of structures and relations [...] which also have a (relatively) enduring nature and which are therefore worthy of scientific investigation” (Joseph, 2000: p186). Critical realism presumes a ‘real existing’ world, which exists independently of our perceptions and knowledge about it (Craib & Benton, 2001; Easton, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It also emphasizes our limited capacity to understand and conceptualize this world, but assumes that just because we cannot observe something does not mean it does not exist.

The creation of knowledge, however, is not seen as an uncontested process and critical realism denies the possibility of gaining objective knowledge about the world. Instead, it assumes that there are multiple scientifically correct ways of understanding reality. Therefore, critical realists retain an ontological realism, whilst accepting constructivist and relativist epistemologies; understanding of the world is inevitably seen as a result of one’s own perspectives and standpoint (Maxwell, 2010). Critical realism distinguishes three ontological models of reality; the empirical, the actual and the real (or ‘deep’) structures and mechanisms. The first category encompasses those aspects of reality that can be experienced (either directly or indirectly), the second category comprises those aspects that occur, but may not necessarily be experienced, and the last category refers to the underlying causes that generate phenomena. These latter mechanisms are not open to observation and cannot be apprehended directly, yet they can be inferred through a combination
of theory construction and empirical investigation (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). The next part will explain how these three ontological layers can help create a comprehensive method to analyse peace and violence.

2.2. OPERATIONALIZING VIOLENCE AND PEACE

As this study aims to explore the possibilities for enhancing peace at the local level, and as ‘peace’ was defined as the ‘absence of violence’, there is a need for a clear methodological approach to operationalize the concept of violence first. However, the previous chapter already shortly indicated the complexity of defining –in particular structural violence (see 1.1.1) and it was argued that the way of operationalizing this concept was closely related to the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research. While cultural violence will probably be even harder to measure than direct and structural violence, the scope of this research does not allow for the elaboration of a comprehensive method to analyse this type of violence. Hence, this research focuses predominantly on the direct and structural of violence.

Going back to the idea that different types of inequalities might lead to different types of violence (see 1.1.1), the question that arises is what types of inequalities to include when analysing structural violence and sources of direct violence. As an example of structural violence, the connection between income and wealth distribution on one side and life expectancy on the other side has previously been discussed (see 1.1.1). It has been commonly argued that there is a significant correlation between the independent variables; income and wealth distribution, and the dependent variable; life expectancy (see for example Kölzer & Alcock, 1976; Farmer, 1996, 2001; Singer & Castro, 2004; Biggs et al., 2010). However, this picture becomes more complicated when other indicators are used to measure inequalities and different forms of violence.

For example, if one were to measure the amount of cigarettes smoked per day by an individual and compare this to life expectancy and a correlation would be found between cigarette smoking and early death, it could be argued that smoking is a source of violence (i.e. lower actual realization than the potential realization; in this case early death). The smoker might experience this differently; the person might feel that smoking contributes to her or his well-being and might prioritize the short-term benefits (enjoy smoking) over the long-term effects (possible health issues). As there is a person committing the act, it could be argued that the above is a description of direct or personal violence (Barnett, 2008). However, if the person that smokes is also the affected person and consciously makes the decision to smoke, can this still be called violence? And if smoking would be prohibited, would that then not be another form of violence; taking away the freedom to decide over one’s own body?2

2 Using the strict definition of the word violence, as explained by Galtung (1967), both questions would be answered positively. For Galtung, violence is present when actual realizations fall short of potential realizations, for which smoking might be seen as a form of direct violence, even though the perpetrator might be the same person as the victim. In order to deal with this philosophical dilemma, a relativist approach to violence is used in this research, which prioritizes the experience of the victim in order to assess the severance of the form of violence (see 2.2).
These questions become even more complicated when they concern structural or cultural violence. Uneven income distribution (structural) or gendered division of tasks (structural and cultural) might be seen as unfair or as (sources of) violence by some, while seen as ‘normal’ or ‘good’ by others. What these examples—hopefully—show, is that the concept of ‘violence’ is constructed according to personal, cultural and contextual factors and characteristics, and is therefore necessarily relative. This is not to suggest that only a cultural relativist approach to violence should be seen as valid, but rather that there are no strict guidelines to define violence. What may be the closest to such a thing, however, is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ho (2007) for example, builds on the work of Galtung and Amartya Sen and argues that when the actual (de facto) rights fall short of the potential (de jure) rights—in this case the Universal Human Rights—it can be seen as violence. Others have made an attempt to connect structural violence to the Human Needs theory (Christie, 1997) and Sen’s ‘crucial instrumental freedoms’ (Barnett, 2008), including: economic opportunities, political freedoms, social opportunities, transparent guarantees and protective security. These approaches are based on the assumption that when certain rights, needs or freedoms are not respected or present, it can be seen as (structural) violence.

In order to incorporate the personal, cultural, and contextual influences in the conceptualization of violence, without falling into complete cultural relativism, this study combined the previously mentioned factors with a rights-based approach, in order to operationalize the concept of violence. This process included two steps. First, by using the data that was gathered through interviewing, important themes were filtered out on the basis of the respondents’ perceptions of violence and peace. This way, the locally most relevant issues for the population in relation to violence and peace could be identified. Going back to the three critical realist ontological layers—the empirical, the actual and the real, or ‘deep’—these ‘perceptions of violence’ can be understood as the empirical aspects of reality that can be experienced (see Figure 1).

![FIGURE 1: THREE ONTOLOGICAL LAYERS OF CRITICAL REALISM](image-url)
The second step was to use a rights-based approach and to choose measurable indicators of inequalities in order to identify potentially violated rights. As a result, several context specific forms of direct and structural violence could be identified through the analysis of perceptions, while the rights-based framework was used to verify or falsify these perceptions (where possible) and to highlight potential ‘blind spots’ of the participants. With these blind-spots I refer to forms of rights-violations that may have become ‘normal’ or accepted to the population and are therefore no longer considered as relevant. Additionally, ‘taboo topics’ that might have purposely been neglected by respondents (e.g. due to security reasons) could be pointed out through this approach. These types of inequalities and direct violence that occur, but may not necessarily be experienced as violence, can be placed within the actual layer of reality.

Due to the broadness of the term cultural violence, the extent of this essay does not allow to make an attempt to operationalize this concept. Nevertheless, I have taken the liberty to place this form of violence in the real or deep ontological layer of critical realism, as it could be argued that cultural violence belongs to the underlying causes that generate certain phenomena; in this case structural and direct violence. An example of this would be the so-called ‘macho-culture’, that possibly leads to the justification of discrimination against women, or even to the justification of direct violence towards women (Vandello & Cohen, 2003). While certain discriminatory inequalities between men and women, as well as direct violence towards women could in theory be measured, it would prove to be a lot harder to measure the level of ‘macho-culture’ amongst a given population.

Turning back to the main purpose of this research –to explore the possibilities to enhance peace– and to the idea that peace is the absence of violence, the most urgent forms of violence (according to the population) were regarded as the most important obstacles to attain sustainable peace. In this holistic approach, peace is not merely regarded as a measurable state of affairs, but rather as a lived experience. Nevertheless, by using a rights-based approach, this study tried to identify some of the structural forms of violence, that may not have been recognized as such by the population. The three ontological layers of reality have been used to explain how direct and structural violence have been interpreted in this research and to help explain how they were researched. To continue, the following part recaps some of the most important ideas that have been discussed until now and explains the setup of the research.

2.3. RESEARCH QUESTION
In the preceding parts, ‘peace’ has been defined as the absence of violence. As it was argued that there exist multiple types of violence, different types of peace were also distinguished and categorized as: negative, positive and cultural peace. Furthermore, this research works with the term ‘sustainable peace’ to refer to an ideal type situation in which the probability of future violence is minimized by addressing the root causes of violence and enhancing positive relations. Following Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013), who argue that there are no blue-prints for making and maintaining peace, this research further supposes that processes of peacebuilding can only be sustainable when they are context specific and are focussed on the interests and
needs of the population at stake. As a consequence, the local context and local peacebuilding efforts are central to this research.

Research that has focused on the local level has normally done so with an emphasis on civil society (organisations) but has largely neglected the role of the individual. Therefore, this research focuses on grassroots leaders that can occupy a special position in local peacebuilding processes, as they are not bound to fixed rules, have knowledge about the local context and may be able to see through the “blind spots of the dominant viewpoint” (Heifetz, 1998 in; Reychler and Stellamans, 2005: p7). In particular, this study is interested in the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders that are able to influence peacebuilding processes at the local level.

Ultimately, to supplement this bottom-up approach to peacebuilding, this study additionally took into account one specific outcome of high-level leadership, namely state-led urban (infrastructure) interventions that could also influence peace at the neighbourhood level. As Medellin is –or wants to be– known for its innovative urban planning policies, the study focused on several consequences of the implementation of large-scale urban interventions (megaprojects) in one of the most marginalized communities of the city, namely Comuna 8. Combining the forgoing ideas, the main research question was formulated as follows:

How can the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders, as well as high-level leadership –expressed in the elaboration of large-scale urban interventions– influence and contribute to sustainable peace in Comuna 8, Medellin?

To further structure the research, the following sub-questions were used:

1. What types of violence are present in Comuna 8?
2. How can grassroots leadership contribute to peace in Comuna 8? (line 1 in Figure 2)
3. How can the implementation of megaprojects contribute to peace in Comuna 8? (line 2)
4. How can the implementation of megaprojects influence the peacebuilding capacity of grassroots leaders? (line 3)
5. How can grassroots leaders influence the implementation of megaprojects? (line 3)

The conceptual scheme below illustrates the researched relationships between the used concepts. It has to be noted that reducing violence and supporting peace are somewhat synonymous, as line 3 represents the influence on peacebuilding capacity of one factor on the other, while lines 1 and 2 only connect to violence. However, as peace is seen as the absence of violence, any reduction in violence is regarded as a contribution to peace. Nevertheless, an example of partial peace could be if structural violence persists, while direct violence is reduced. Clearly, grassroots leaders and urban interventions are only two possible factors to influence violence and peace on the local level and innumerable other factors had to be excluded from the scope of this research.
2.4. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

As the research focused on one specific district of Medellín –where some of the most marginalized neighbourhoods of the city are located– a case study design was used. Although the area is not formally considered ‘conflict territory’, it shares several characteristics of armed conflict zones, such as a lack of transparency and security (Wood, 2006). The two most important challenges were getting access to some parts of the community and obtaining reliable data about key characteristics of the neighbourhoods, such as demographic data and crime rates. Due to these challenges, and to the fact that this research was mostly of an exploratory nature, the larger part of the research was based on qualitative methods, such as in-depth and semi-structured interviewing and (participant) observation.

As the relationships between grassroots leadership, urban interventions and sustainable peace were not clear at the beginning stage of the research, the first task was to determine whether these different concepts held some kind of relationship. One of the main strengths of qualitative methods, is that they are open ended, which can be useful for illuminating complex concepts and relationships that would be difficult to capture through standardised quantitative measures or predetermined response categories (McEvoy & Richards, 2006). Another characteristic of qualitative analysis is that it allows the researcher to go back and forth between data and theory. Creswell (2013) notes that “[i]n the entire qualitative research process, the researcher keeps a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers express in the literature.” (p. 186). Building on this idea, the participants’ perceptions violence and peace have been at the centre of this research.

Besides the qualitative data, quantitative data were also used to measure certain types of ‘measurable violence’, such as homicide, as well as several inequalities, such as household access to drinking water. Ultimately, geographical information system (GIS) techniques were used to map and visualize relevant information.
2.4.1. SAMPLING

In this research, a special form of convenience sampling was used in the selection of grassroots leaders. One of the challenges in conducting research in conflict environments is the establishment of a representative sample. According to Cohen and Arieli (2011) in conflict environments “the entire population is marginalized to some degree, making it ‘hidden’ from and ‘hard to reach’ for the outsider researcher” (p423). These assumptions are without doubt generalized, and do not necessarily hold true for all the neighbourhoods that were studied here. Nevertheless, Cohen and Arieli (2011) do provide a comprehensive solution for some of the difficulties that can occur in these settings when selecting a sample, namely the use of the snowball sampling methods (SSM). Through intensive contact with one individual that is part of the community, the researcher can build trust and reliability, which can lead to new contacts and possibly to a whole network within the community.

This type of sampling has several limitations for both external (generalizability) and internal validity (whether the researcher’s observations match the theoretical ideas). Although the last type of validity is usually considered to be a strength of qualitative research (Bryman, 2008: p376) the use of snowball sampling might lead to different types of sampling errors and sampling biases (Bryman, 2008: p168-170). This is due to the fact that the researcher has to make choices about who to include in the sample without knowing how ‘representative’ these participants are, and furthermore because the SSM will depend on the network of a small selection of participants that were selected at the beginning of the sampling procedure, for which it is likely that one particular type of ‘network’ will be dominant in the research. By making the sampling choices and possible sources for bias explicit, I intend to minimize the possible threats to both the internal and external validity.

In total, 54 people were interviewed during the period between August 2015 and January 2016, all in the city of Medellin. Of the 54 respondents, 28 were male and 26 were female. For administrative purposes, a distinction was made between grassroots leaders that belonged to small organizations and NGOs (GRO), formal grassroots leaders that were part of legal political structures for participation (GRFG) and informal grassroots leaders (GRI) (see Appendix 2). Ultimately, the people that were not living in Comuna 8, but through their work had connections with the district (e.g. government officials) were classified as ‘Context respondents’. The first person for the SSM was selected through a network that I had built up prior to the research, during an internship. This person provided me with five other contacts and one of them handed a guide to me, in which almost all the organizations of Comuna 8 were listed. The guide was used to select about 30 more respondents, which were chosen on basis of the type of organization they were part of and the neighbourhood in which they worked. The remaining respondents (a bit less than 20) was selected on the basis of interviews and recommendations; whenever somebody mentioned a name (in either a positive or negative way) I asked for contact details, in order to include them in the investigation.

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3 Internship between August 2015 and January 2016, at the YMCA-ACJ Medellin, in Comuna 13.
2.5. ETHICS
In any given setting, ethical issues need to be thought over by the researcher, but especially in conflict affected areas this is a crucial part of the research, as the "do no harm" principle might be harder to comply than in non-conflict affected areas (Wood, 2006: p373). Therefore, sensitive information was handled with great care; the audios of the interviews (and sometimes the notes) were anonymous and the information was not shared with others.

2.5.1. ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER
Another challenge was the level of involvement with the community. Over time, I gained trust of (parts of) the local community and this facilitated the access to more informal environments. One difficulty, however, was dealing with personal conflicts between respondents; although not every respondent was explicit about these conflicts, they were clearly noticeable. Personal conflicts –but also friendships– were an important factor that could bias the respondents answers to certain questions. However, rather than getting involved in these feuds, the experiences were used as input for the research and it was always tried to get both sides of a story.

2.5.2. PROTOCOL FOR INTERVIEWING AND AUDIO-RECORDING
Most respondents were first called and explained the purpose of the research, while few persons were approached directly in the field in the same manner. Before the actual interview, the estimated time of the interview was indicated, the purpose of the research was explained again and the option was given to make the interview anonymous. Permission for recording was always asked and the respondent was always made aware when the recorder was turned on and off. All the ‘off the record’ information has been handled separately from the regular data and every respondent was interviewed first, before any further interaction took place.
3. SETTING THE CONTEXT

In order to understand the complex forms of violence and the possibilities for peace at the local level, in this case Comuna 8, it is important to take into account some aspects of the national context. The first part of this chapter focuses on those aspects of the social and armed conflict that have had the most notable repercussions for Medellin and Comuna 8 in particular; the struggle over territorial control and the drivers of forced displacement. The last part of the chapter provides a short introduction to Comuna 8, that focusses on some of the contextual factors that have shaped the particularity of this territory.

3.1. WHO RUNS MEDELLIN?

Since the 1980s, Medellin has been plagued by different waves of violence, caused by a wide variety of illegal armed groups, ranging from drug-cartels, to militias, to paramilitary groups and, more recently, combos—sometimes interrelated with each other. Between the 1970s and 1980s, the city was practically run by Pablo Escobar and the notorious Medellin Cartel; who did not only control the drug-trafficking in the city and the region, but also exerted power over police forces and mayors (Serrano, 2013). However, at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, different militias, that had clear nexus with guerrilla groups, such as the FARC and ELN, entered the city. While these groups initially developed their own businesses without confrontations, they were soon involved into battles over territorial control between public forces and drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) in the early 1990s (Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013). Disputes over the control of important and strategic neighbourhoods escalated rapidly, until reaching their climax between 1991 and 1992, when the homicide rates shoot up to 433 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants (Franco et al., 2012). Not surprisingly, Medellin became known as the ‘murder capital of world’. Shortly after his escape from jail, Pablo Escobar was murdered in 1993 due to a collective effort between public forces, Carlos and Fidel Castaño and alias ‘Don Berna’ (Ronderos, 2014C). Nonetheless, drug trafficking continued and the earlier culture of ‘easy money’ has not disappeared ever since (Restrepo & Rodriguez, 2014).

In 2000, a new armed confrontation over the control of Medellin between two paramilitary groups, the ‘Bloque Cacique Nutibara’ (BCN) and the ‘Bloque Metro’, began and ended in a victory of the BCN; led by alias ‘Don Berna’ (Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013). Don Berna, former member of the Medellin Cartel, had also been an important member of the AUC; the most influential and powerful paramilitary

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4 See Appendix 4 for a summarized history of the social and armed conflict, based on Chapter 2 of the book from the Nacional Center for Historical Memory (2013): ¡Basta Ya!.
5 Militant groups that had links with guerrilla groups such as the FARC, ELN, EPL and M-19.
6 Small gangs that usually operate on neighbourhood level and offer services to larger criminal organizations, in particular Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) and (ex) paramilitary groups.
7 Carlos, Fidel and Vicente Castaño were the most recognizable faces of the paramilitary forces. Until 2001, Carlos Castaño was general commander of the AUC; the most influential paramilitary group the country has ever seen. This groups is now officially demobilized, nevertheless it is widely recognized that the old criminal structures, interlinked with DTOs remain largely existent (Gil Ramirez, 2013; GMH, 2013; Ronderos, 2014D).
8 Refers to the influential cultural impact of the drug industry on the country. ‘Easy money’ is money that is made through obscure, or criminal ways.
organization Colombia had ever seen (GMH, 2013). His rival, nonetheless, Carlos García Fernández, better known as ‘Doblecero’ and head of the Bloque Metro, was also familiar with the AUC, as he had been the head of Carlos Castaño’s (former general commander of the AUC) personal security (Ronderos, 2014C). Ronderos (2014D) argues that during the conflict between Don Berna and Doblecero, Carlos Castaño was asked to mediate in the conflict, for if the issue would not be settled, Medellín had to be “given back to the State” (p355). According to Ronderos (2014), the paramilitaries had made a deal with the government to keep Medellín quiet and to help eliminate the militias (p355-256). The most obvious expression of the connection between state forces and paramilitaries in Medellín can be found in Comuna 13, where the infamous military intervention ‘Operación Orión’ took place. This military intervention, that put an end to the presence of militias in Comuna 13, was coordinated between the army and paramilitaries and contributed to the consolidation of the paramilitary hegemony in the city (Cruz & Durán-Martínez, 2016; Ronderos, 2014C; Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013).

In 2003, Don Berna had established almost complete control over Medellín and –as there were no more confrontations between different armed groups– homicide rates started to fall again (Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013). In that same year, the structures that were under his control entered a demobilisation process initiated by President Alvaro Uribe. The benefits for the paramilitaries to take part in this process was that they could receive judicial benefits in exchange for a reduction of violence (Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013). However, a large part of the 3.270 demobilized persons in Medellín did not belong to real paramilitary groups, but rather to local combos; small territorially limited gangs that offer services to larger criminal structures (Cruz & Durán-Martínez, 2016; Ronderos, 2014D: p363). Not surprisingly, the illegal activities of the (ex-paramilitary) groups, such as extortion and drug trafficking, continued in the same way after the demobilization process (Cruz & Durán-Martínez, 2016; Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013; Serrano 2013).

Today, Medellín is for the most part occupied by two major armed groups; the ‘Oficina de Envigado’ and ‘Los Urabeños’, or ‘Autodefensas Gaitanistas de Colombia’ (AGC). The Oficina de Envigado (OdE) has existed since Pablo Escobar and was first merely used as a ‘debt collection agency’ for the DTOs. After Escobar’s death, however, the OdE continued its business in controlling neighbourhoods, exporting cocaine and coordinating assassinations and also came under the control of Don Berna, until his extradition to the United States in 2008 (Ronderos, 2015; Bernal Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013). Even though Don Berna had formally demobilized his Bloque Cazique Nutivara and Bloque Héroes de Granada (another group he had established) he still controlled Medellín and its combos, and the OdE remained in power. After Don Berna’s extradition, an internal war over the command of the OdE, and later the confrontations between the OdE and Los Urabeños, resulted again in elevated homicide rates in Medellín (Franco & Navas Caputo, 2013; Gil Ramírez, 2013). Although successors of Don Berna have not been able to reach the same hegemony over the city, the OdE still exerts control over the larger part of combos in the city and therewith a big part of its illegal economy (Ronderos, 2015; Serrano, 2013).
In July 2013, the Oficina and the Urabeños made a no-aggression pact, the so called ‘Pacto de Fusil’, which lead to a 30% decrease in homicides compared to the year before (Gil Ramírez, 2013). According to former mayor Gaviria, however, this decline can be explained by the increase in police forces under his command9 (Valencia Garcia, 2015). Notwithstanding, while homicide rates may have declined, other types of violence, such as forced displacement and disappearances, have increased (Cruz & Durán-Martínez, 2016; Análisis Urbano, 2015; Colak & Pearce, 2015).

From the above, several conclusions can be drawn. The first noticeable aspect about territorial control in Medellin is that since the 1980s, the city has largely been controlled by various illegal organizations that were and are involved in drug trafficking. Although the leaders of those organizations have changed during this period, their presence and continuous action is still widely recognizable in the city. A second important aspect is that periodical increases of homicides can largely be explained by both internal disputes and disputes between different illegal organizations in the city, while the decline in homicides can largely be attributed to the consolidation and the formation of pacts between hegemonic groups (Gil Ramírez, 2013).

It is widely known that the demobilization process of paramilitaries under Uribe’s mandate has been partial and that many of the mid-level paramilitary commanders are now in charge of (neo-paramilitary) criminal organizations (Análisis Urbano, 2013; Ronderos, 2014; p376). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Comuna 8 is not excluded from this logic. The comuna has historically been used as a strategic vantage point by different illegal armed groups and has witnessed various waves of violence, caused by territorial disputes (CORPADES, 2014).

3.2. DISPLACEMENT AND INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

As was explained above, besides the struggle over territorial control, the social and armed conflict has had another important effect on the city of Medellin; namely the large influx of internally displaced people (IDP). This section first drafts a general image of the city, in order to explain how the influx of IDP has affected the city, and in particular Comuna 8.

Medellin is Colombia’s second largest city and is the capital of the Antioquia State. The city hosts approximately 2.46 million people, while the metropolitan area is estimated to accommodate about 3.5 million people (Cómo Vamos, 2015; Drummond & Dizgun 2012). The city was founded in 1616 by the Spanish conquistadores and grew in stature in the 19th century due to the production of gold and coffee (Drummond & Dizgun, 2012). Nowadays, the industrial sectors and financial markets are fundamental drivers for the city's strong economy (Medina et al., 2012). Nevertheless, Medellin is a city full of contrasts, that are expressed in high levels of social segregation and a notable unequal geographical distribution of income and security (Torres, 2009; Echeverri & Orsini, 2011; Medina et al., 2012). With a Gini-coefficient of 0.520, Medellin is Colombia's most unequal city in terms of income distribution (El Tiempo, 2015).

9 Although it remains unclear whether the municipality had anything to do with this pact, the decline in homicide rates has definitely been convenient for the municipality. Former mayor Anibal Gaviria has repeatedly announced the fact that during his governance, the city's homicide rate dropped to 20 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants; the lowest in almost 40 years (Semana, 2015B; Valencia Garcia, 2015).
Moreover, the access to good quality education, employment and basic services has a clear spatial pattern throughout the city: particularly the north-eastern borders of the city –where Comuna 8 is located– show low levels of all three factors (Medina et al., 2012). As can be seen on Map 1, the quality of life, measured in IMCV\textsuperscript{10} (Multidimensional Indicator of Quality of Live) by the municipality, is also lower in these parts of the city.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Medellín: Quality of Life per Comuna}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{Legend}

\begin{itemize}
\item IMCV
\begin{itemize}
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\item 35.1 - 40
\item 40.1 - 45
\item 45.1 - 65
\item 65.1 - 75.8
\end{itemize}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{10} Measured by the a multidimensional indicator by the municipality (IMCV) which is based on: vulnerability, human capital, access to- and quality of work, health provision, economic resources, infant development, quality of housing and durable goods (Castañó Vélez, 2009).
The north-eastern borders, as well as a part of the western border of the city are characterized by steep hills and high levels of informal settlements (see purple areas on Map 2) which have been built by the residents, mostly without any type of governmental planning (Torres, 2009; Echeverri & Orsini, 2011; Velásquez, 2015). In 1992 it was estimated that about 185,000 people lived in informal settlements. In 2002, this number had increased to 350,000 people, representing 18% of the total population (Torres, 2009). It is currently estimated that about 170,000 dwellings, equivalent to 25% of the total number of homes, present some level of illegality\footnote{Interview 46 (Director of neighbourhood improvement; Planning Department of the Medellín Municipality)}; meaning that the owners lack one or more of the legal rights in either in property rights, construction rights or ‘licencia de urbanismo’; which give them the rights to basic utilities.

The rapid increase in informal settlements can be attributed to both push and pull factors that have caused people to migrate, mostly from rural areas, to the city. Since the beginning of the previous century, the growing industry in the city attracted people from rural areas to migrate in search of new job opportunities. Since the city was not able to provide adequate planning and housing to host the large influx of people, the new migrants, especially since the 1930s, were often left no choice but to build their own houses and neighbourhoods (Torres, 2009; Velásquez, 2015). What has added to the phenomenon of urbanization is the large amount of forcibly displaced people that has come –and is still coming– to the city. Due to the social and armed conflict, the constant struggles over land and territorial control, as well as practices of land grabbing –by for example mining, oil and agricultural companies– approximately one in ten Colombians has had to flee her or his hometown, in order to build up their lives elsewhere (CNMH, 2015). With over six million displaced people, Colombia is currently listed number two in terms of its number of refugees (CNMH, 2015: p26).

After Bogotá, Medellín is the city that receives most internally displaced people (IDP) and currently hosts about 4.6% of the total number of IDP in Colombia (CNMH, 2015: p26). Most of the IDP that come to Medellín settle in the borders of the city, especially in the northern, north-eastern and western borders of the city (Velásquez, 2015). Usually with very few resources, these people build their homes with cheap materials in ways that may not be fully structurally sound. The growing population of the city automatically implies a growing demand for suitable building terrains, public services, housing and infrastructure, yet historically the municipality has been incapable of providing the necessary planning and services for the expanding city (Echeverri & Orsini, 2011). As a result, the over-crowded hill slopes of the city, that have largely been neglected by the municipality, show lower levels of public spaces, educational- and health
facilities, green spaces and public transportation facilities (Torres, 2009). Due to the fact that Medellín is located in a mountain valley (the Valle de Aburrá), the borders of the city are characterized by their steep hills. Hence, besides the lack of services, infrastructure and housing, parts of these areas are also considered as ‘(high-)risk’ areas. Settlements that are constructed on mountain slopes or near river streams are considered to be at risks, since these sites are often not suitable for construction (Velásquez, 2015).

Various authors talk about Medellín as containing two cities within one, due to its segregation between formal (planned) and informal (unplanned) territories (Echeverri & Orsini, 2011; Torres, 2009; Medina et al., 2012). The informality of the unplanned areas is not only visible in the physical landscape, but is also accompanied by higher levels of crime and violence than other areas of the city – excluding the city centre, which is considered to be the most violent area (Echeverri & Orsini, 2011). These higher levels of crime and violence can partially be explained by the historical lack of state presence, that has resulted in other types of territorial control, mostly by illegal armed groups (Torres, 2009). Furthermore, it has also been argued that the structural lack of employment- and educational opportunities may contribute to this phenomenon, as crime can be another way to climb up the social ladder for people in these areas, especially for male youth (Medina, 2012; Echeverri & Orsini, 2011).

3.3. COMUNA 8

Without counting the adjacent corregimientos, Medellín is divided into 16 ‘comunas’, or districts, with a total number of 249 officially recognized urban neighbourhoods. This investigation focused on the eighth district; Comuna 8, also known as ‘Villa Hermosa’. However, the term ‘Comuna 8’ is preferred above Villa Hermosa, as the latter can also refer to a neighbourhood within the district, for which the name can be confusing. Comuna 8 is located at the eastern side of the city and is surrounded by the comunas 3, 4, 9 and 10 on the northern, southern and western side, and by steep mountain hills on the eastern side. The geographically lower (western) part of the comuna is older than the rest of the comuna, closer to the city centre and is mostly populated by middle-class residents. On the contrary, the higher (eastern) parts of the comuna consist mostly of unplanned and informal settlements (see Map 2). According to the municipal planning department the district officially consists of 18 neighbourhoods, however the community recognizes 36 neighbourhood in its Local Development Plan (LDP).

Some of the neighbourhoods that are not officially recognized by the planning department lay beyond the urban perimeter; a line that officially demarcates the border of the city. Due to the ever growing population, and therewith the growth of the informal settlements in the borders of the city, this border has been expanded several times. However, due to the precarious conditions of the steep hillsides where these informal settlements are located, the municipality has applied different strategies to counter the unplanned and informal growth of the city, ever since the 1970s (Torres, 2009).

Although the name has changed over time, the so called ‘Cinturón Verde’, or Green Belt, is probably the most noticeable plan that the Municipality has proposed in order to contain the borders of the city. Through
the construction of a greenbelt around the city, that consists of parkland, pedestrian paths and bicycle tracks, the municipality aims to prevent the construction of new settlements above the new conformed line around the city. The construction of this project has started in the higher parts of Comuna 8 and has brought along with it some impacting spatial transformations, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). While the effort to limit the expansion of the city may be one rationale behind this project, it has been argued that the megaprojects have another important goal: to assert state control in the most violent and turbulent areas of the city. As Comuna 8 is known for its turbulent past, this logic, which will be explained further in Chapter 8, can also be applied to this comuna. In order to understand how violence and peace can be understood in this comuna, the next part will go over some key characteristics of Comuna 8 and will discuss different types of inequalities and violence that are present in this district.
4. DIRECT AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN COMUNA 8

The previous chapters have elucidated the theoretical, ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions on which this investigation was based and have provided some contextual information on Medellin and Comuna 8. The following five chapters will apply the established theories of violence, peace, leadership and state-led urban interventions to analyse how these concepts can be applied to the context of Comuna 8, with the aim of understanding if and how grassroots leadership and the implementation of large-scale urban interventions can contribute to sustainable peace in this district. As argued above, the first step in most peace research is to identify the factors that obstruct peace. Therefore, this chapter looks at the types of violence that are present in Comuna 8 by drawing on information from interviews, as well as from secondary information on social, political and economic characteristics of the population of the district. These characteristics are used as indicators in order to assess what type of deprivations and inequalities can be identified in Comuna 8. After having discussed both direct violence and several specific forms of deprivation and inequality, the last part of this chapter will discuss how these latter issues can be regarded as violence by applying a rights-based approach.

4.1. VIOLENCE AS ‘MOST URGENT PROBLEMS’

Following Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) this research presumes that peacebuilding practices can only be sustainable when they are context specific and are focussed on the interests and needs of the affected population (see 1.3). The first task in identifying the factors that obstruct peace is thus to analyse where the interest and needs of the population are not met, or where the rights of the population are violated. A content analysis of the interviews was used to quantify different codes that were created during the analysis.

Respondents were asked to describe the most urgent problems in their community, in order to identify the perceptions of what could (possibly) be called violence. The bar-chart below (Figure 4) shows what the respondents perceived as the most urgent problems in their community. A total of 24 most urgent problems (MUP) were identified ranging from ‘forced displacement’ to ‘disappearance’. The chart shows that the two most recurring themes had to do with forced displacement and (the lack of) public utilities.

While some of these problems can immediately be identified as direct violence, others have to be analysed further, in order to determine whether they can be considered as causes or forms of structural violence. To make things more comprehensible, the pie chart (Figure 3) gives an overview of

![Figure 3: MUP Categorized](image-url)
the three categories that have been deducted from the 24 MUP; 1) (threats of) direct violence; 2) lack of (basic) needs and opportunities and 3) other. The next part will elaborately discuss the first two categories.

FIGURE 4 MOST URGENT PROBLEMS TOTAL
4.2. DIRECT VIOLENCE IN COMUNA 8

As can be seen from the chart above (Figure 4), the respondents identified at least five forms of (threats of) direct violence to be present in Comuna 8, namely: forced displacement, the lack of security, the presence of armed groups, domestic violence and disappearance. While domestic violence is probably the most frequently occurring form of direct violence in Comuna 8 (and with a higher incidence rate than other comunas, see Figure 5) it was not mentioned very often in interviews. This could be one of the so called ‘blind-spots’ of the population, or it could be a form of ‘taboo’ topic (see 2.2). In either case, this type of violence was not often identified as one of the most urgent problems for the community.

Another form of direct violence that was identified as a problem –the most important one– is forced displacement. Within Medellín, this type of displacement usually occurs on a case to case basis, rather than massively. Together with the comunas 13 and 1, Comuna 8 is amongst the districts with the highest levels of forced displacement of its inhabitants (see Figure 6). The dominant cause of displacement is the presence of armed groups, that not only expel their rivals, but also those that oppose their rules or those that do not want to cooperate in their illegal activities (IPC, 2015). One form of (forced) cooperation is the payment of the so-called ‘vacuna’, a periodical payment in return for ‘protection’ (read: no harassment). In Medellín, this type of extortion is amongst the crimes that has expanded most since 2005 (Colak & Pearce, 2015). Last year there were 29 illegal armed groups present in the comuna, the majority belonging to the Oficina and a smaller part to the Urabeños and the total number of members is estimated around 1.100 persons; Oficina with 800 and Urabeños with 300 (CORPADES, 2014). Another factor that contributes to forced displacement –although this time through a more legal procedure– is the construction of the megaprojects in Comuna 8. This point will be discussed more elaborately in Chapter 7.

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12 Interviews: 7, 22, 24 and 40. See also CORPADES (2014) and Colak & Pearce (2015)
13 Interviews: 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 19, 27, 32, 34, 35 and 39
The last two forms of direct violence that remain to be discussed are disappearances and the lack of security. In 2014, a total of 20 cases of disappearance were reported in Comuna 8. Despite the fact that this was a decrease in comparison to foregoing years\textsuperscript{14}, disappearances have augmented in the city since the ‘Pacto de Fusil’ (see 3.2.1) between the Oficina and Urabenos (Análisis Urbano, 2015; Colak & Pearce, 2015). One theory behind this paradox is that there is a connection between the mafia- and paramilitary structures and the municipal government (the so called ‘parapolítica’) that has created mutual benefits in lowering the homicide rates\textsuperscript{15}. The idea here is that the municipality, in order to attract more tourists and investments, wants to keep the homicide rates as low as possible. The ‘secret deal’ that is insinuated here is that the illegal groups can continue their business, as long as homicide rates are kept low:

“\textit{Medellín, especially this mayor, often brags about the drop in homicide rates, that are now the lowest in 30 years. But he doesn't talk about the increase of disappearances. What does this tell me? That they are not leaving the dead in the streets anymore, but that they make the evidence disappear.}”*  

(Interview 40, Q1)

Finally, the lack of security was another topic that was often mentioned during the interviews, as one of the most urgent problems. The lack of security was mostly contributed and connected to a lack of trust in the local police\textsuperscript{16}:

\begin{quote}
\textit{“Although there is some kind of peace, the [lack of] security, that has resulted from the historical neglect of public forces in this area and which has contributed to the consolidation}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{14} 27 cases of disappearance were registered in 20012 and 37 in 2013 (Cómo Vamos, 2015).
\textsuperscript{15} Interviews: 40 and 49. See also CORPADES (2014)
\textsuperscript{*} Quotes are translated from Spanish, for original quotes see Appendix 3
\textsuperscript{16} Interviews: 7, 8, 19, 25, 30, 34, 36 and 39
of the power of the illegal groups, is still a problem. Our problem is that we don’t trust the police here.”

(Interview 7, Q2)

This lack of trust in the police is caused by various factors. For one, the historical incapacity of the state to provide basic services, infrastructure and planning has led to a neglect of some areas in the city, especially the borders of the city (Torres, 2009; Velazquez, 2015). Additionally –or as a consequence–, since the time of Pablo Escobar, the organization in control of security in most parts of the city has consisted of illegal armed groups (Serrano, 2013: p192-196). Today, illegal armed groups are estimated to be present in 70% of neighbourhoods of the city\(^{17}\). This phenomenon is also present in Comuna 8 where, especially in the higher parts (further from the centre) of the community, the illegal groups control the territory in many ways and serve as both ‘judiciary’ and ‘executive’ power; they decide what can or cannot be done by the population in the area and they settle disputes between inhabitants\(^{18}\)—the so called justicia rápida, or ‘fast justice’\(^{19}\):

“They have acquired recognition, a legitimacy, that the same inhabitants have given to them. When you are not paying rent, I won’t go to the police, nor to the Commissioner's Office for Families, nor whichever other place to settle my issue. Instead, I’ll go to the ‘pelados’* of the neighbourhood. I will go there and tell them “Johannes hasn’t paid me, he owes me three months of rent.” Within five to ten minutes, they will be knocking on your door: “you there, you owe Jorge** three months of rent. You’ve got until Monday 4pm to pay, or if you don’t pay, you will suffer the consequences”*, which can range from: them taking your stuff from your house, to them doing something to you. So, this is why [some] families have to leave the territory. Or if a husband beats his wife, she won’t go to the police nor the municipality, but to the ‘pelados’ of the neighbourhood.”

(Interview 40, Q3)

Ultimately, police corruption was also mentioned as a cause of general distrust towards the police\(^{20}\). Linking all the previous mentioned forms of direct violence together, it becomes clear that most of the mentioned forms of direct violence are related to the presence of illegal armed groups in the territory in some way, except perhaps for domestic violence. Yet interestingly enough, this last type of violence can again lead to (the threat of) violence by the armed groups through the so-called ‘justicia rápida’. Forced displacement, a lack of security and disappearance can largely be attributed to the armed groups together with the contextual factor of historical neglect by the State of the area.

\(^{17}\) Interview 49
\(^{18}\) Interviews: 1, 7, 19, 22, 24, 30, 34, 35, 39 and 40
\(^{19}\) Interview 49
\(^{*}\) Literally: baldheads, but often used to refer to young people, not necessarily in a negative way.
\(^{**}\) Some names have been changed for privacy reasons.
\(^{20}\) Interviews: 1, 7, 8, 19, 25 and 32
4.3. LACK OF BASIC NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Besides the previously mentioned forms of direct violence, various forms of deprivation were mentioned as urgent problems in the community. These included the lack of: public facilities, (decent) housing, employment (opportunities), (adequate) infrastructure, state presence, healthcare (facilities) and public space, as well as problems related to education, poverty, mobility, food security, environmental risks and early childhood. Since it was not possible in this research to measure to what extent these deprivations caused lower ‘actual realizations’ of the population than the ‘potential’ (see 1.1), they cannot immediately be defined as structural violence. Therefore, the following section will analyse how the mentioned deprivations are present (or not) in Comuna 8, without labelling them as structural violence yet. The last part of this chapter, however, will apply a rights-based approach in order to evaluate the violations of rights that can be seen as forms of violence.

4.3.1. LACK OF STATE PRESENCE

The historic incapacity of the municipality to cope with the ever (faster) expanding city, has led to a neglect of certain areas of the city (Torres, 2009; Velásquez, 2015). The previous paragraph has explained the consequences of this neglect in terms of security, but beyond the security aspect this neglect is reflected in the following:

a) A lack of basic services: In 2012, of the 44,298 settlements, there were 146 without electricity, 1,042 without direct access to clean water (see Map 3), 2,983 without sewerage and 1,662 without waste-management services in Comuna 8 (MVSPD, 2012).

MAP 3: HOUSEHOLDS WITH DIRECT ACCES TO DRINKING WATER
b) A lack of infrastructure and public space: due to the fact that the geographically higher parts of the comuna have been constructed with almost no planning, streets are often insufficiently connected, are very steep or too narrow, and the available public space is restricted\(^{21}\).

c) A lack of healthcare facilities: although a healthcare centre exists, there is no emergency post and ambulance access is impossible in some of the higher parts of the comuna.

d) A lack of transportation methods (mobility): at the moment there are 15 bus routes that cover the greater part of the community. However, most of the busses are orientated towards the centre of the city, for which mobility within the comuna by bus is rather complicated. There are, however, currently two metro cables under construction, which will be discussed later (see 7.1).

Furthermore, it could be argued that e) the lack of decent housing and f) the associated environmental risks are also consequences of state neglect, which has resulted in the unplanned construction of neighbourhoods and houses in inadequate or risk areas (Velásquez, 2015). The quantitative deficit of housing\(^{22}\) in Comuna 8 has generally been higher than in any other comuna of the city (see Figure 7). In 2012 it was estimated that 3500 houses in Comuna 8 were located in high-risk zones. The high-risk zones are mostly in risk of landslides and floods (Velásquez, 2015). During the fieldwork, people often talked about the high-risk areas.

\(^{21}\) Interview 29 and PDL (2007)

\(^{22}\) Until 2013, the quantitative deficit of housing was measured by 1) the quantity of households that share the same house, 2) households that live in precarious housing, 3) households that live in single rooms and 4) households in (not recoverable) high-risk areas. However, due to a reconceptualization of ‘high-risk areas’ the numbers for 2014 differ in such manner from the numbers of previous years, that they cannot be compared (Cómo Vamos, 2015).
and referred particularly to the landslide of Villatina, Comuna 8, that took place on 27 September, 1987, which cost the lives of approximately 500 persons (García, 2015).

4.3.2. EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES

While the former types of deprivation and inequality (in comparison to other comunas for example) can largely be attributed to the lack of state presence, problems related to education, employment and the lack of opportunities cannot only be described as a consequence of state neglect, as –in theory– other contextual or even personal factors could also influence these factors.

Education

In 2012, educational attendance amongst 17 to 21 year-old people was estimated to be 42.4%, which is more than 10 percent lower than the city’s average (54.3%) and twice as low as in the wealthiest district, El Poblado (89.8%). However, in terms of educational capacity, Comuna 8 does not seem to score very badly; currently, a total of 16 official educational institutions has the capacity to accommodate 26,601 students. However, only 25,459 students were enrolled in 2014 (SPE, 2015). This indicates that there is not necessarily a quantitative lack of educational facilities, but that there might be other factors that cause the relatively lower school attendance in the district. According to the Subsecretary of Educational Planning, long distances between the educational institutes and the students’ residents are problematic in almost 55% of the comuna. Furthermore, the neighbourhoods Llanaditas, Villa Liliam and San Antonio lack educational institutes in all levels, for which 1,383 students are not attending official education (SPE, 2015). However, there are more factors that can contribute to school-dropouts:

“From very early on, they say “I don’t want to study”. There are also the gangs; many temptations. [...] And then, there is the cultural part, the people are originally from rural areas, where studying was not important. When they get to 13/14 years, they are more motivated to make money, to help out at home. In those sectors, they start by carrying construction materials (mostly male youngsters). But the people that are moving drugs and arms will also use these kids to transport their stuff, and nobody asks where the money comes from, it’s normal. The environment, in general, the ‘easy money’, that resulted from the drug-traffic industry, is something generalized, something that’s part of the culture. They see that those who have cars, motorcycles, the ones that are in charge here, are not the ones that studied, yet they have the power and the people respect them. That’s it! That’s the cultural cycle within the history of schooling. The kids that are carrying [drugs and money from one place to another] are called ‘carritos’ (wheelbarrows) and they receive some coins in return, not even bills I think. This is how they get recruited as well, and start getting involved in vicious behaviour.”

(Interview 31, Q4)

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23 Refers to the fact that, especially in the geographically higher parts of the comuna, the larger part of the population consists of internally displaced people (IDP) that have often fled the country-side due to the social and armed conflict and practices of land-grabbing.
The lack of incentives, the economic needs of the families and the ‘easy money’ culture might all contribute to the lower school attendance in Comuna 8. However, becoming part of a combo is not necessarily a voluntary choice: in 2012, 440 cases of ‘forced recruitment’ by armed groups were registered in Comuna 8 (CORPADES, 2014). Especially the male youth are considered to be at risk for recruitment.

Employment
In 2011 the level of unemployment (17.64%) was almost four percent higher than the city’s average (Diáfora, 2011). More remarkable even, is the level of underemployment (30.1), which was the highest in the city in 2011 and was almost 7% higher than the city's average (23.2). Especially IDP that have settled in Comuna 8 rely on informal employment or sometimes begging (mostly in the city centre)24. Other than low education levels (only 5.2% of the population have followed higher education) another factor that was seen as an obstacle for finding work was the stigmatization of the people of Comuna 825 (see also 5.3).

Poverty and quality of life
In 2013 approximately 83% of the total population of the comuna belonged to the two lowest social classes26 (CORPADES, 2014) and in terms of quality of life (measured in IMCV27 and the Human Development Index) Comuna 8 scores considerably lower than the average comuna in Medellín (see Table 1 and Map 1). Furthermore, in 2010 it was estimated that the level of severe food insecurity28 in Comuna 8 was of 70.7%, compared to a 55.6% city average (Álvarez et al., 2010).

### Multidimensional Indicator of Quality of Life (City of Medellín)

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</tbody>
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TABLE 1: QUALITY OF LIFE IN COMUNA 8

While ‘early childhood’ was mentioned as an urgent problem in the community, mortality rates of babies (12 months or less) are slightly lower (6.0) than the city’s average (6.2) and while infant mortality (up to 5

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24 Interview 32
25 Interviews: 7, 23, 27, 29, 31, 35 and 37
26 Colombia is the only country that uses a legal social-stratification model to classify its inhabitants into six clearly demarcated classes that influence the allocation of subsidies and the amount of taxes to be paid by a household. The six classes are based on household income, but also on characteristics of the household's residence. Some factors include accessibility, the size of the house and the materials used for construction.
27 Measured by the a multidimensional indicator by the municipality (IMCV) which is based on: vulnerability, human capital, access to and quality of work, health provision, economic resources, infant development, quality of housing and durable goods (Castaño Vélez, 2009).
28 Defined as a limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food; or limited or uncertain ability to acquire adequate food. In the severe state, the reduced intake of nutrients also affects the children (Álvarez et al., 2010).
years) due to malnutrition was rated at 9.6 in 2005 (in comparison to a 4.8 city average) this number dropped to 0 in 2014 (Cómo Vamos, 2015). Notwithstanding, it cannot merely be argued that early childhood might not be problematic in Comuna 8 on the basis of these two indicators that fall short of a complete analysis, but the related problems might be a generalized phenomenon in the city. As this topic was only brought up once during the interviews, the exact problematics relating to early childhood remains unclear and need further exploration.

SOME FURTHER REFLECTION
The forgoing part has shown that there are various types of deprivations and inequalities present in Comuna 8, in comparison to other comunas in the city29. Overall, it shows that within Comuna 8 there are different issues that may affect the quality of life of its inhabitants, such as the previously mentioned lack of public facilities, adequate housing and infrastructure, the low levels of education and employment, but also (the threat of) different forms of direct violence. Neither the categories of direct violence, nor the categories of deprivations and inequalities that were used here are claimed to be exhaustive or complete in any way. Nevertheless, the analysis above, that made use of secondary quantitative data, was used to indicate the severity (or not) of the problematic issues in Comuna 8, that were raised during the interviews, in order to get an idea of the present forms of violence in the comuna.

Some issues that were seen as problematic could not be placed in either of the two categories, as they were not measurable with the available data, or could be regarded as outcomes or forms of either direct or structural violence. These issues related to: megaprojects (which will be discussed in Chapter 7) drugs, prostitution and the social fabric. Regarding the last mentioned problem, this seems to relate mostly to the idea of ‘cultural violence’, as the social fabric (tejido social) refers to the interaction between community members.

In the case of drugs and prostitution, there is little data to draw from, but it is generally known that the armed groups are strong drivers of both drug-use and prostitution (of minors)30. According to the Ombudsman's Office, 70% of the armed groups in Comuna 8 consist of children (from 7 years and older) and adolescents, that are “used to transport arms, sell drugs and other activities that belong to the carritos” (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2013: p6). The report also states that “girls are used for prostitution and to attract victims that will later be executed elsewhere” and explains that in many cases, children are tempted and paid with drugs, resulting in drug addiction amongst this vulnerable group (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2013: p6).

4.3.3. LOOKING FROM A RIGHTS-PERSPECTIVE
The term ‘structural violence’, has intentionally been avoided while identifying the most urgent deprivations and inequalities, as it was not possible to measure the extent until these deprivations caused

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29 These issues are not exclusive to Comuna 8 and similar characteristics can also be found in other parts of the city. Depending of the variable, various comunas (e.g. comunas 1, 6 and 13) share similar characteristics in terms of direct violence, deprivation and inequality levels.
30 Interviews 1, 6 and 49. See also: Defensoria del Pueblo (2013) and Colak & Pearce (2015; p 69,70)
lower ‘actual’ than the ‘potential realizations’ (see 1.1). Nevertheless, as has been argued above (see 1.1.1 and 2.2) when certain needs, freedoms or rights of people are not met, this can be seen as a form of structural violence, as the restrictions in any of these can lead to both physical and mental harm (Barnett, 2008; Ho, 2007; Christie, 1997). As can be concluded from the foregoing part, there are various needs that are not being met, as well as various rights being violated in Comuna 8. By taking the Colombian Constitution of 199131 as guideline, several rights that are being violated in comuna 8 can be identified:

- Article 11. “The right to life is inviolate.” (see 4.2)
- Article 12. “No one will be subjected to forced sequestration (kidnapping), torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.” (see 4.2)
- Article 44. “The following are basic rights of children: life, physical integrity, health and social security, a balanced diet, their name and citizenship, to have a family and not be separated from it, care and love, instruction and culture, recreation, and the free expression of their opinions” (see 4.3.2)
- Article 45. “The adolescent is entitled to protection and integral development. The State and society guarantee the active participation of adolescents in public and private organs that are responsible for the protection, education, and progress of the youth” (see 4.3.2)
- Article 51. “All Colombian citizens are entitled to live in dignity. The State will determine the conditions necessary to give effect to this right and will promote plans for public housing, appropriate systems of long-term financing, and community plans for the execution of these housing programs” (see 4.3.1)
- Article 365. “The public services are inherent in the social purpose of the State. It is the duty of the State to insure the efficient provision thereof to all the inhabitants of the national territory.” (see 4.3.1)

These might only be few of the violated rights in Comuna 8, as probably not all types of rights-violations have been reported or mentioned during the interviews. Nevertheless, from this analysis, it can be concluded that there are various forms of direct and structural violence present in the comuna, which have to be considered in the analysis of factors that obstruct sustainable peace. After having questioned how violence can be understood in Comuna 8, the next chapter intends to interpret the meaning of ‘peace’ at this local level.

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31 Translated version of Marcia et al. (2012) was used.
“One type of peace is that of the bourgeoisie, another one is that of the people and the two will never be reconcilable. Peace for the bourgeoisie is that there can be external investment, that one can move freely on the highways, that you don’t get kidnapped [...] But peace for us is peace with a surname; a peace with social justice [...] not just the silencing of the guns of the FARC and the ELN [...]. I mean, how can there be peace without decent housing? How can there be peace without public facilities [...]? How can there be peace without the mitigation of risks? How can there be peace when people are dying from hunger? How can there be peace if public transport is more expensive than lunch? How can there be peace if the people are insecure because the ‘combos’ control the area? What type of peace are we actually talking about?!”

(Interview 22, Q5)

Carlos, a leader that voluntarily works in Comuna 8 to inform the population about their rights and about the municipal interventions that affect them, does not think the peace agreement that was signed in Havana will lead to peace in the city –as can be seen from the statement above. Surprisingly –and in contrary to my expectations– he was not the only one to talk about peace in terms of ‘social justice’ and access to basic necessities, such as food, water and shelter. One thing that caught my attention during the interviews with the community leaders was that there was a noticeable pattern in the answers of respondents when I asked for their conception of peace: first, the person would laugh, then she or he would repeat the question –as if I had asked if the universe were either finite or infinite– and ultimately, the person would turn the tables around and ask me questions, mostly starting with the words “How can there be peace if...?”.

For the leaders of Comuna 8, ‘peace’ was a discourse that had lost its charm and credibility. After more than half a century of persistent conflict, massive displacements and uncountable violations of rights, who would believe in peace anymore? Besides, every time people had put down their arms in order to pursue their goals in the legal political arena, they had been killed32. A couple of weeks after the interview, Carlos explained to me that the word ‘peace’ was almost never used by the community leaders, because it could get them into trouble. The multiple peace processes that had taken place in the country had always been with the guerrilla groups, for which the word ‘peace’ was commonly associated with being a guerrilla; if you were no guerrilla, you would not have to make peace with anyone. But more than that, talking about peace could be dangerous if someone would imply that this meant the absence of armed groups; Camilo was the only one to refer to this issue directly when asked to describe his understanding of peace.

32 The assassination of emblematic presidential candidates –such as Jaime Pardo Leal and (1987) and Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa (1990) from the UP and Carlos Pizarro Leongómez (1990); a demobilized presidential candidate from the M-19– were symbolic in the sense that they portrayed the unwillingness of the established elites, paramilitary groups, the army and drug-lords to let anyone they disliked enter the political arena (GMH, 2013).
If peace did not mean the absence of armed groups in the territory, how then was it understood by the community leaders? Although the term ‘peace’ did not seem to be part of the vocabulary of most (if not all) respondents, the majority did have a clear idea about what it entailed and what the necessary drivers of it were. It was regularly emphasized that what was happening in Havana did not have a lot to do with it. However, this is not to say that the peace negotiations were considered as unimportant or irrelevant, but rather only indirectly related to what was happening in the city. The graphic below (Figure 8) – similar to the one used for the identification of the MUP (see 4.1) – shows six themes that repeatedly came up during the interviews, when leaders were asked to define peace. Most respondents included multiple factors that were seen as important for creating peace, that could belong to any of the categories.

**FIGURE 8: PEACE DEFINED BY COMMUNITY LEADERS**

### 5.1. PEACE BASED ON POSITIVE INTERACTION

The greater part of respondents indicated that peace should start at the personal level\(^{33}\) (category A in Figure 8). While some defined this as ‘inner peace’, others explained that peace starts with little things and with how one relates to others, especially the family:

*“If I am [at] peace and there's peace at home, there will be peace in Colombia”*  
(interview 9, Q6)

*“Peace is constructed by each and every one of us and with every little action, little change, something simple, for example: when you enter the bus and say ‘good afternoon’, you are already building peace with something that simple.”*  
(interview 13, Q7)

\(^{33}\)Interviews: 8, 9, 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 30, 31, 33 and 37
Relating to this theme, is category D (Freedom and harmony) which comprises several relatively subjective concepts, such as harmony, respect, tranquillity, freedom and dignity\(^{34}\). However, the emphasis this time is more on the community as a whole, rather than on the individual, and about how people interact within the community:

“There will always be conflict, and I think that thanks to that, humans are creative. The problem begins when we start to be intolerant, when problems are getting solved by inadequate means; hurting the other. So I think that peace is the way to resolve conflicts in a calm and healthy way.”

(Interview 35, Q8)

These interpretations of peace seem to relate to what Galtung defined as ‘cultural peace’, defined by him as "aspects of a culture that serve to justify and legitimize direct peace and structural peace" (Galtung, 1990: p291). Saying "good afternoon" to the bus-driver cannot be seen as an action that targets direct or structural violence in a concrete manner; not-saying good afternoon does not directly lower the actual realizations of the bus-driver, or any other person on the bus for that matter. Instead, saying good afternoon and ‘being tolerant’ are rather ways of interaction that can foster positive relationships amongst people and that can possibly counteract the legitimization of violent behaviour.

5.2. FULFILMENT OF RIGHTS AND NEEDS

Another important theme that reoccurred during the interviews involved (human) rights, equality, social justice and inclusion\(^{35}\) (category B). Elena, a female leader nearly 70 years old –yet does not like to take any type of public transport as she considers Medellín to be a small village and therefore prefers to walk– dedicates her free time to studying Legal Hermeneutics (interpretation of written law) in order to help people whose rights have been violated. For her, peace has to go together with the respect for human rights:

“To me, rights are everything [...]. You are a human being with the right to life, a life with dignity, housing, healthcare, education. But from the moment you leave your mother’s womb the inequality and discrimination starts as soon as they start violating your rights. [...] What type of peace are we talking about if they don’t respect our natural, social, economic and political rights, which are all Human Rights?! What type of peace are we talking about?

(Interview 32, Q9)

The related category (E), defined here as ‘basic needs’, included: food security, housing and public services –especially water\(^{36}\). The satisfaction of these basic needs was often seen as a necessary condition for peace:

“How can a mother, or a father, talk about peace if there is nothing to eat?”

(Interview 33, Q10)

\(^{34}\) Interviews: 8, 9, 10, 12, 18, 21, 23, 35, 37 and 43

\(^{35}\) Interviews: 8, 9, 12, 15,16, 19, 22, 24, 26, 30, 32, 33 and 36

\(^{36}\) Interviews: 7, 11, 18, 22, 24, 33 and 38
“What type of peace will there be [...] if there is no food? If there is no housing?”

(Interview 7, Q11)

“With hunger, peace is difficult”

(Interview 11, Q12)

“There is no peace when you don’t have water”

(Interview 38, Q13)

While there is no space here to go into detail about the meaning of social justice, the use of this term by the community leaders is remarkable, for it corresponds with Galtung's idea that social injustice—which he regards as equivalent to structural violence– inhibits peace. According to Galtung, an uneven distribution of resources will inevitably lead to a decrease in the potential realizations for the community and can thus be seen as violence (Galtung, 1969: p184). Similarly, category E (basic needs), partially overlaps with category B (respected rights and social justice) as they are in theory granted to every individual by law, yet distributed unevenly. Equality and inclusion seem to be two related concepts here, that were mentioned by some community leaders as absolute necessities for peace. Again, we can see a link to Galtung, but also to Paul Farmer (1996), who both see inequality and exclusion as the main drivers of structural violence (see 1.1.1).

5.3. OPPORTUNITIES

As was shown in the previous chapter, the unemployment rate in Comuna 8 in 2011 was higher than the city’s average (13.7 compared to 12.2) and the underemployment was the highest in the city: 30.1 compared to a 23.2 city average (Cómo Vamos, 2015). Especially the underemployment rate may be an indicator that even if people have a certain level of education, it might remain difficult to get a job. One reason for this difficulty could be the stigmatization of various sectors of the community. La Sierra, for example, has become internationally known to be a very dangerous neighbourhood, ever since a documentary with the same name was released in 2009. Yessenia explained some of the consequences of this stigmatization:

“It’s very hard for a young person from La Sierra to get a job. I have publically criticized the stigma, they think that all the girls from the 8 are prostitutes, or that all the guys are hitmen.”

(Interview 35, Q14)

Various community leaders saw opportunities for education and employment as a crucial factor to attain peace and expressed their sincere worries, especially for the youth. Without opportunities and jobs, it was implied, people would look for alternatives, for instance in illegal activities:

“So they are done with the guerrilla, good... but now what? The violence has entered the neighbourhoods because salaries are low, resources are low, so there won’t be peace! More

37 Interviews: 19, 22, 24, 26 and 31
38 Interviews: 8, 16, 26, 30 and 36
39 Interviews: 7, 8, 10, 15, 16, 18, 21, 25, 30 and 33
Although employment and education opportunities are also related to rights (e.g. the right to employment and education) and are also distributed unevenly, they cannot merely be put on the same level as the fulfilment of rights and basic needs. In contrast to the neglect of rights and basic needs, they cannot directly lead to physical harm in the same way that violations of rights (e.g. the right to live) or unsatisfied needs (e.g. access to water) can; the lack of opportunities can thus be considered as structural violence only.

### SECURITY

Going back to Galtung’s distinction between positive, cultural and negative peace, it shows that the community leaders were predominantly concerned about the former categories. Although one person brought up ‘security’, she did so only after mentioning education, food security, housing and harmony first⁴⁰. Also Camilo saw the presence of *combos* as an obstruction for peace, yet put it at the end of his list of necessities for peace (see quote above: Q5). Could this perhaps mean that the presence of armed groups in the territory was not seen as the biggest inhibitor of peace? Several hypothesis could be formulated: 1) the community leaders have a conception of peace that is closely related to Galtung’s notion of positive peace (and therefore see the absence of structural violence as more important than the absence of direct violence); 2) fear for the *combos* may have influenced the answers during the interviews; or 3) territorial control by illegal armed groups is seen as something unavoidable or is partially accepted by the community. Instead of choosing one hypothesis over another, all three mentioned possibilities may have contributed to the (almost complete) neglect of this theme during the interviews when conversing about peace and can be seen as valid to some extent. However, community leaders might have alluded to the topic indirectly by mentioning issues related to human rights, housing⁴¹, harmony, respect, tranquillity and freedom for example, as it could be implied that the armed actors have a negative influence on these issues.

### IN SHORT

What can be concluded so far, is that there are three topics of major relevance for the community leaders in their conception of peace: 1) human interaction (categories A and D); 2) fulfilment of rights and basic needs (B and E) and 3) education and employment opportunities (C). These categories, especially the first two, are without doubt very abstract and broad, however they allow us to get a general understanding of the leaders’ perceptions of peace in Comuna 8. The question that follows is how leaders can, or think they can, contribute to sustainable peace in their community. The following chapter will go over some of the characteristics of different types of leaders in Comuna 8, as well as the strategies they use to support –either intentionally or not– sustainable peace.

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⁴⁰ Interview 18

⁴¹ The issues related to forced displacement by armed groups has been explained in the previous chapter (see 4.2).
6. BUILDING PEACE FROM BELOW

The previous chapter has outlined how peace is perceived by community leaders in Comuna 8. This chapter will explain what it entails to be a community leader in this context, before it analyses how these leaders can support sustainable peace.

6.1. LEADERSHIP IN COMUNA 8

The first time I heard about Jairo Maya was during my first interview in Comuna 8, when Juan summarized the history of the comuna, the variety of organizations and the impacts the megaprojects would have on the community to me, in just over an hour. During the interview he repeatedly insisted that I had to talk to Jairo. He was not the only one; during my fieldwork in the comuna, Jairo’s name was often mentioned, almost synonymously to ‘good leadership’. However, not everybody had always been happy with him, considering he had received several death-threats by members of the combos.

The first time I actually saw Jairo, we were both walking in the street, without knowing who the other person was. I observed him for a moment and saw that he was observing me as well. There was not much sympathy in either of our faces and instead, an awkward feeling of distrust emerged as he kept looking at me – I probably looked unfamiliar or maybe even suspicious to him. Coincidence or not, just few minutes later we both walked into the same office. Feeling slightly uncomfortable, I greeted him and that would be about all we would talk that day. About half an hour after the encounter, I had my fourth interview, in which Alfredo told me that some people did not like to be called ‘leader’. Sure enough, the only example he mentioned was Jairo Maya. This made me wonder why it seemed like everyone knew Jairo and what it was that made him so special.

In Medellín, and Colombia in general, the term leader (lider) is commonly used by social organizations, media, governmental institutions and community members. While leadership can take place on various levels, this study focused on grassroots ‘community’ leadership, which has played a historical role in the construction of the city of Medellín. As has been explained in Chapter 3, especially the outer parts of the city have been constructed in an informal, unplanned manner by migrants and IDP. In these construction processes, community leaders organized so-called ‘convites’ where the community was gathered in order to construct infrastructure and facilities such as roads, gathering spaces, sewerage and schools (Velásquez, 2014). Today, there are various types of leaders that can be identified that fulfill varying tasks and are perceived differently by the community. What will be discussed next are the 1) different types of leaders, 2)
perceptions of positive versus negative leadership, and 3) the strategies used by leaders, either intentionally or not, to support peace. It has to be noted that these categories are limited to the context of Comuna 8.

6.1.1. FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEADERSHIP

As discussed in Chapter 2, the first distinction that can be made between different kinds of leaders is the one between formal and informal leaders. Although the majority of leaders that were interviewed were part of some type of organization, they cannot all be considered to be ‘formal leaders’ as such. The reason therefore is that the majority of leaders worked in small organizations without any job descriptions or legislated mandates –on which ‘formal authority’ of leadership is based (Heifetz, 1998 in: Reichler and Stellamans, 2005). An example of a small organization could be a Hip-hop group, initiated by a rapper to promote art on a voluntary basis, without any type of monetary compensation nor legally binding obligations.

Formal leaders can either be part of NGOs, or part of the state apparatus. In Medellín, every district has at least two types of organizations that are part of the state apparatus: the Local Administrative Boards (JAL) and the Community Action Comities (JAC). Both entities are meant to promote political participation of the citizens. Every comuna has one JAL, which is composed by 7 councillors that have been elected through formal election processes. The task of the board is to control and supervise municipal activities at the communal level. Supposedly, these boards form the ‘bridge’ between the community and the municipality and should help resolves all type of problems within the district. Furthermore, they have the responsibility to consult the community about the priorities for public works funding (Registraduría, 2012). The JAC are smaller organizations that operate at the neighbourhood, instead of the comuna, level and its members are also democratically elected. In both the JAC and JAL, the functions are on a voluntary basis and without any type of salary (Registraduria, 2012).

Moreover, different types of leaders can be identified on the basis of their activities. Both formal and informal leaders in Comuna 8 worked in different areas and on different topics such as: culture, sport, LGBTI, women’s rights and gender, elderly population, environment, housing and public services, human rights, childhood, youth, attention to victims, demobilized people, religion and media.

6.1.2. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE LEADERSHIP

As ‘leadership’ was a familiar concept to all respondents, there were several noteworthy discourses around this topic. The most noticeable one had to do with the distinction between positive, and negative leadership⁴³. Related to this were other types of classifications such as constructive vs. destructive⁴⁴ and critical vs. traditional leadership. I use the term ‘discourse’ here as it seemed that these categories belonged to a shared set of ideas within the community and the city in general. Positive leadership was

⁴³ Interviews: 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37 and 39
⁴⁴ Interview 31
⁴⁵ Interviews: 14, 18 and 22

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generally associated with “thinking about the whole community”\(^{46}\), while negative leadership was usually synonymous for “thinking only about oneself”\(^{47}\). These ideas are comparable to Burns’ (1978) distinction between transactional and transformational leader behaviours (see 1.3.1.1). Where transactional leader behaviour leads to exclusive privileges for leaders and a selected group of followers, transformational leader behaviour transcends the boundaries of one’s own people or followers.

Furthermore, in order to be considered as a leader, an individual must have certain organizational and technical skills and knowhow. These skills and knowhow have already been outlined elsewhere (Reychler & Stellamans, 2005; see also 1.3.1.2 and Appendix 1), for which I will only highlight several that were repeatedly mentioned as prerequisite for being a leader. These skills and knowhow related to:

- Creating networks
- Management and networking
- Proposing and taking initiative
- Bringing people together
- Negotiating
- Knowing how to direct and organize
- Communicating effectively
- Motivating
- Mediating

Interestingly enough it could be argued that (almost) all of these skills and knowhow can apply to ‘positive’ as well as ‘negative’ leaders. An example of a negative leader could be the so-called ‘duro’ (tough guy), a term used to indicate the leader of a combo. In order to control the neighbourhood, the duro must be able to bring and keep people together (his combo), negotiate with higher-level players (narco-paramilitary structures), be able to motivate his people and to take initiative. Possessing the above mentioned skills and know-how, does therefore not necessarily imply ‘positive leadership’. The distinction between positive and negative leadership here is based on the interviews, in which involvement with or being part of an armed groups was always mentioned as a feature of a ‘negative leader’\(^{48}\), even by a demobilized paramilitary\(^{49}\). As no interviews were conducted with people that were presently part of a combo, this distinction between positive and negative leadership must be considered with some caution, due to its high level of subjectivity.

Following Reychler and Stellamans (2005) it is presumed here that ‘positive’ or ‘peacebuilding’ leadership can only be defined by the actions of a person, rather than by the person itself. For example, if a community leader that is seen as ‘positive’ uses its position in the wrong way (e.g. arrogating resources that were meant for the community), this person is not supporting peace as inequality can be increased and the ‘actual

\(^{46}\) Interviews: 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19, 23, 24, 27, 30, 32, 36, 37, 40 and 43

\(^{47}\) Interviews: 7, 9, 10, 17, 21, 23, 24, 30, 31, 35, 36, 37 and 39

\(^{48}\) Interviews: 9, 12, 13, 19, 20, 24, 29, 30, 31, 37 and 39

\(^{49}\) Interview 37
realizations’ of the community are possibly reduced. On the other hand, if a ‘negative’ leader (e.g. *el duro*) decides to quit charging vacuna (see 4.2) to the community, this could be seen as an action that contributes to peace as it takes away part of the oppression of the community. Therefore, rather than looking at ‘positive’ versus ‘negative’ leadership, this study focused on actions and strategies that can reduce specific forms of violence.

6.2. BUILDING PEACE, THE GRASSROOTS WAY

“We don’t say ‘we are going to do this to build peace’, but we have been building peace for years and years [...] In what way? With our organizations we are working on training and education, family issues and the important theme that we sometimes forget: political empowerment. [...] In Comuna 8 people have been working for years and years on the protection of human rights. There is no need to say ‘we are building peace’. Before the negotiations in Havana, we were already building peace.” (Interview 33, Q17)

As has been argued in Chapter 1, the limited amount of literature on peacebuilding leadership has not sufficiently addressed the mechanism through which grassroots leaders can enhance peace. Reychler and Stellamans (2005) have described the characteristics and individual attributes of peace builders and peace spoilers, but the actual strategies these people might use have been left undiscussed. In this study, three major strategies were found that were used by leaders to support peace: 1) defending rights; 2) creating consciousness and supporting empowerment; and 3) providing opportunities. These three categories are overlapping in the type of actions they comprise. For example, through the foundation of a school, leaders can defend the right to education, while providing opportunities for- and supporting empowerment of the youth. Nevertheless, the distinction between the three types of strategies is useful for analysing how they can target both direct and structural violence. The common thread that connects these three categories is the ability to ‘identify the needs of the community’, as will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

6.2.1. DEFENDING RIGHTS
As was shown in Chapter 4, various types of rights are being violated in Comuna 8 on a daily basis, such as the right to life, children’s rights to a balanced diet, the right to protection and education of adolescents and the right to public services. Starting from the viewpoint that right violations are forms of violence (Ho, 2007), it becomes clear why addressing these violations can be seen as an effort to support peace. Rights can be defended through different actions:

- Resistance, highlighting problems and right violations: *for example through marches or other symbolic actions*
- Protection of the territory and inspecting or monitoring state actions
- Making denunciations or declarations when rights are violated
These actions are often interlinked: when the municipality initiated its *Cinturón Verde* project (see 3.2), leaders of the community started to resist the plans that were proposed by the company that designs and implements the megaprojects; the EDU. As over 1600 homes would be expropriated, leaders and community gathered in order to protect their territory and the right to housing. Through marches and community gatherings, they made their concerns and problems visible at both the local and the municipal level. Moreover, when rights are violated, leaders can denounce these violations as they tend to know where and how to denounce. Other community members may not dare to denounce right violations, especially not against members of illegal groups, as it is a well-known fact that it is a dangerous task that has cost the lives of many.

Actions of resistance may be directed towards government intervention, but also towards local armed groups. As an example, the previously called ‘Torture House’ –a former command centre of paramilitaries– was turned into a community gathering space by Isela and is today called *Casa Vivero Jairo Maya*. This ‘symbolic’ act of resistance may not necessarily directly affect human rights, but it does draw attention to the situation in the community and portrays a message of resistance towards the rule of the illegal armed groups. Not surprisingly, shortly after turning the previous command centre into a community centre, Isela was threatened with her life by the *combos*. Many leaders indicated that the main risk of being a leader was to ‘become a target’. Due to the visibility of leaders, they run the risk to be signalled by armed groups, or other powerful actors, who may see them as a threat to their authority.

> Also Jairo had been threatened several times for his actions, such as publicly denouncing right-violations in the comuna. Yet, he had never been afraid of denouncing, whether the person at charge was part of an armed group, part of the police force, or any other organization. He would not have been the first leader to have been assassinated for openly criticizing all types of human rights violations and corruption. No, Jairo did not get killed and “fortunately” as Martín Román puts it “[Jairo] did not die from the bullets that silence the words of the nonconformist that the establishment does not want to hear”. Nonetheless, on May 26, 2016 the people of Medellín and I had lost a friend and definitely one of the most respected leaders of Comuna 8 and the city.

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50 The Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (Urban Development Company), or EDU, is a public-private company that is in charge of the design and implementation of the so-called ‘megaprojects’, such as the PUI and nowadays public works for the Jardín Circunvalar.

51 Between March and April 2015, for example, three community leaders were killed in Medellín and the dangerous position of these leaders have repeatedly been reported by social organizations (IPC, 2015). In 2015 the UN reported that 69 community leaders that worked with human rights were murdered in Colombia in the first 8 months of that year, while 628 had received death-threats (La Nación, 2016).

52 Interviews: 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 22, 24, 25, 27, 30, 35, 36 and 39

53 Román (2016)
6.2.2. CREATING CONSCIOUSNESS AND EMPOWERMENT

The next category comprises various actions and strategies that leaders use in order to empower people and support peaceful coexistence. These actions might have a limited effect on direct violence, but can tackle structural and cultural violence by influencing the behaviour of the involved people. These actions include:

- Sharing knowledge and creating consciousness; for example through (informal) education, workshops and events.
- Creating spaces and including people; for example by organizing recreational activities or by starting discussion groups for minority- or women’s groups.

Going back to the Cinturón Verde project, various leaders, such as Camilo, Isela and Jairo organized multiple gatherings in which they informed people about the megaprojects. Most people knew that the possibility existed that their homes would be expropriated, in order to make space for the megaprojects. What they usually did not know, however, was what rights they had in case of expropriation. Especially Carlos, a graduate student, knew the details of the megaprojects inside out and shared them with the community during informal meetings in the neighbourhoods and sometimes at bigger events for a larger part of the comuna. He gave presentations on the rights people had if their homes would be expropriated and explained how they could get a fair compensation –as far as this was possible. He also explained the consequences of losing a house and how people could deal best with this.

On multiple occasions that I had accompanied Jairo through the community, people had come up to him with all types of questions about the megaprojects. One day, an elderly lady asked him what to do, as the EDU\(^4\) had asked her for the property papers of her house –which she did not have– and were planning to ‘buy her out’. She had no idea how much her house was worth, what her rights were, nor where or how she would live next. Jairo explained to her that she should not sign anything before having contacted a person he knew, that worked voluntarily to help people with handling an expropriation. He would make sure his contact would look at the case, so she would receive a fair compensation.

As argued before, these strategies may not have a direct effect on peace, but can rather contribute to reducing structural violence. In this case, Jairo and Carlos helped people to deal with handling an expropriation; a serious threat to the well-being and rights of the people.

Another way of creating consciousness and supporting empowerment is through the formation of spaces for minority or marginalized groups. Aldo, for example, led a LGBTI group in which activities are organized for young people, but also for the community as a whole:

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\(^4\) The Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (Urban Development Company), or EDU, is a public-private company that is in charge of the design and implementation of the so-called ‘megaprojects’, such as the PUI and nowadays public works for the Jardín Circunvalar.
“We have gone to parks [...] where we surprised people with our campaign by telling them ‘come, I will vaccinate you against homophobia, take these pills, they will make you immune to homophobia’.”

(Interview 23, Q19)

It has to be noted, however, that these kind of unconventional actions are not without risks. Openly drawing attention to the LGBTI population had brought Juan –my initial contact– into trouble; he had also received several death-threats for openly declaring himself gay and promoting the rights and acceptance of the LGBTI community.

Moreover, women’s groups in the comuna draw attention to the position of women in society and all types of ‘taboo topics’, such as domestic violence. I was told that these groups were powerful in the comuna and that they had inspired women to fight for their rights. Without renouncing the idea that there can be a higher level of incidence of domestic violence in Comuna 8, this type of empowerment could perhaps partly explain the fact that the reported cases of domestic violence (corrected for population) are higher than in any other comuna (see 37).

These last examples show an emphasis on the cultural drivers behind direct violence –such as violence towards LGBTI and women– which are addressed by leaders and organizations. These strategies can support both short- and long-term efforts for peace by overcoming taboos, empowering minority- and oppressed populations and by defending their rights. Additionally, improving the position of minority groups and women can, in the long-run, also lead to a reduction in inequality, for example in job opportunities. This way, creating consciousness and supporting empowerment can also lead to a reduction of structural violence. Ultimately, it has to be mentioned that the role of a positive or peacebuilding leader was also frequently associated with 'giving the right example', as it was argued that leaders if leaders would ‘do the right thing’ or ‘act in the right way’ other people would follow.

6.2.3. PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

Ultimately, leaders can create opportunities for the population by providing education and training, and by stimulating sports and other types of recreational and cultural activities. Isela, for example, helped an 11 year-old boy create a football team. Through her network of contacts she was able to find a suitable training location and she managed to get sponsors and sportswear for the team. Sport and cultural activities can support peace in at least two ways. On the one hand people can develop technical and social skills that can increase their chances in accomplishing personal goals. A clear example of this in Medellín is the Hip-hop culture that has been used by youth, as a resistance tool towards the experience of direct violence in their everyday life, but also as a tool to address and overcome different types of social, economic and political

55 Interviews: 7, 9 and 12
56 Interviews: 8, 9, 10, 12, 17, 18, 24, 26 and 32

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problems that affect them (Montoya and Holguín, 2008; Bean, 2014). Again, this can be seen as a form of empowerment, for which this category is also partially overlapping with the previous one.

On the other hand, and this is especially relevant for youth, recreational spaces can provide a ‘safe ground’, away from hazardous environments in problematic areas. However, as is shown in this next quote by a rapper from Comuna 8, leaders can become a target themselves by providing alternative spaces for the youth:

“If you have a lot of people behind you and they don’t want you to have that position, they can harm you. Because we have a different mentality than they have, [...] we want to prevent youngsters from falling into drug-addiction, but for them, that’s a bad thing. They live from the drug-addiction, so if the youth doesn’t fall into that, we are ruining their business.”

(Interview 25, Q20)

Besides cultural and recreational activities and formation, leaders have historically played an important role in the provision of formal education as well. Due to the historical lack of state presence, as mentioned in chapters 4 and 5, the insufficiency or absence of educational facilities has led to the auto-construction of schools by the community.

In short, providing opportunities through education, training and cultural- and recreational activities can lead to a reduction of both direct and structural violence. Direct violence can be reduced by providing ‘safe spaces’, while structural violence can be reduced by improving the chances and opportunities of the involved people, especially the youth. It has to be noted here, that the effect on direct violence may be constrained due to the fact that there is some sort of conflict over the youth population. When I attended a workshop for teenage boys, in which they learned how to assemble and programme remote controlled cars, I was told by the leader in charge of the group that he would probably lose several of his pupils to the armed groups. He argued that some of them would sooner or later figure out that making money with the ‘big boys’ was easier than putting into practice the new learned mechanical skills in a paid job. Interestingly enough, he did not judge this decision, but rather questioned the larger picture and the opportunities these kids really had.

TO CONCLUDE

This chapter has outlined the different types of leaders, the perceptions of positive versus negative leadership, and the strategies used by leaders that can support peace. I have argued that these strategies can be categorized into three groups that contain overlapping actions. These strategies include: 1) defending rights, 2) creating consciousness and supporting empowerment, and 3) providing opportunities. One feature that these strategies have in common, is that they are all based on the ‘identification of needs’ of the community.

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57 Interviews 31 and 35
As ‘positive leadership’ was often linked with ‘thinking about the whole community’, I argue that peacebuilding leadership, in this case at the local level, starts with identifying the needs of the population. Defending rights, supporting empowerment and providing opportunities will only be necessary as long as certain needs of the community are not satisfied and as long as rights are being violated. Consequently, peacebuilding leadership cannot merely be defined by the personality and qualities of the leader, but must be measured by the appropriateness of her or his actions in a given context.

The use of the word community becomes problematic here, as the needs and interests of ‘the community’ will usually be contested to some degree. Different interests and needs amongst the members of the community can create conflict, for which the task of a leader can become more difficult when dealing with issues on which the community has strongly diverging opinions. However, as was indicated in paragraph 6.1.2, there are certain skills – such as mediating, knowing how to bring people together and knowing how to direct – that leaders can apply when confronted with these situations. Hence, handling with different interests in a constructive manner will be among the main tasks of the leader (see also 1.3.1.1). The next chapter provides an illustrative example in Comuna 8, that has generated conflict amongst the community; the implementation of the Cinturón Verde project. It will discuss how this project can affect peace in the comuna, before the final chapter explains how it can affect (peacebuilding) leadership.

After I had gotten to know Jairo a bit more, I started to realize why so many people had urged me to talk to him. For many, he was the personification of ‘positive leadership’, of someone that always ‘thought about the community’ and would never misuse his position as leader – even though he claimed not to be one. It was this humbleness, combined with an unconditional devotion to the community and the spirit of a fighter to protect the most vulnerable, that made him so appreciated by the community. If I were to describe what he did on a daily basis, I would say ‘everything and anything’. No problem was too small or too big for him to take a look at it. And even though he did not get paid for his work, he was fully dedicated to his role as ‘gestor social’58, as he called it. He saw through “the blind-spots of the system” and people knew he would hear them if they had a problem and that he would do to the best of his ability to find a solution. After his first heart attack, Jairo had already died once clinically during my stay in Medellín. When I asked him about this experience he told me: “[after I died] I saw my mother and she was happy to see me, but I told her I couldn’t stay for long, as there was still too much work that needed to be done here.”

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58 Unfortunately I still do not have a clue what this means. Literally though, it translates to ‘social manager’.
After homicide rates fell drastically from 18559 in 2002 to 32.4 in 2006, Medellín gained international attention and was even referred to as the 'Medellín Miracle' (Fajardo & Matt, 2014). This miracle had to do with the extraordinary drop in homicide rates on the one hand and a physical transformation of the city on the other. This chapter explores some of the mechanism and rationales behind this ‘miracle’ and questions the sustainability of the type of peace that is promoted through this approach. While almost no references are made to leadership in this chapter, it serves as an example of how certain top-down interventions can affect peace on the local level. Furthermore, it sets the context for the next chapter in which the relationship between leadership, the implementation of megaprojects and peace will be explored.

7.1. THE MEDELLÍN MIRACLE
In 2004, mayor Sergio Fajardo (2004-2007) introduced a new planning strategy, called ‘Social Urbanism’, that focused primarily on the physical upgrading of some of the most marginalized areas:

“Medellín’s recipe looks simple. It used to be the world’s murder capital, the hometown of Pablo Escobar, an all-powerful druglord. The solution was a radical urban makeover with a redistributive purpose: the best projects were reserved for the poorest, most violent areas.” (The Economist, 2014)

The rationale behind this approach can be traced back to the late 1980s and early 1990s, in which the municipality changed its attitude towards dealing with informal settlements. Prior to the 1990s, the municipality had rejected and neglected most of the informal settlements and there had not been any clear strategy for improving the living conditions of its inhabitants. After the landslide in Villatina (Comuna 8) in 1987 however (see 3.3), discussions opened up about how the municipality should deal with these precarious, neglected and dangerous areas (Velásquez, 2012). The first attempt to formalize and legalize the informal parts of the city, as well as to make up for part of the ‘historical debt’ of state neglect, was through the implementation of the so called PRIMED (Integrated Programme for Improvement of Subnormal Neighbourhoods in Medellín) in 1992 and several years later, in 1999, through the introduction of the Comprehensive Neighbourhood Improvement (MIB) programme; that was also part of the Land Management Plan (POT)60 that guides the city planning for the long-term.

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59 Per 100,000 inhabitants
60 The POT is a planning instrument that provides technical, normative and political guidelines for municipalities and districts. It defines long-term environmental, economic and social goals and directs the public spending of the particular territory at stake, in this case Medellín. This long-term planning instrument defines the strategy of implementing infrastructural changes for the short- (4 years), mid- (8 years) and long-term (12 years) and has to be respected by the different mayors and administrations in turn. The plan must be designed through a collaborative effort between, public, private and communitarian actors and should form a “social pact between the population and its territory” (MAVDT, 2004; p5). This means that the mayor has limited power to alter the course of the city planning. However, each mayor decides what part of the POT will be emphasized, or what part of the city will be prioritized.
In 2001, however, the new mayor Luis Pérez closed the PRIMED programme and the MIB programme also lost support (Velásquez, 2015). Improving the conditions of the informal and marginal areas of the city was not the priority anymore, as mayor Pérez was more preoccupied with pacifying (getting rid of the militias) the city: it was in this period that *Operación Orión* took place (see 3.1). Following the ‘pacification’ of sectors of the city, such as in Comuna 13 through *Operación Orión*, ‘Social Urbanism’ was introduced by new mayor Sergio Fajardo in 2004 and the ‘miraculous transformation’ had begun. It is important to note here, that the ‘pacification’ of the city –the ousting of the militias and later the supposed demobilization of the two dominant paramilitary groups– opened the way for the municipality to exercise control in areas that had until then been left largely neglected.

Fajardo’s Social Urbanism gave new life to the MIB strategy that sought to integrate some of the most marginalized parts of the city into ‘the formal city’. New libraries were built in some of the poorest areas of the city and the first ‘metrocable’ was constructed to connect the comunas 1 and 2 to the metro system (see Map 4). The north-south and central-west metro lines had opened in 1995, but were too far away from the city’s peripheries to integrate them. These constructions were part of a comprehensive development plan that would also take the social and economic development of the surrounding areas into account. These Comprehensive Urban Projects (PUI) were the first of their kind in both form and size and were designed to intervene in areas with high levels of marginalization, segregation, poverty and violence61 (Echeverri & Orsini, 2011). In 2008, after an evaluation of this pilot project, it was argued that the PUI “could be the adequate instrument to attain peace and [peaceful] coexistence in the neighbourhoods” (Echeverri, 2008: p13, in: Velásquez, 2012). In 2008, another PUI was put into function, this time for Comuna 13: the historically most violent district of Medellín.

The PUI were part of a larger strategy of inclusion and formalization of informal areas, as proposed in the POT (Velásquez, 2015). However, in 2012 the new mayor Aníbal Gaviria decided to focus on another aspect of the POT and introduced the Cinturón Verde (‘Green Belt’) project to “control the expansion and consolidate a balanced and equitable territory [...] between the urban and the rural” (EDU, 2014, in: Velásquez, 2015). In other words, the Cinturón Verde’s main objective was to counter the unplanned and informal expansion of the city towards the borders and to improve living conditions in the targeted areas. Moreover, the project was (or is) also meant to promote tourism in the city (EAFIT, 2012). Critics of the project, however, have argued that the project is predominantly used as a tourist attraction and as a tool for ‘city branding’, rather than for improving living conditions of the people in the targeted areas (Velásquez, 2015; 2012; Duque & Rodríguez, 2012; Serna, 2012; Bocarejo *et al.*, 2014).

Comuna 8 was the first comuna in which part of the Cinturón Verde project was implemented, under the name of ‘Jardín Circunvalar’62. This project, similar to the PUI, are planned and carried out by Medellín’s

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61 Map 4 combines the information that was provided in Chapter 3 about the quality of life (measured in IMCV) with the infrastructure of the Metro system in Medellín. It shows that the metrocables are all orientated towards the areas with the lowest indicators of Quality of Life.

62 Litteraly ‘Circumventing’ or ‘Surrounding’ Garden.
Urban Development Company; the EDU. At the same time, two new metrocable lines were also planned for the comuna (see Map 4). The Jardín Circunvalar consists of different types of facilities and infrastructural works, such as cycle- and pedestrian paths, eco-parks, ecological allotments, housing projects, security facilities, playgrounds and sport-facilities (see Figure 9). Additionally, the parks and pedestrian- and cycle paths will be connected to the public transportation system, in this case the metro-cable.

Metro System Medellín

![Metro System Map](image)

This company is officially a public company, yet it is free in contracting sub-contractors, which can operate under the rule of private enterprises (interviews 41, 46 and 47).
FIGURE 9: MASTERPLAN JARDÍN CIRCUNVALAR, COMUNA 8

Source: EDU, 2015
What has been discussed, is that since the 1990s the administrators of Medellín have changed their approach to informal settlements and have tried to physically upgrade some of these areas through large-scale urban interventions, or ‘megaprojects’. The most notable ones being the PUI (meant to integrate some of the marginalized areas of the city that had poor connections to the centre) and later the Cinturón Verde (meant to counter the unplanned informal growth of the city). Even though both of these strategies have incorporated some efforts to improve living conditions of the targeted population, the creation of ‘eye-catchers’ such as new parks, new public spaces and buildings such as libraries, have been given priority. While these latter interventions may serve the population to some extent, it has widely been recognized that the megaprojects have been used primarily as a tool for city branding –in order to attract tourists and investors– rather than as a tool for improving the livelihoods of the people that live in the intervened areas (Velásquez 2015; 2012, Colak & Pearce, 2015; Serna, 2012; Duque & Rodríguez, 2012; Corpades, 2014):

“The Jardín Circunvalar may be very beautiful, but it’s not our priority. I mean, what is more important, a path for a tourist, or a path that makes sure a child does not have to get his or her shoes dirty when going to school? Or a worker on their way to work? Or a mother when she leaves the house to do groceries? I find it disgraceful, I mean, the real ‘Path of Life’ should be a path of a life with dignity, paths that allow the inhabitants to walk, day and night, to access the city or the neighbourhood, yet they spend 540.000.000.000 pesos that could be invested in unsatisfied basic needs.” (Interview 22, Q21)

Furthermore, the connection between the decline in homicide rates and the implementation of the projects is not as straightforward as it first appears. While homicide rates may have declined, other expressions of violence, such as forced disappearance, extortion, prostitution (of minors) are still present in the intervened areas (Colak & Pearce, 2015; CORPADES, 2014; Serna, 2012;). The next part explores how the effects on direct violence can be interpreted, but also the possible effects of these megaprojects on structural violence.

7.2. MEGAPROJECTS AND SECURITY

In 2012 it was shown that there was a significant difference in the decline of homicide rates between neighbourhoods that had been intervened by the first PUI and neighbourhoods that had not seen interventions: the decline in homicide rates was 66% higher in intervention neighbourhoods and residents reports of violence decreased by 75% (Cerdá et al. 2012). More than a strategy for physical upgrading, Social Urbanism (nowadays under the banner of Pedagogic Urbanism) has also been associated with the implementation of new control mechanisms and the effort to assert state control in formerly considered ‘no-go areas’ (Colak & Pearce, 2015; Serna, 2012). The first and most visible effort to assert state presence in one of these no-go areas was the so called Operación Orion, as has been described in Chapter 3, in which state security forces worked together with paramilitary groups in order to expel the FARC guerrillas and urban militias from Comuna 13 (Colak & Pearce, 2015; Velásquez, 2012). The operation was followed by

64 ‘Camino de la Vida’ (Path of Life) is the name of the pedestrian path that is being constructed as belt around the city (see 1 on Figure 9). It is designed as a tourist attraction and connected to parks and sight-seeing spots.

65 €167.250.519 or $185.851.211 (exchange rate 30-09-2016)
the reinforcement of local military bases and the construction of new police stations, but this did not interfere with the growing paramilitary power in the area (Colak & Pearce, 2015; Serna, 2012).

With the elaboration of the second PUI after 2006, a new metrocable line was built in Comuna 13 (see Figure 10), together with a public library park and electric escalators that lead to some of the geographically higher parts of the comuna. Nowadays, so-called ‘slum tours’ are organized in which tourists can visit the comuna. A typical tour will consist of a ride in the metrocable, a visit to the library park and later to the electric stairs. The paradox of this story, however, is that Comuna 13 still has amongst the highest levels of forced displacement and homicide rates in the city and is still controlled by different combos that extort and intimidate the population (Barajas et al., 2012). Furthermore, even though police and army are present in the comuna, their control is limited and they have not been able to restore the citizens' trust in the official forces (Barajas et al. 2012). This is perhaps unsurprising considering the massive rights-violations during Operación Oríon which have yet to be recognized fully by the municipality.

The Medellín Miracle, has gained global recognition for the seemingly effective reduction of homicides and appears to have been successful in attracting tourists and investors that now regard the city as ‘safe’ (Colak & Pearce, 2015; Velázquez, 2012). However, according to Colak and Pearce (2015) the overall security in the city is questionable and it is argued that the lived experience of insecurity has not
necessarily diminished, especially not for the poorer citizens (p199). They further argue that the Medellín Model partly shifted away from an approach of 'security as repression' to 'security as management'. This type of 'Managed Security' has also been applied in cities such as San Salvador and Rio, where homicide-reducing pacts have sometimes explicitly been supported by the government. This pragmatic approach is thus focussed on managing urban violence, rather than eradicating it (Colak & Pearce, 2015: p201).

In Medellín, this has led to the coexistence of both legal and illegal control-systems over territories in the city. Both before and during the implementation of the megaprojects, new military bases and police stations have been built in the impacted areas, in order assert a certain level of security and control (Serna, 2012; Velásquez, 2012). The so-called ‘CAI periféricos’ (24-hour police stations) for example, have been implemented in the comunas 1, 3, 6, 8 and 13; basically the same comunas which have or will be intervened by the construction of megaprojects. Furthermore, the megaprojects have also been accompanied by military bases in Comuna 13 and Comuna 8. In Comuna 8, two military bases accompany the Jardín Circunvalar Project and in 2010 a CAI periférico was constructed in La Sierra, the most notorious neighbourhood of the comuna. According to Serna (2012), the construction of the metrocable has also been planned strategically in the sense that at least three of the six stations are placed in the most violent neighbourhoods of the comuna; Esfuerzos de Paz, La Sierra and Trece de Noviembre. Rather than coincidence, the strategic positioning of police and military bases, as well as of infrastructure, in these violent areas appears to be an effort to establish state control in these locations (Serna, 2012; Velásquez, 2012).

While the surrounding areas where the megaprojects have been implemented may have become safer in terms of homicide rates, the lived experience of security of the population in these areas has not necessarily improved (Colak & Pearce, 2015). Experiences show that extortion and intimidation of the population continues in the same manner as before the projects and that the armed groups retain their power over their territory (albeit less visible for the outsider):

“We know that an investment in the territory can lower the expressions of violence and insecurity. You construct something here and the armed groups will not enter that place. For a moment it can have this effect; an apparent peace. But with time, they (the armed groups) will adapt. At some point, they will probably reoccupy these sites.” (Interview 35, Q22)

Finally, it is known that secret or implicit deals are made with local armed groups, in which the latter are able to exercise control over local illegal markets of arms and drugs, as long as they keep the homicide rates low. As a result, large parts of the city live in what has been denominated a tensa calma, or ‘apparent calm’, in which “the noise of bullets” may not be heard, but where “the violations of human

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66 Interviews: 12, 24, 40 and 49
67 Interviews: 40 and 49
68 Interviews: 19, 22, 27 and 39; Duque & Rodríguez (2012); Velásquez (2015)
“rights are constant” (OSMH, 2014 in: Colak and Pearce, 2015: p216). The exact mechanisms behind these deals remain unclear and the term ‘implicit’ is used here as there does not necessarily have to be an explicit agreement between either high-level government agents or formal community leaders that are part of the state apparatus and the armed groups. Nevertheless, it is known that the armed groups also benefit from the projects; sometimes by stealing materials and other times by claiming part of the budget. As argued above, the Medellín Model may have led to a reduction in homicide rates, nevertheless it has also allowed the coexistence of both legal and illegal territorial control mechanisms that have not necessarily reduced the threats of direct violence for the local population. Rather, an artificial calmness has been created that makes the city attractive for tourist and investors (Velásquez, 2015; Serna, 2012; Colak & Pearce, 2015). A question that remains is how sustainable this type of ‘negative peace’ can be, as the population that lives close to the megaprojects might not benefit equally from this kind of peace. Moreover, human rights violations (e.g. intimidation and extortion) might even receive less attention, as the city is considered to be relatively peaceful by its mayors –that rely mainly on statistical data about homicide rates. Some of the structural aspects of violence might also suffer as a consequence of this planning- and security model, which will be discussed in the next section.

7.3. MEGAPROJECTS AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE

Measuring the effects of the PUIs and the Cinturón Verde on structural violence in the targeted areas goes beyond the scope of this research. Instead, what will be discussed here are the perceptions of leaders from Comuna 8 as well as findings of studies that have researched some of the effects of the megaprojects in other areas.

There are various ways through which megaprojects could possibly reduce structural violence, such as through: the creation of jobs, the improvement of the mobility of residents, the improvement of housing, the increased access to services, the stimulation of the local economy and the mitigation of risks (Cordoba et al., 2014). These efforts could satisfy certain needs of the community and counteract some forms of exclusion and inequalities that can be regarded as structural violence. Nevertheless, while the megaproject can contribute to a reduction of structural violence, different studies have shown that the needs of the population in the targeted areas have not been given priority in most of the interventions (Velásquez, 2015; 2012; Duque & Rodriguez, 2012; Serna, 2012; Brand, 2013; Drummond et al., 2012; Bocarejo et al., 2014). Furthermore, when asked about the implementation and effects of the megaprojects –not for associated problems– about half of the community leaders and several outside experts indicated that one of the biggest problems with the megaprojects was that they did not address the needs of the population (see Figure 11).

Interviews: 7, 24, 35, 40 and 49
Another associated problem was the displacement of inhabitants due to the projects. In 2015 it was estimated that 1671 houses would have to be expropriated and removed for the implementation of the Jardín Circunvalar project in Comuna 8 (CJL, 2015). Moreover, while the initial plan of the EDU promised to build 945 new apartments and to improve 135 existing houses, more recent information shows that 969 apartments are planned to be build, while only 84 improvements are planned –even though the community had clearly indicated that the improvements of existing houses was its main priority (CJL, 2015). There are at least two economic motives behind this strategy. In the first place, 43605 m² will enter the real-estate market in Comuna 8 with the construction of new apartments –most of the current houses in the intervened areas are in some way illegal and thus not in the real-estate market. Secondly, the apartments cannot be bought, but will be rented out, for which they will be profitable after a certain period. Although people that will be expropriated do not have to pay rent for the first three months (if they opt for an apartment) this means that in many cases the living expenses of the people will rise, possibly making it impossible to continue living in these apartments or the area. This could pose a threat to Article 51 of the Colombian constitution (see 4.3.3), which guarantees the right to housing. If this right is threatened through the implementation of megaprojects, it can be considered as a form of violence (see 1.1.1).

In regard to employment, the Jardín Circunvalar has created an estimated 600-700 jobs in Comuna 8 and over the last four years approximately 8000 jobs have been created during the development of related projects to the Cinturón Verde and the construction of new metrocable and tramlines. While the creation of employment through the projects can reduce unemployment and perhaps poverty, jobs that are created will only last for as long as the contractor decides; this period ranges between approximately three months and one year. Furthermore, the stimulation of the local economy seems to count only for the sectors that are within close proximity of the public works (Brand & Dávila 2011).

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70 Interview 45
While residents’ mobility has improved in the comunas 1 and 2 (Dávila & Daste, 2011; Bocarejo et al., 2014) the improvement appears to be relatively little in comparison to the level of investments. According to Bocarejo et al. (2014) strategic economic development and land-use planning could also have promoted a similar increase in mobility, with probably a fraction of the resources. The metrocable stations in Comuna 8, for example, are not strategically distributed in terms of proximity for its inhabitants. As has been argued above, it seems that the metrocable stations are located in historically highly conflicted areas – rather than in areas that would benefit a larger part of the community. The metrocable may be just one expression of the Medellín Model, but it represents the symbolic importance of Social Urbanism in which the “aesthetic aspects are much stronger than its material impacts” (Bocarejo et al., 2014: p61).

**TO CONCLUDE**

The Medellín Model has been praised both nationally and internationally for its innovative character and its impacts on homicide reduction. Nevertheless, there is a wide belief that this model has been orientated more outwards than inwards; the big symbolic projects seem to attract tourists and investors, but may not meet the promises of improving the quality of life of Medellín’s most marginalized residents. The positive effects of the megaproject are not to be denied, but there is a need to look deeper into the drivers behind these projects, in order to understand how these projects can contribute to the city’s wellbeing and peace in the long-run.

While homicide rates have dropped in the impacted areas, the coexistence of both legal and illegal territorial control mechanisms is found to be problematic here, since residents’ security does not necessarily improve. The danger here, is that the aesthetically transformed city with a low homicide rate might be mistaken for a ‘peaceful’ city. Indeed, outsiders such as tourist and investors may not experience the threats of violence, nor the presence of illegal armed structures as such, since these structures may initially not be visible to the outsider’s eye. It has been argued, however, that residents of the city, especially in the most marginalized parts, might experience an ‘apparent calm’, rather than peace (7.2). Ultimately, it has been argued that while the megaprojects might positively influence the satisfaction of certain needs of the population, these needs have not been given priority, as ‘city branding’ appears to be a more probable driver behind these high-cost interventions. What remains to be discussed is the connection between (peacebuilding) leadership and the implementation of megaprojects. The next chapter will illuminate some of the mechanisms and interactions that profile the relationship between these expressions of both low-level- and high-level decision making and discusses the possible effects of these mechanisms and interactions on sustainable peace.
This last chapter is meant to show the importance of looking at the way in which high- and low-level decision making can influence each other, as well as how they can affect sustainable peace at the local level. The reason for looking at this relationship consists of two inter-related assumptions. First, it was argued that peacebuilding leadership is primarily based on the identification of needs of the community, as the satisfaction of these needs can be seen as an effort to reduce both direct and structural violence. Secondly, it was argued that the type of ‘peace’ that has been created or stimulated by the ‘Medellín Model’ is questionable in the sense that it consists mostly of a reduction in direct violence—especially homicide rates—, rather than of a reduction in structural violence, as the needs of the affected population are not given priority in the planning and elaboration of the megaprojects. Consequently, it can be understood that there is a (possible) conflict of interests between those that prioritize the most urgent needs of entire the population (i.e. peacebuilding leaders) and those that prioritize economic interest for a smaller segment of society. Neither of the groups can be considered a homogeneous group, nor can the latter be directly associated with ‘megaprojects’. However, it is argued here that it is crucial to understand the ways in which these megaprojects are designed in order to assess the possible consequences of these projects on peace; if these projects are driven by economic interest for a small segment of society, rather than by the needs of the entire population, they will inevitably lead to some form of conflict and might not even contribute to sustainable peace at all.

8.1. THE EFFECTS OF MEGAPROJECTS ON GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

Based on the information that was gathered through the interviews and observations, I have distinguished four ways through which the planning and implementation of megaprojects can affect grassroots leadership. These four possibilities are not claimed to be exhaustive and can be overlapping. However, the categorizations that are used in this chapter (similarly to the ones in 6.2) are useful for analysing the possible effects of certain actions and relationships on sustainable peace later.

8.1.1. ENHANCING AND FORMALIZING EXISTING LEADERSHIP

In order to execute the projects, the EDU makes use of the existing forms of leadership, especially of formal leadership that is part of the state apparatus; the JAC and the JAL. Working with these juntas can be helpful for the EDU, as they already possess a network within the community and can indicate possible candidates (personnel or contractors) to work on the project, but can also communicate directly with the inhabitants about the projects. Moreover, informal leadership can be ‘formalized’ by adopting and contracting existing leaders among the workforce and entitle them with certain responsibilities.

71 Interview 41
8.1.2. FORMING NEW LEADERS

According to the former General-Manager of the EDU, new leaders are trained in order to “convince”, “help” and “transform”\(^\text{72}\). In other words, new leaders are created that can *convince* the community about the benefits of the projects, *help* the construction process by monitoring and finding suitable people that can work on the project, all with the aim of *transforming* the neighbourhood or comuna. Following the logic of the – in the words of Brand (2013) – ‘paternalistic’ and ‘ill-defined’ *Pedagogic Urbanism*, these leaders are not only trained technically, but also socially:

“In the formation process we also teach on topics such as ‘recognition of the other’, ‘respecting the other’, because it is not only about doing, but also about being. It is important that people recognize themselves, as well as those that are able to help them progress.”

(Interview 47, Q23)

For both the formation of new leaders and the enhancement or formalization of existing leadership, it seems that the EDU uses some sort of ‘cherry-picking’ method in order to choose certain leaders the company finds ‘suitable’:

“When we find that we have to start from zero with the community, the first thing they [the EDU] demand us to do is to generate processes in order to make the project sustainable. For example, all the work is done by people from the community that are formed through the project. In this process, new leaders are key; we do not only contact existing organizations [...] but we also try to find those persons that have the capacities to be a leader. This is really important, the training of new leaders [...] in order to develop the projects.”

(Interview 41, Q24)

The quote above shows that new leaders are found to be essential for the EDU, in order to make the projects ‘sustainable’ and locally supported. This is understandable, as new leaders that are formed through the projects will almost unquestionably support them and thus provide more legitimacy to the project. However, finding “persons that have the capacities to be a leader” means that these people were not considered to be leaders before, which makes their authority in the community questionable.

8.1.3. UNDERMINING EXISTING LEADERSHIP

The creation of new leaders, as well as the enhancement or formalization of existing leadership will generally provide the EDU with leaders that are willing to cooperate with the projects. However, the other side of the coin, that has to be recognized, is that existing leadership that is not willing to cooperate can be undermined through these processes. These so-called ‘critical leaders’ have even been stigmatized by the

\(^{72}\) Interview 47
EDU and the municipality as guerrilleros, for opposing some of the plans for the megaprojects. A clear example of the undermining of existing leadership can be found in the neighbourhood El Faro. Don Omar, a recognized leader of this neighbourhood—who had initiated its construction and was largely responsible for the fact that his neighbourhood would not be demolished by the EDU—had planned to transform an unused shed into a kindergarten, together with the neighbourhood, that had asked for it. However, the EDU capacitated another leader of the neighbourhood, a former friend of Don Omar, in order to push through the construction of a playground on the spot planned for the kindergarten. The eventual construction of the playground resulted in a heavy conflict between the two leaders and a division amongst some of the community members.

8.1.4. CORRUPTING LEADERSHIP

Ultimately, megaprojects can also lead to the corruption of leaders. Various leaders indicated that there are leaders that will cooperate with the planning and construction of a project if it brings along personal benefits, even though it may not bring direct benefits for the community. This type of corruption, however, is something generalized in the community and across city and is often associated with clientelist practices that mostly take place in formal participation spaces that have been created by the government, in this case in the JAC and JAL. Furthermore, the same issues were raised in relation to Participatory Budget programmes, that are known to be infiltrated by the armed groups. These armed groups can intimidate community leaders that have access to Participatory Budget funds, in order to get a share of the money. It is not argued here that the corruption of leaders is a part of the strategy or logic of the EDU or municipality, but rather that there are various possibilities for corruption to occur when money or projects are assigned to community leaders. Either due to pressure from armed groups or personal interests, these leaders can misuse their position in ways that will have a negative consequences for the community—that might not even be aware of it.

8.2. THE EFFECTS OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP ON MEGAPROJECTS

Rather than being passive subjects, grassroots leaders have the ability to alter the course of their surroundings, even when high-level decision making enforce certain changes. Below, I have outlined three ways in which leaders can have an effect on the planning and implementation of megaprojects. Again, these categories are not claimed to be exhaustive and can also be partially overlapping.

8.2.1. RESISTANCE

As has been shown in chapter 7, leaders of Comuna 8 have used methods of resistance to protest against the expropriation after the plans for the Jardín Circunvalar project had become public—these plans entailed

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73 Interviews: 22 and 33
74 Interviews: 8, 18, 22, 32, 40 and 49
75 Interviews: 9, 14, 18, 21, 26, 37 and 39
76 Interviews: 19, 34 and 39
77 Interviews: 12, 13, 24, 31, 39 and 49
78 Interviews: 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 32 and 35
the expropriation of at least 1600 houses. Acts of resistance against the megaprojects have varied from protests and marches, to legal processes in which leaders can emphasize the rights of the community and how these might be violated by the implementation of megaprojects. An organization that has linked different leaders, scholars and organizations together in order to resist some of the plans of the EDU, Metro, EPM79 and other big public-private companies is the Mesa Interbarrial de Desconectados80. This organization supports communities and their leaders in order to defend their rights. For a clear example of resistance, the case of Don Omar from El Faro can be used again. As indicated above, Don Omar had been largely responsible for the fact that his neighbourhood would not get demolished by the EDU. He organized protests and used his network to get attention for his case, until he finally received the news that his barrio could remain in place and that the houses as they were would be legalized.

8.2.2. PROPOSING ADJUSTMENTS

Another way in which community leaders have influenced the megaprojects, but also other type of state interventions, is by proposing adjustments to the projects. Together with the community and organizations such as CORPADES, leaders of Comuna 8 have made different types of proposals, not just as a reaction to interventions, but also as a proactive tool to improve the livelihoods of the people in the comuna. Some of these proposals have been financed by funds from the municipality, for example through Participatory Budget programmes or, during the last four years, through the so-called Jornadas de Vida81.

79 Empresas Públicas de Medellín, or EPM (Public Utilities Company of Medellín) accounts for 20% of the municipal budget, while it destines only 30% of its profits to the municipality. Between 2012 and 2015, EPM accounted for 4 billion COP of the total 17 billion that was invested in infrastructural projects (Interview 22).

80 No direct translation possible: Network of Neighbourhoods of Disconnected (people). The so-called mesas are groups of people that join together for a certain cause. In Comuna 8 there are various of these groups, such as the mesas for displaced people, the LGBTI community, public services and housing.

81 Municipal budget for comunas, similar to Participatory Budget, on which the community can decide about its use.
One of the perhaps most extensive proposals has been the PDL (Plan de Desarrollo Local), or Local Development Plan (see Figure 12), in which the social, economic, political and cultural priorities of the comuna have been outlined. This plan is made within the framework of ‘Participatory Planning’—that is based on the Colombian Constitution of 1991—and offers a guide to the municipality, in the sense that it provides information on different problematics within the comuna, as well as on possible solutions. Nevertheless, these plans (not only in Comuna 8) have largely been left out of the city’s most recent Land Management Plan, or POT (Duque & Rodríguez, 2012).

“For over more than 10 years, we have been elaborating proposals for the Local Development Plan […] But they have not been willing to listen to the organized people. They (the government) are now in a peace process, but if they don’t change their attitude, we will remain the same. We ask ourselves; why is the government used to negotiate with armed actors, but not with the organized civil society that is claiming its rights in a peaceful manner?” (Interview 18, Q25)

There are occasions, however, on which some of these proposals are taken into consideration. The Jardín Circunvalar project, for example, did initially not include a component for comprehensive neighbourhood development (MIB). However, due to the pressure of several leaders and organizations that demanded qualitative improvement of some of the neighbourhoods (as had been proposed in the PDL) the so-called Barrios Sostenibles (Sustainable Neighbourhoods) was incorporated into the project, with the aim of improving the living conditions of several parts of the comuna. Nevertheless, the EDU took the credit for this programme and changed it in such way, that it hardly represented the community’s initial proposal.

8.2.3. FACILITATING AND MONITORING THE PROCESS

One leader I spoke to, a self-declared non-critical leader, welcomed the megaprojects and argued that they could bring many good things to the comuna, especially employment and new spaces. He had planned out a two-hour walk through the comuna and showed me almost all of the areas that were intervened for the Jardín Circunvalar project and for the construction of the metrocable. During this tour, he talked to the people that were at work, checked if everything was going according to plan and explained me that the role of a leader was to monitor these interventions. Afterwards, he wrote an email to the EDU with some small problems he found and assured me they would write him the next day and fix it. This type of monitoring is helpful for the companies that develop the programmes, as it gives them an insiders’ view on how the process is going. Another way in which community leaders can facilitate the process, is by finding people within the comuna that can work on the project, as they usually have a network of people and probably know who is reliable or not. Nevertheless, while this was one of the few persons to talk quiet positively about the megaprojects, he remained sceptical on the long-term effects, as he recalled that in other parts of the city the promises of the megaprojects (e.g. about the creation of employment and improvement of
quality of life) had not been made true. He also argued that the community’s social cohesion would be put to the test with the interventions and that leaders had to organize themselves well, if they wanted to have any influence on these projects. If leaders were not able to do so, he argued, the megaprojects would merely be imposed on the community.

8.3. BUILDING PEACE: WITH OR WITHOUT PEOPLE?
In order to understand how the relationship between grassroots leadership and megaprojects can influence peace, it is necessary to recap some of the ideas that have been outlined in the foregoing chapters. Starting with the idea that peace is the absence of violence and sustainable peace the absence of direct, structural and cultural violence, it was argued that peace can only be sustainable if the needs of the concerning community are given priority (Evans-Kent, 2002; see also 1.2.1 and 1.3). Considering the idea that grassroots leaders can have a specialized knowledge about their surroundings, I have argued that peacebuilding leadership is essentially based on the identification of needs of the community (6.2). Furthermore, it was argued that grassroots leaders predominantly focus on the reduction of structural and cultural violence (6.2), rather than direct violence. In contrast, the megaprojects seem to have a strong reducing effect on a particular expression of direct violence (7.2), namely homicides, but are less likely to have a similar impact on structural violence (7.3). Ultimately, it was suggested that there exists a (possible) conflict of interest between high-level stakeholders, that seem to prioritize economic interests over the needs of the community, and low-level grassroots leaders, that have a ‘moral obligation’ to prioritize the needs of the community (8). Consequently, this conflict can have repercussions on peace at the community level.

The argument here is that if both high- and low-level decision-making are focussed on meeting the needs of the concerning community, they can both contribute to sustainable peace. If, on the contrary, there is a conflict of interests between high- and low-level decision-making, this can form an obstacle to sustainable peace. It has been shown that most commonly associated problem with the megaprojects by leaders of Comuna 8 is that they do not satisfy the needs of the people. Moreover, more than half of the leaders indicated that they felt the megaprojects were forced upon the population; meaning that the opinions of the community were not (sufficiently) taken into account in the designing and implementation of the projects (7.3). Other issues that were raised by leaders, as well as by four civil servants, were that the projects were poorly communicated with the community and that they destroyed existing dynamics, social bonds and processes. What these issues show, is that existing leadership is not sufficiently recognized by the high-level stakeholders, to ensure ‘ownership’ of the processes. While the majority of leaders indicated that they did not ignore the possible benefits of the megaprojects, they were almost without exception sceptical towards the way in which they were implemented, as they felt they were forced upon the community without proper consultation:

83 Interview 36
84 Interviews: 7, 9, 10, 13, 18, 19, 20, 24, 27, 35, 39 and 48
85 Interviews: 2, 9, 23, 26, 34, 35, 36 and 39
86 Interviews: 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 33, 35 and 38
“They have tried to keep the leaders informed, but only with information that is convenient to tell. It hasn’t been a process about building things together, nor about listening to our opinions” (Interview 18, Q26)

In this perspective, the fact that the EDU looks for possible ‘new leaders’ in the community becomes problematic. If a large majority of existing leaders is critical about the implementation and has not felt included in the planning and designing of the project, it seems that there is something substantially ambiguous about the way in which these projects have been planned, communicated and implemented. If existing leadership is undermined, and critical leaders are conceived as “negative leaders” by the EDU and thus not taken sufficiently into account in the elaboration of the projects, these megaprojects, I argue, can have a deteriorating effect on peace, as the needs of the community are not given priority and new conflicts can arise between different leaders in the community.

Finally, while community leaders may have a certain influence on these projects and can be able to change parts of them, their power remains limited. In the first place because the community has no choice but to accept the megaprojects. However, more importantly, community leaders do not possess the necessary information, resources and institutional power to change the projects according to the needs of the community. It has been argued elsewhere that the information, communication and construction mechanisms of the project have not been efficient, nor inclusive (Borja, 2013) and that the spaces for participation of the affected communities have primarily been used as a tool for justification of certain projects, rather than as a tool for genuine discussion and consultation (Bedoya, 2016; Duque & Rodríguez, 2012). If participation of the community in the planning and construction of megaproject is more about appearance rather than content, their relevance for the community, as well as their sustainability becomes questionable. In regard to sustainable peace, then, the question remains whether these projects will contribute to reducing conditions of structural violence, especially if the needs of the most marginalized are put on the backburner.

87 Interview 47
88 One example of the lack of information is the quarrel about the definition and identification of (high)risk areas. Houses that are located in these (high)risk areas will be expropriated and demolished by the EDU, however the EDU has never handed over the results of the soil-studies that determined which areas can be considered (high)risk areas. Even after the community had decided to ask for a second opinion – that was paid with resources of the community – the results were not communicated to the community directly. As a consequence, nobody that was told to live in a (high)risk area and that had to leave their house, could verify if this was actually true.
9. DISCUSSION

The relationship between grassroots leadership, megaprojects, and sustainable peace was not clear at the beginning of this research. Therefore, mostly qualitative methods, such as open- and semi-structured interviews and participant observation, were used during the investigation, in order to assess if there was any kind of relationship between these factors. As has been argued in Chapter 2, qualitative methods can be helpful to illuminate complex relationships that would have been difficult to capture through standardised quantitative research. The relationships that were researched included: the ways through which grassroots leaders can influence peace at the local level, the ways in which megaprojects can influence peace at the local level and ultimately how grassroots leadership and megaprojects can influence each other in their peacebuilding capacity.

As peace was defined as the absence of violence, the first step in this study was to define violence and examine what types of violence were present in the researched location. In order to do so, the experiences of the respondents were used as input to define which types of violence could be seen as the major obstacles to attain peace. Subsequently, where possible, these types of violence were further explored through the use of quantitative data and measurable indicators of different types of inequalities and violence. This way, different expressions of direct and structural violence were made visible, that were regarded as obstacles to attain peace.

The next step was to analyse the ways through which grassroots leaders could reduce these types of violence, and thereby contribute to sustainable peace. In order to do so, the perceptions of peace by these leaders were first explored, which provided some insights of how leaders saw their role in promoting it. It was found that in general, grassroots leaders’ contribution to peace lays mostly in addressing the basic needs of the community; i.e. addressing issues of structural violence.

As it was presumed that the megaprojects could also influence peace at the local level, especially in reducing homicide rates (Cerdà et al., 2012), the effects of these projects on both direct and structural violence were also discussed. Based on existing research and the opinions of the leaders of Comuna 8, it was argued that while the megaprojects have the potential to reduce structural violence, the underlying rationales behind these projects, as well as the way of implementation do not seem to be aimed at satisfying the needs of the affected community. Therefore, it was argued, the reducing effect of structural violence of these projects is rather limited. Moreover, other research has shown that the reducing effect on homicide rates does not necessarily increase resident’s perceptions of security (Colak & Pearce, 2015). Combining these factors, and the fact that it was often indicated by leaders that they felt the projects were forced upon the community, it was argued that the type of peace that was promoted through the implementation of these projects does not appear to be sustainable, since it is not ‘rooted’ in-, nor based upon meeting the needs of the community.
9.1. LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH
During the analysis of violence and peace, there were several limiting factors that need to be addressed. While an attempt has been made to measure several forms of structural violence, this type of violence, as well as cultural violence, will probably never become completely comprehensible to the researcher. The opposite, peace, will therefore also remain a relative and abstract concept, that needs to be understood in a context specific manner. In this research, it was therefore tried to incorporate the subjective experiences of the people most affected by violence into the process of conceptualizing peace. Nevertheless, there may still exist unobserved experiences of violence that have not been sufficiently addressed. A reason for this could be that certain ‘taboo topics’ have (purposely) been concealed by respondents, due to either cultural or security reasons (see 2.2 and 4.2). A way in which this aspect could be addressed, could be through prolonged (participant) observation, with the aim of creating higher levels understanding as well as of trust of the community.

Due to the high level of abstraction of both peace and violence, it has to be considered that the influence of both grassroots leaders and megaprojects on peace remain rather speculative. Hence, without an experimental design it is almost impossible to assess the influences of one singular factor while excluding others. Considering this idea, and the fact that this research made use of a singular case-study and used only two independent variables, further research is needed in order to assess the influences of high- and low-level leadership in different contexts with the aim of creating deeper levels of understanding of local peacebuilding practices and contributing to the sustainability of those practices.

9.2. RECOMMENDATIONS
This case-study has provided an example of the incidence of both high- and low-level leadership in local peacebuilding processes. It has been argued that if both of these types of leadership aim at meeting the needs of the affected population, they are able to contribute to sustainable peace. While this case showed that there can be a conflict of interests between both types of leadership, the examination of possibilities for prolific cooperation between the two levels of leadership might support local peacebuilding practices. Lederach (1997), for example, has indicated that middle-range actors (mid-level leadership) might be the most important and able ones in local peacebuilding processes, as they can “impact processes and people at both the top ad the grassroots levels” and may therefore “lay the foundation for long-term, sustainable conflict transformation” (p.151). Although this may be true, I argue that the role of grassroots leaders is as crucial as other levels of leadership, as they probably know best what the needs of the community are and are also able to create a rooted basis of support for local peacebuilding practices. Therefore, I argue that further studies can research the ways in which the strategies and actions of grassroots leaders, that support peacebuilding practices, can be strengthened and supported.
In looking for ‘positive leadership’ academics and policy makers may be searching for a chimera and hence will be disappointed. The reality is, perhaps, that this particular model of leadership rarely exists in this context of violent conflict. This is why a Mandela figure stands out so sharply.

(Peake et al., 2004: p13)

Although there exists an increasing interest in local peacebuilding processes, the ‘local turn’ is often still restricted to the margins of peace thinking and practice (Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2013). This study has analysed how the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders and high-level leadership – expressed in the elaboration of large-scale urban interventions – can influence and contribute to sustainable peace in Comuna 8, Medellín. Focussing on grassroots leadership, an under-researched topic in peace studies (Peake et al., 2004), this study was particularly interested in the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders that could contribute to sustainable peace. As shown in the quote above, a “particular model” of positive leadership in violent contexts may be hard to find. Therefore, in contrast to previous studies that focused mostly on characteristic differences between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ leaders in conflict situations (Reychler & Stellamans, 2005: Peake et al., 2004), this study focused explicitly on the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders, rather than on individual personality.

It has been shown that there are at least three major strategies through which grassroots leaders can support sustainable peace: 1) through the creation of consciousness and supporting empowerment; 2) by defending rights and satisfying certain needs of the community; and 3) by providing opportunities for the population. Overall, the main strength of grassroots leaders might be their ability to address the most important needs of the communities, as they can been seen as experts on the local context and have a close connection to the concerning community (Mouly, 2013). The three mentioned strategies are largely overlapping with the community leaders’ conceptualization of peace in Comuna 8, which included: 1) positive human interaction; 2) the fulfilment of rights and needs; and 3) the availability of opportunities.

Noteworthy, the absence of armed groups and direct violence, in the form of homicides, was almost left unmentioned by the community leaders in their definition of peace. This could be due to: 1) the possibility that the conception of peace of the interviewed leaders relates closely to Galtung’s notion of positive peace (rather than negative peace); 2) fear for the armed groups; that may have influenced the answers during the interviews; or 3) the possibility that the presence of armed groups was seen as something unavoidable or perhaps partially accepted. As indicated in chapter 5, all three hypotheses are acceptable to some extent. More importantly, however, is the fact that grassroots leaders see their role in contributing to peace – albeit implicitly – predominantly in reducing structural and cultural violence, rather than reducing direct violence, as their position as leader may imply personal risks if the authority of the armed groups is challenged (6.2.1).
Researching the actions and strategies of grassroots leaders to contribute to sustainable peace provides insights not only on the way in which peace is perceived at the local level, but also on how grassroots peacebuilding leadership can be supported or impeded by higher level leadership. An illustrative case was used to illuminate relationships between high- and low-level leadership and local peacebuilding practices in the urban context. However, due to the scope of the research, the focus on high-level leadership was limited to one specific outcome of high-level decision making, namely the implementation of megaprojects. Whilst research from Cerdá et al. (2012) has pointed to reduction in homicide rates of 66% in neighbourhoods with infrastructure interventions, this study has questioned the sustainability of the ‘peace’ promoted through these projects.

It has been argued by Colak & Peace (2015) that although homicide rates have decreased in different parts of the city through the implementation of megaprojects, residents’ perceptions of security have not necessarily improved and other types of (non-lethal) violence, such as extortion and intimidation have remained at the same level or have even increased (Colak & Pearce, 2015). It has further been suggested that the ‘apparent calm’ that has been created, has allowed the coexistence of both legal and illegal territorial control mechanism in the city, that could have detrimental effects on – especially the marginalized – population. Combining this theory with idea that the rationale behind the large-scale urban interventions appears to be based on a marketing strategy of ‘city branding’, rather than on a strategy to meet the needs of the local population (Velásquez, 2015; Serna, 2012; Colak & Pearce, 2015) I have argued that the type of ‘peace’ created is representative of Galtung’s notion of ‘negative peace’, in which the expression of direct violence decrease, while the root causes of violence persist.

The relationship between grassroots leadership and the way in which megaprojects are implemented has also been examined, in order to assess how these two forms of agency can influence each other, and how they influence peace at the local level. This essay has argued that while grassroots leaders may exert some power over the ways in which megaprojects are implemented, i.e. through resistance, proposing adjustments or by facilitating or monitoring the process, their power is limited due to their lack of information, resources and institutional power. Megaprojects, on the other hand, may influence leadership through: enhancing existing leadership, training new leaders, undermining existing leadership and corrupting leadership. Looking at these interactions is important, as it has been argued that there can be a conflict of interests between grassroots and high-level leadership. This conflict of interests becomes problematic in the scope of peacebuilding, when grassroots leadership is either undermined or corrupted, as this can lead to a neglect of the needs of the community. As it has been suggested that the principle contribution to peace of grassroots leaders lies in their ability to address the community’s needs, any intervention that will decrease their potential to do so can threaten sustainable peace:

“Our proposition is that only through a methodology which takes serious account of the knowledge, experience and agency of those most affected by urban violence, can the claims of a citizen-centred, social urbanism model of security be effectively scrutinised and improved”

(Colak & Pearce, 2015: p199)

80
The construction of megaprojects, in the larger picture of city branding and economic development, might be inevitable, but (small) changes in their implementation and communication mechanisms, that allow for real participation and inclusion, might contribute to larger positive changes in the targeted areas and might ultimately support sustainable peace at the local level. Considering that, after the signing of the bilateral ceasefire in Havana, Colombia is now in a period of transition, there are both opportunities and possible pitfalls in a time of ‘post-agreement’. This essay has argued that looking beyond formal negotiations and top-level agreements, there is a need to incorporate local peacebuilding practices, especially when the most marginalized are still dealing with threats of both direct and structural violence in their everyday life, but may be obscured or neglected as a result of the ‘apparent calm’ that has been generated. I argue that grassroots leaders can play a key role in addressing the needs of the communities most affected by violence and can offer a starting point for the creation of sustainable peace, as they are able to identify some of the most important problems and root-causes of conflict that may have led to violence in the first place.


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## APPENDIX 1: PEACE BUILDERS- AND SPOILERS

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<th>Peace Builders</th>
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<td><strong>Values</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Envision an attractive peaceful future for all who want to cooperate</td>
<td>Exclusive depiction of future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depicture future as non-violent, inclusive and win-win</td>
<td>Privileges for some at the expense of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not want to mislead their audience with vague future perspectives</td>
<td>Win-lose situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present a positive image of peace, not merely negation of present state of affairs (look for sustainable peace)</td>
<td>Tend to define peace as the absence of the threat of violence. Violence is defined as the absence of war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regard peace as ongoing process</td>
<td>Perceive peace as the result of imposing certain values at the expense of other values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analytic style</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make an effort to grasp a problem fully</td>
<td>Analyse the future for possible future threats to own power or interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will not manipulate or censor information</td>
<td>Tend to define challenges in a selective way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do everything to identify and get a full understanding of the challenge</td>
<td>Tend to be mesmerized by the past and the problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to ask for and confront brutal facts</td>
<td>Try to exploit weaknesses in order to strengthen their power base</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look ahead with critical vision</td>
<td>Tend to frame the conflict in an adversarial way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not only look for details, but see the bigger picture</td>
<td>Tend to blame the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able to make an appreciative inquiry of what still works in society; not only focused on weaknesses and problems, but also look for actual and potential strengths</td>
<td>Polarize the conflict in &quot;we versus them&quot; thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of the risks of group think; therefore also listens to and protects dissent voices</td>
<td>Attribute negative behaviour to other party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instead of blaming the other, assume responsibility for changing the situation (self-awareness)</td>
<td>Stereotype the other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand that peace building comprehends efforts in different domains and layers within society</td>
<td>Show low level of analytic empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will support initiatives in other sectors and set up networks with other leaders</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Willing to compromise</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change behaviour</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay attention to the stress a conflict or a transformation process arouses in the population</td>
<td>Do not make a comprehensive analyses of the adaptive challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insure to maintain disciplined attention on the peace process and avoid getting astray on unconstructive side paths</td>
<td>Manipulate fear and stress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return responsibility to the people who are best suited to deal with the problem (empowers them)</td>
<td>Elicit negative emotions, particularly a mix of fear and anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While the use of violence may not be disregarded totally, peace builders will agree that a solution for conflict will never come from a military victory over the other party</td>
<td>Make use of distraction that prevent people from dealing with the challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer evolution over revolution</td>
<td>Give little responsibilities back to the people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation and personality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage: they are courageous men and women, encouraging other people.</td>
<td>The prime drivers of their behaviour are negative motivations, which are turned into destructive policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humility: they demonstrate a compelling humility, shun public adulation and are never boastful. When successful, they tend to apportion credit to other people.</td>
<td>Some spoilers have courage, some spoil the process because of a lack of courage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal integrity: being congruent and true to one’s values.</td>
<td>Tend to build a personality culture and claim all the credits for themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of integrity.</td>
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</table>

Source: Reychler & Stellamans (2015)
APPENDIX 2: TRANSPARENCY DOCUMENT

The table below contains all the respondents that participated in the investigation. GRO = Grassroots Organizational, GRFG = Grassroots Formal Governmental, GRI = Grassroots informal. Names have been removed for privacy reasons.

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APPENDIX 3 : LIST OF ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS

Q1) Hay comunas, como la 8 y la 13, que se mantienen en picos de violencia muy alto. ¿Qué es lo que ha pasado con el tema de los indicadores de homicidios? P.e. en Medellín este alcalde en particular, alardea mucho de que tiene los índices de homicidios más bajos desde hace 30 años. Pero él no habla de que se incrementó la desaparición forzada. ¿Eso qué me dice a mí? Que no están dejando el muerto en la calle, sino que están desapareciendo la evidencia. (40)

Q2) Aunque hay una paz, la seguridad, porque se le dio una fortaleza a los actores (armados) por el descuido de la fuerza pública, sigue siendo un problema y el problema de nosotros es que no creemos en la fuerza pública. (7)

Q3) Aparte de eso, han ido adquiriendo reconocimiento, un legitimamiento, que la misma gente les ha dado. Vos cuando no pagas el arriendo, yo no voy a ningún policía, ni a una comisaría de familia o donde sea para que me ayuden a conciliar ese pleito que yo llevo, sino que yo voy donde los pelados del barrio. Entonces yo voy donde los pelados del barrio; Johannes no me ha pagado el arriendo, me debe 3 meses. A los 5-10 minutos, te están tocando la puerta, venga, usted le debe 3 meses de arriendo a *******, tienes hasta el lunes 4pm para pagararlo, y si no los ha pagado, usted sufre las consecuencias. Que van desde que te saquen las cosas a la calle hasta que te hagan algo. Entonces esas familias son los que tienen que salir del territorio. O usted y una pareja, un compañero cascó a la esposa, ella no va a la policía ni a la alcaldía para poner la denuncia, sino al pelado del barrio. (4)

Q4) Desde muy temprano empiezan a decir “yo no quiero estudiar”. También existen bandas, hay muchas tentaciones. Mucha gente sale a trabajar (rebusque) y los hijos se quedan solos, ahí puede pasar de todo. Además, no existe una motivación, muchas veces en bachillerato la gente sale y dice “yo no quiero estudiar, no, ¿para qué?”. Y hay una parte cultural, la gente viene del campo, y allá el estudio no fue importante. Cuando van cumpliendo los 13/14 años, están más motivados para que produzcan plata, para ayudar a la casa. En estos sectores empiezan a cargar ladrillos, materiales de construcción (más que todo niños varones). La gente que está movilizando drogas y armas, también los encargan con cosas y nadie pregunta de dónde viene la plata, eso es normal. El ambiente, por lo general, la plata fácil, que viene del narcotráfico, es algo generalizado, es algo que está en la cultura. Ellos ven que los que salen adelante y que tienen el carro, la moto, los que mandan, no estudiaron y son los que tienen el poder, y la gente los respeta. Ahí está. Ese siglo es cultural dentro de esa historia de la escolarización. Se les llaman ‘carritos’ (los niños) transportan (armas o drogas) y reciben monedas (no creo ni siquiera billetes). De esa manera se van reclutando también para las bandas y se van metiendo en el vicio. (31)

Q5) Una paz, es la paz de la burguesía y otra cosa es la paz del pueblo y nunca van a ser reconciliables. La paz de la burguesía es, que pueda haber inversión extranjera, que se puedan mover libremente por las carreteras, que no los secuestren, que no paguen vacunas. Pero la paz para nosotros, es una paz con un apellido, es una paz con justicia social. La paz no es solamente el callamiento de los fusiles de las FARC y el ELN, sino que la paz, va con la justicia social. Es decir, ¿cómo va a haber paz sin vivienda digna?, ¿cómo puede haber paz sin servicios públicos de acueducto y alcantarillado?, ¿cómo puede haber paz sin mitigación del riesgo?, ¿cómo puede haber paz si la gente se está muriendo de hambre?, ¿cómo puede haber paz donde los transportes públicos son más caros que un almuerzo?, ¿cómo puede haber paz donde la gente está insegura porque los combos son los que denominan el territorio?, ¿entonces de qué paz estamos hablando? (22)

Q6) Si yo soy paz y hay paz en la casa, va a haber paz en Colombia. (9)

Q7) La paz la construye cada uno de nosotros y de cada acción que realice, cada cambio, algo mínimo o sencillo, por ejemplo: subirse al bus y decir "buenas tardes" y con esto tan básico cada uno está construyendo paz. (13)
Q8) Toda la vida va haber conflicto, y yo creo que gracias al conflicto la humanidad es creativa. El problema es cuando empezamos a ser intolerantes, cuando los problemas empiezan a solucionarse de la manera menos adecuadas (violentando al otro). Entonces yo creo que la paz es la forma que resuelve los problemas de manera tranquila y sana. (35)

Q9) Para mí los derechos humanos es todo, es geología, antropología, todo. Y siempre he pensado que cuando a uno le quitan los derechos humanos... tú eres un ser con derecho a la vida, la vida digna, la vivienda, salud, educación. Pero inmediatamente sales del útero materno, ya empiezan con la desigualdad y la discriminación, al restringirte los derechos. [...] ¿De qué paz estamos hablando si no nos respetan los derechos naturales, sociales, económicos y políticos (que son derechos humanos)? ¿De qué paz estamos hablando? (32)

Q10) ¿Cómo va a hablar una mamá o un papá a su familia de paz, cuando no tiene qué comer? (33)

Q11) ¿Qué paz vamos a conseguir si no hay empleo? Si no hay alimentos, si no hay vivienda, si la educación es deficiente. (7)

Q12) Con hambre la paz es difícil (11)

Q13) No hay paz cuando no tienes agua (38)

Q14) Es muy difícil que un joven de la Sierra encuentre trabajo. Ese estigma lo he criticado en público, que piensan que todas las jóvenes de la 8 son prostitutas, o que todos los jóvenes son sicarios, eso es mentira. (35)

Q15) ¿Qué paz vamos a conseguir si no hay empleo? (7)

Q16) Acabaron con la guerrilla, bien ¿y qué? Ya la violencia entró a los barrios porque es muy bajo el sueldo, muy bajo el recurso, entonces ¿no va haber paz? Van a llegar más personas que van a sembrar guerra. ¿Por qué? porque no tienen plata, no tienen un apoyo estable, entonces siempre va a haber eso, ¿cierto? Puede existir, pero lo hacemos entre los seres humanos. (25)

Q17) No decimos “estamos haciendo esto para construir la paz” sino que llevamos años y años de estar construyendo la paz. [...] ¿La paz la estamos construyendo en qué sentido? Desde las organizaciones estamos apostando al tema de la formación, al tema familiar, al tema tan importante que se nos olvida a veces; el empoderamiento político. Le estamos apostando a la construcción de nuestros territorios, le estamos apostando a trabajar colectivamente, en redes. La C8 lleva años y años trabajando diferentes estrategias. ¿Frente a qué? Frente al tema de la defensa de los derechos humanos. Y no hay necesidad de estar diciendo “estamos construyendo la paz”. Antes de que se sentaran en los diálogos, nosotros ya estábamos construyendo paz. (33)

Q18) Afortunadamente no murió por las balas que silencian las palabras de las personas inconformes y que el establecimiento no quiere escuchar y digo afortunadamente, porque en mi ciudad se acostumbró a justificar las muertes violentas, como si se validara que alguien que piense distinto a lo “establecido” merece que los criminales lo callen. Román (2016)

Q19) Nos hemos ido a parques, hemos colgado toldos donde cogemos y vacunamos y hacemos una campaña grande "venga yo lo vacuno contra la homofobia, tomáte estas pastillas para que te vacunes contra la homofobia". (23)

Q20) Vos ya tienes mucha gente a tu favor, y si ellos no quieren que tengas esa posición, te pueden hacer daño. Porque nosotros tenemos una mentalidad diferente a la de ellos, porque nosotros queremos sacar a los jóvenes de la
drogadicción y para ellos eso es malos. Ellos viven de la drogadicción, entonces si los jóvenes no caen en eso, estamos acabando con su negocio. (25)

Q21) El Jardín Circunvalar puede ser muy bueno, pero no es nuestra prioridad. Uno dice: es más prioritario un camino para un turista, o un camino para que un niño no tenga que ensuciarse los zapatos para ir a la escuela, que un trabajador no tenga que ensuciarse los zapatos para ir a trabajar, o una madre cuando sale de la casa para ir a hacer el mercado. Me parece indignante, o sea, el verdadero camino de la vida debería ser el camino de la vida digna, que son los caminos por donde pasan los habitantes día a día, noche a noche, para acceder a la ciudad, para acceder al barrio, e inviertan 45.000.000.000, que podrían ser invertidas en otras necesidades básicas insatisfechas, y no solo en el turismo, y en vender la ciudad. Entonces eso es uno de los principales planteamientos. (22)

Q22) También sé del fenómeno que genera la inversión en espacios frente al campo de reacción de temas violentos.. no sé.. Sabemos que una inversión en el territorio puede repregar un poco las expresiones violentas y la inseguridad. Tu pones una obra acá y los actores de inseguridad no se meten ahí. Momentáneamente puede tener ese efecto. Probablemente paz… pero con el tiempo se adaptan. Probablemente en algún momento ese actor armado puede volver a ocupar los espacios. Ahí tendrían que hacerse unas medidas. Por ejemplo en Parque Berrio, cuando estaba la alcaldía por esos lados se construyó un espacio de ‘Cultura Metro’, pero últimamente vemos que hay unas prácticas de subastas, de robo. Las dinámicas se van adaptando al espacio. (35)

Q23) En los procesos de formaciones también enseñamos temas de reconocer al otro, de respetar al otro, también hay un tema social que no es solamente para hacer, sino para ser. Ahí nace un tema importante de la misma gente para reconocerse y reconocer quienes son las personas capaces de llevarlos adelante. (47)

Q24) Cuando encontramos que tenemos que empezar desde cero con la comunidad, lo primero que nos exigen es eso, que se genera en la comunidad procesos para ser sostenibles. Entre eso está la formación. Por ejemplo, toda la mano de obra ha sido mano de obra formada por el proyecto con gente de la comunidad. En ese proceso también son claves los nuevos liderazgos; no sólo contactar a las organizaciones que ya hay en el territorio, como las JAC, las JAL, las organizaciones juveniles y demás, sino también encontrar a partir de esos procesos de formación, quiénes son esas personas de la comunidad que tienen esas características para ser líderes. Eso también es súper clave, súper clave en el desarrollo de nuevos líderes, además de los que ya existen, para desarrollar esos procesos. (41)

Q25) Llevamos más de 10 años elaborando propuestas y proyectos de planes de desarrollo local, y territorial a los gobernantes locales. Sin embargo, el gobierno no ha querido escuchar a la gente, y creemos que si estas organizaciones de paz no "aterrizan" con un cambio de actitud por los gobernantes, vamos a seguir en la misma situación, es como nosotros siempre lo hemos dicho "¿Por qué el gobierno colombiano se acostumbró a negociar con los actores armados, y no con la población civil organizada, que pacíficamente está reclamando sus derechos?" (12)

Q26) Han tratado de tener informados a los líderes, pero es una información la que conviene contar. También pasó con el JC. No de construir juntos, escuchar opiniones. (18)
APPENDIX 4: A HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

To elaborately describe and explain the precedents, history and current state of the armed conflict in Colombia goes beyond the scope of this research. Hence, it is not my intention—and beyond my ability—to do justice to more than half a century of history that has marked probably all areas of Colombian society. Being the longest ongoing armed conflict in the Western hemisphere, it has become increasingly complex in many ways; the conflict-areas, involved actors and their strategies and objectives have changed uncountable times and continue to change. What follows is an attempt to describe the origins and development of the Colombian social and armed conflict.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE ARMED CONFLICT

Although there is no official date that marks the beginning of the armed conflict in Colombia, the researchers of the Colombian National Centre of Historical Memory distinguish four periods of ‘evolution’ of the conflict. In their work ‘¡Basta Ya!’—elsewhere referred to as “probably the most elaborate report on the aggravation of the war” (Semana, 2015)—the researchers give an historical overview of the period between 1946 and 2012, divided into the following four stages:

- **1958-1982:** Transition from political violence between liberals and conservatives to the rise of subversive violence, characterized by the growth of guerrilla movements.
- **1982-1996:** Politicization and territorial and military expansion of guerrilla groups and the rise of paramilitary groups, the partial crisis and collapse of the State, the irruption and spreading of drug-trafficking, the climax and decline of the Cold War, the new Political Constitutions of 1991 and the democratic reforms and peace-processes with partial and ambiguous results.
- **1996-2005:** Intensification of the armed conflict, marked by the simultaneous expansion of guerrilla and paramilitary groups, the crisis and redrafting of the State and the radicalization of the public opinion towards a military solution for the conflict. The war on drugs, and its interweavement with the war on terrorism that renewed international pressure and aggravated the conflict, coupled with an expansion of drug-trafficking and changes in its organization.
- **2005-2012:** Rearrangement of the armed conflict. Characterized by a military offensive, resulting in the most efficient counterinsurgent actions until then, weakening but not defeating the guerrilla. Simultaneously, negotiations to demobilize the paramilitary groups failed, leading to a rearment and violent internal rearrangement between fragmented structures that are heavily permeated by drug-trafficking, more orientated toward criminal actions and more defiant towards the State.

Rather than regarding these four periods as strictly demarcated stages of the conflict, it is worth noticing some of the ‘binding factors’, that have led to a seemingly endless prolongation of the conflict. While there are different theories about the causes of the armed conflict, there is a wide consensus on the idea that 1) the distribution of (agricultural) land, 2) the permeation of drug-trafficking in the armed conflict and 3) a lack of state legitimacy and control have contributed to a large extent to the continuation of the conflict.
The following part will discuss the above mentioned time-laps. However, for the sake of brevity, the four periods will not be discussed separately and only the most relevant aspects for this research will be given attention.

Precedents and Rise of the first Guerrilla Movements (1946-1982)

The so called 'La Violencia' period, between 1946 and 1958, inaugurated what would become more than half a century of violent confrontations in Colombia. During La Violencia, the two dominant political parties, the Liberal and Conservative party, got involved in a violent struggle over political power. After the conservative leader Laureno Gómez became president in 1950, open armed confrontations between the two parties broke loose. With support of the army and catholic church, the Conservative party tried to destroy any expression of liberal and communist discourses. This resulted in the violent oppression of peasant movements, labourers and urban 'popular' movements and the political radicalization reached a crucial point on April 9, 1948 when the liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán was assassinated. What followed was a period of massacres, violent brutality, sex crimes, at least 16,219 deaths (without counting the collective massacres and victims of the army's regular forces) 321,621 exiles and the abandonment of 40,176 properties (GMH, 2013).

The first noticeable pacification process took place under the newly installed President of the Republic, general Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957). He offered amnesty to the liberal guerrillas and peasant 'autodefensas', upon which the first group agreed while the latter refused. The military response of the President to the refusing autodefensas may have contributed to the transformation of some of those groups into the first revolutionary guerrillas in the country. After a political pact between the leaders of the Conservative and Liberal parties, the so called Frente Nacional (1958-1974) – meant to reduce animosities between the two groups – attention shifted towards the 'containment' of communism as a rising threat in the face of the Cold War. During this same period, two general interpretations of 'La Violencia' could be identified: some considered the violence to be a result of common crime and the 'pathology' of the working classes, while others saw it as a consequence of a rural issue that was never settled, accompanied by high levels of political and economic inequality (GMH, 2013).

It was already at this stage that political fragmentation – between and within political parties, national and regional factions of those parties and between political parties and the evolving guerrillas – complicated the attempts to pacify the country. In 1959 President Alberto Lleras Camargo called for an 'intense pacification campaign' based on repressive measures and accompanied by social and economic programmes. Nevertheless, due to a lack of consensus on the social and economic roots of the conflict; the difficulties of responding to the necessities of the victims; strong criticism towards the rehabilitation strategies for the affected areas and, ultimately, the urge of local and regional authorities to maintain public order, the pacification strategy brought little change in the ongoing conflict. After receiving help from the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations (1959-1963), president Lleras Camargo pushed for economic development, democratic reforms and agricultural reforms, but despite these efforts, the agricultural crisis –
expressed in extreme inequality in the distribution of land and the extreme poverty of the rural population—was far from resolved.

It was in this context, between 1950 and 1960 that a part of the former communist *autodefensas* evolved into the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*; or better known as the FARC (GMH, 2013). Initially, this peasant movement of *autodefensas* was meant to defend the territorial interests of the rural population and to defend the victims that were displaced, as a result of the conflict between liberals and conservatives. Almost simultaneously with the foundation of the FARC (formally between 1964 and 1966) two other major guerrilla armies were founded; the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) in 1962 and the Ejército Popular de Liberación (EPL) in 1967 (GMH, 2013). While the three guerrilla groups had different military, political and social strategies, objectives and discourses, a common feature was their presence in and their focus on the rural areas in the country.

The M-19 guerrilla movement (founded in 1974) however, had a clear urban strategy. Fed by an economic crisis, outrageous inflation, a rapidly descending legitimacy of the State and the resulting growing social discontent among the urban population, the M-19 gained momentum and started to invade the urban territory, starting with Bogotá. Meanwhile, discontents in the rural areas were also growing, due to the development model introduced by the Pastrana (1970-1974) Government, that privileged capitalist, subsidized and protected large scale production as means to increase external competitively, clearly in favour of the *latifundistas* and increasingly excluding the small landowners; once again, the problems related to the distribution of land were all but resolved.

According to the investigators of the GMH (2013) the growing frustrations in both the rural and urban context gave way to the rapid increase in illegal activities, most importantly; the emerging drug industry. Marihuana cultivations replaced the coffee fields in areas such as La Guajira and the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta and cocaine-processing laboratories turned up in different places to process the cocaine coming from countries such as Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. Not long after, the penetration of the drug industry in the political arena would start to become visible.

Meanwhile, the three biggest guerrilla movements of that time were not sitting still, on the contrary; inspired by Maoism (EPL), the Cuban revolution (ELN) and the Sandinista revolution (FARC) they adjusted their strategies and especially the FARC continued to expand its territory at a fast rate. As a result, the Government of Turbay Ayala (1978-1982) responded with a military strategy to eliminate the 'internal enemy' and the anti-communist discourse served to justify the cruel repressive measures used by the army. Growing fear for the expanding communist movement led to a change in the strategy of the State and army; in different parts of the country new groups of *autodefensas* emerged, composed by landowners in the rural areas. In contrast to the above mentioned *autodefensas*, these groups were supported by the army with weapons, ammunition, training and assistance during operations, all with one goal: to eliminate the insurgent (communist) enemy (Ronderos, 2014A; GMH, 2013).
After the M-19 had kidnapped the sister of the notorious Ochoa Vázquez brothers (members of the Medellín Cartel) a collaborative effort between retired military officials, cattle ranchers, drug-traffickers and police resulted in the creation of MAS, or “Death to Kidnappers” (Hylton, 2006). Although the organization formally stopped to exist after Martha Nieves (the kidnapped sister) was let free, other paramilitary and even army forces kept on using the name of MAS in a generic way, in order to cover up some of the cruel acts in their persecution of left-wing militants and social leaders (GMH, 2013). One year after the creation of MAS, the Association of Middle Magdalena Ranchers and Farmers (ACDEGAM) was created with the aim of supporting the organization in logistics and public relations issues. Supported by the military with intelligence, weapons, ammunition and assistance and economically by the drug-traffickers, MAS was used to get rid of any type of (communist) opposition that was disturbing the interested stakeholders of the organization. Ties between drug-traffickers, rural elites and the military were starting to grow stronger, yet this was only the beginning of the penetration of the drug industry in the armed conflict (Ronderos, 2014A & B).

**Rise and expansion of paramilitaries**

The newly elected president Belisario Betancur (1982-1986) was convinced to start a new peace process and to open a dialogue with the guerrilla's. However, the recently consolidated Union Patriótica party (1985) –founded as a legal political platform by several guerrilla movements– generated large amounts of distrust amongst local and regional elites; as they feared the organization would interfere with their political interests. The army, on its turn, saw the UP as a strategy of the guerrillas to take over political power via political routes. Meanwhile the FARC were still expanding their territory, which again increased the distrust of local and regional elites, who felt abandoned by their government (that was not taking the communist threat seriously) and therefore often decided to support the paramilitary groups instead. Partly due to the ongoing territorial expansion of the FARC, paralleled with extortions and kidnappings and the decision of the M-19 to take over the Justicial Palace, the dialogues that should have led to peace were starting to fail. Adding to this unrest was the systematic elimination of the UP members; a strategy of eradication of the political opponent that would last the entire conflict.89

Due to the failed peace process, the succeeding president, Virgilio Barco (1986-1990) was severely limited in his capacity to change the ties. A new land reform and various democratic reforms were planned to support his depoliticized, institutionalized and technocratic peace process; aimed at establishing the Government's legitimacy and taking away the social basis of the guerrilla. However, the lack of support for his plans led to a further degrading of the State's legitimacy and hindered also this new approach to attain peace.

89 The assassination of presidential candidates –such as Jaime Pardo Leal and (1987) and Bernardo Jaramillo Ossa (1990) from the UP and Carlos Pizarro Leongómez (1990), the recently demobilized presidential candidate from the M-19– were symbolic in the sense that they portrayed the unwillingness of the established elites, paramilitary groups, the army and drug-lords to let anyone they disliked enter the political arena.
The 'boom' of the paramilitary phenomenon was made possible by the shared interest of the economic elites, drug-traffickers and the army, who all saw their interest threatened by the ever expanding guerrilla movements. The growing power of the drug-traffickers resulted in new concentration of land –needed for the production and processing of coca-leaves– in the hands of few owners; again aggravating the rural-agricultural problematics (Ronceros, 2014B; GMH, 2013). A side effect of the growing drug industry was the corruptive effect on politicians and the cultural effects on the population that saw possibilities of a rapid increase in social and economic status made possible by the 'easy money' (Lamb, 2010; Baird, 2011).

“A keen observer of our reality has said that the entire Colombian society is drugged. It is not addicted to cocaine –of which the consumption is not alarming in my country–, but to a much more pernicious drug: easy money.”

Gabriel García Marquez (in Labrousse, 1993: p275)

New Constitution of 1991
The intensification of the conflict and the resulting aggravating socio-political and economic situation of the population led to heavy protests and calls for a profound institutional change. The Barco administration reacted by proposing a political and constitutional reform, which paved the way for different actors, such as academics, delegates of political parties and NGOs, to voice their concerns and call for peace in a proposal for a new constitution. The new Political Constitution of Colombia was approved in December 1990 and came into force July 4 of 1991, during the Gaviria administration (1990-1994). This new Constitution gave hope for a peaceful future, as it was based on peaceful coexistence, a Social State based on the rule of law, the strengthening of participative democracy and the recognition and guarantees of Human Rights within a divers, multi-ethnic and multicultural society (GMH, 2013).

Nevertheless, the new Constitution, that promoted the redistribution of land and political and economic decentralization, also created new tensions. At that time, the national economy was starting to open up and become more export-orientated. Interest of large-scale producers clashed with the land claims of different ethnic groups and displaced people, empowered by the new Constitution. This led to new forms of aggression of illegal armed groups in the rural areas towards its population, which was fuelled by the economic interests of mining companies, energy companies, cattle-farmers and drug-traffickers. Secondly, the decentralization politics, that gave local governments more political and economic power, had the unintended effect of intensifying the interference of armed groups in local and regional politics. By making use of the political scattering process, the illegal armed groups captured new municipal budgets to finance their war, or to invest it in projects that would support their political legitimacy; thereby consolidating their influence on the population and territorial control (GMH, 2013).
**Escalation of the conflict**

Between 1996 and 2005, the Colombian armed conflict reached its peak in both geographical extension and the levels of victimization. The massive numbers of forced displacement turned Colombia into the country with the highest number of refugees, after Sudan. The country had already become the biggest producer and exporter of cocaine and the Government had entered in another crisis in 1994, after president Ernesto Samper’s (1994-1998) campaign was found to be financed by drug money. Perhaps due to the weak legitimacy of the State, no solid attempts were made to support peace in the country during this Government.

Instead of creating a platform for negotiation with the guerrilla groups, the Government delegated power to a new type of *autodefensas* through a new legal framework in 1994. These so called “Convivir” were often run by well-known paramilitary commanders. In 1997 there existed 414 Convivir in Colombia, which would regularly violate Human Rights and worked together with both drug-traffickers and other existing paramilitary groups. In that same year, different paramilitary organizations merged into the *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (AUC). The creation of this organization, which defined itself as a 'anti-subversive political-military movement' marked the beginning of what would become the biggest expansion of the paramilitary influence so far. Not only did they take over territorial control by force, they inserted themselves into local, regional and even national politics. It was estimated that they exerted control over a third part of the congress (through which they could influence the presidential elections) in 2002 and controlled 250 municipalities and 9 governorates during the elections of 2003. The new political anti-subversive discourse, spread by the media campaign of Carlos Castaño (general commander of the AUC until 2001), served to legitimize their actions and to gain support from the population; that had grown more hostile to guerrillas after the failed peace processes.

While the 80s had been the decade of the Guerrillas, the 90s and the beginning of the new century would become the epoch of the paramilitary. Nevertheless, after various failed peace processes with the FARC and ELN (1991-1992 and 1999) these guerrillas also intensified their kidnappings and made increased use of economic resources attained through drug-trafficking. Especially in the Southern and Eastern areas of the country they were able to consolidate their power. The FARC, for example, that counted 5,800 combatants in 1991, quadrupled this number in 2002 when they had 28,000 combatants in 60% of the countries municipalities. As both the paramilitary and the guerrilla groups were strengthening their political and military strategies, heavy confrontations between armed groups reached a point of unprecedented intensity, leaving no space for political negotiations for promoting peace.

**Demobilization of paramilitaries**

After the failed peace negotiations of the Pastrana administration (1998-2002) the public opinion was ever less in favour of a negotiated way out of the armed conflict. The new president, Álvaro Uribe, made some drastic changes in his approach to pacify the country. Instead of negotiating with the guerrillas, he opened a new political, military and judicial offensive in order to defeat them. While he managed to weaken the
guerrilla structures in an unprecedented way, the costs of his decisions were high. With the introduction of extraordinary taxes, he tripled the military expenditures, which may have contributed to his success of expelling the guerrillas from Bogotá and Medellín (Semana, 2010). But more alarmingly, Uribe's eager to defeat the guerrillas also resulted into serious criminal behaviour amongst the military, that would kill innocent civilians and dress them up as guerrilla fighters in order to pretend as if they had defeated them in battle: the so-called falsos positivos. Until today, about 5.700 of these cases have been reported (Verdadabierta, 2015).

Nevertheless, the most surprising strategy of Uribe, was to start peace negotiations with the paramilitary groups. The only requisite for these groups to take part of the process was a unilateral ceasefire. Up to that moment, the government was not allowed to negotiate with armed groups that had not originated out of political motives90. Carlos Castaño, however, was already aware of this long before the start of the negotiations and had given up his military command in turn for the political command of the AUC; the most influential and biggest organizational structure of paramilitary groups ever seen in Colombia (Teresa Ronderos, 2014D). However, the peace process with the AUC have caused serious controversy as the rights of the victims were not recognized and almost a total impunity would be given to those that participated in the program (GMH, 2013). Moreover, the terms on which the government was negotiating with the paramilitary commanders were very much in favour of the last ones, who “understood that the negotiations were a way of reaping the fruits of their long criminal career, without having to pay for it with years of prison” (Teresa Ronderos, 2014D: p352).

Although the demobilization of some of the highest paramilitary commanders initially resulted in a strong decline in homicides and massacres, it soon turned out that internal differences and fragmentation within different branches of the paramilitary groups would not allow for a complete demobilization of paramilitary forces. Carlos Castaño, for example, was murdered in 2004 by the new commanders of the AUC (including his own brother Vicente Castaño) for openly denouncing the co-optation of the paramilitary by drug-traffickers; something he had (however rather recently) disapproved of (GMH, 2013; Teresa Ronderos, 2014D). With cyclical increases in violence, the rearmament of the (partially) demobilized paramilitary groups led to a new generation of illegal armed groups, that showed similar characteristics in both political and economic structure. And although there was never ‘one’ paramilitary movement, the further fragmentation of paramilitary groups after the demobilization process has certainly not made it any easier to understand the current structures of illegal armed groups in the country.

The preceding sum-up of events may appear overwhelming to the reader’s eye at first sight, however, it is exactly this immensely complicated history of events that has made it so difficult to attain peace in Colombia. The issues related to the distribution of land that have never been solved, the role of drug-trafficking in the armed conflict, the corruption amongst politicians and institutions and the overall fragmentation of the conflict have all contributed to the prolonging of the conflict. And while the new

90 23 dic 2002 Ley 782 allowed the government to negotiate with illegal armed groups that had not shown any political character beforehand. (Teresa Ronderos, 2014; p358).
Constitution of 1991 offered a glimpse of hope for a more democratic country, in which the rule of law would be obeyed, it seems that there still much work to do to put it in practice. While this chapter has made no direct reference to Medellín, all these above mentioned factors have their own important implications for the city. Understanding violence and peace in Medellín, is to understand the meaning of violence and peace in Colombia first.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES


