Civil society and peacebuilding
in Colombia
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¡Gracias!

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Maria Erlingsson
Abstract

There is a growing interest in how to build sustainable peace in the world, preventing countries from relapsing into violent conflict. Recognising that there are several important peacebuilding actors, this Master thesis takes its point of departure in local civil society actors as a peacebuilding force. For this interpretative qualitative study, Colombia is used as the case of investigation. This is as a result of a renewed interest in the country due to the peace negotiations that were initiated between the Colombian government and the largest guerrilla group in the country, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), in October 2012. Interviews with diverse civil society actors in Colombia were used as primary data, and in addition literary reviews of primary and secondary information have been added to the material.

There are diverging views of what peacebuilding means, and one of the research objectives of this thesis is to draw from previous research to build a general framework for what peacebuilding wants to achieve, i.e., identify the international peacebuilding objectives. The second research objective is to compare the seven activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as described by Paffenholz and Spurk in the Comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding, to see how the work of civil society in Colombia compares to the international peacebuilding objectives.

The research shows that all seven activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding: protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialisation, social cohesion, facilitation/mediation, and service delivery, are performed by the interviewed civil society actors. When the activities and functions are compared to the international peacebuilding objectives, the research demonstrates that the peacebuilding activities carried out by civil society adds to the efforts performed by other actors to achieve stability and security, restore political and judicial institutions, address socio-economic dimensions and transform relations. Acknowledging the particular regional dynamics of the Colombian internal armed conflict and recognising the need for local ownership for peacebuilding to be successful, the conclusion drawn is that peacebuilding in Colombia has to be attained at the local, regional as well as national level. The polarisation and distrust between civil society and the state hinders a joint effort to build peace in Colombia, which further complicates the prospects for attaining sustainable peace in the country. Based on the understanding gained from the conducted research, this thesis affirms that peacebuilding must be adapted to the local realities and requires active participation from both government and civil society.

Keywords: Colombia, peace, peacebuilding, civil society
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACR</td>
<td>Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración / Colombian Agency for Reintegration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia / United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINEP</td>
<td>Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular / Programa por la Paz / Centre for Research and Popular Education / Peace Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELN</td>
<td>Ejército de Liberación Nacional / National Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPL</td>
<td>Ejército Popular Liberación / Popular Liberation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESPERE</td>
<td>Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación / Schools for Forgiveness and Reconciliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARC</td>
<td>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia / Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISCH</td>
<td>Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó / Interethnic Solidarity Forum of Chocó</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRECO</td>
<td>Gestores de Reconciliación y Convivencia / Managers for Reconciliation and Coexistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally displaced persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSTAPAZ</td>
<td>Asociación Cristiana Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolental / Christian Mennonite Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M-19</td>
<td>Movimiento 19 de Abril / 19 April Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAQL</td>
<td>Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame / Armed Movement Quintín Lame</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOVICE</td>
<td>Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímines del Estado / National Movement of Victims of State Crimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFP</td>
<td>Organización Femenina Popular / Feminine Popular Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONIC</td>
<td>Organización Nacional de Indígenas de Colombia / Colombian National Indigenous Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRT</td>
<td>Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores / Workers’ Revolutionary Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REDEPAZ</td>
<td>Red Nacional de Iniciativas por la Paz y contra la Guerra / National Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sida</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem formulation

There is a growing acknowledgement that ending the world’s violent conflicts and wars and creating peace cannot only be achieved by Track I diplomatic efforts. Handling of international as well as internal armed conflicts and wars were long treated as top-led affairs where the leaders of the conflict parties, often with help from external actors such as other governments and the United Nations (UN), were to sit down at a negotiation table to end the violence. Peace was then assumed to “trickle-down” to the rest of the population (Lederach, 1997:44ff). Based on Galtung’s (1969) notion on negative and positive peace, from the 1970’s and onwards peace was no longer conceptualised as the sole absence of physical violence, but included a wider perspective of the termination of indirect or structural violence which is the base for justice and equal opportunities (Paffenholz, 2010a:45). Andy W. Knight (2003:241) defines peacebuilding as a “...complex and multidimensional exercise that encompasses tasks ranging from the disarming of warring factions to the rebuilding of political, economic, judicial and civil society institutions”, preventing a country from relapsing back into conflict. It is also recognised today that peacebuilding does not begin when the peace agreement between the warring parties is signed; rather there is a need for peacebuilding activities before, during as well as after armed conflict. In this sense peacebuilding can be seen as a process, not “a stage in time or a condition” (Lederach, 1997:20).

The changes in perspective of what peace entails and how to create sustainable peace to avoid countries falling back into vicious circles of violence has led to a significant rise in the interest of peacebuilding activities from the 1990’s and onwards. The creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding Fund in 2005 to support peacebuilding efforts in countries emerging from conflict can be seen in this light. The UN is today emphasising the importance of national ownership of peacebuilding processes to be able to reach successful results (UN, 2010:5f). The perception of possible peacebuilding actors has widened, from solely government and opposition leaders with help from external governmental and intergovernmental bodies, to include a broad range of other types of actors. “Today, an array of non-state actors such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), associations, religious entities, business and grassroots organisations, communities and individuals are increasingly involved in different peacebuilding activities,” emphasise Thania Paffenholz and Christopher Spurk (2006:18). The World Bank concluded in a report that there is now a general consensus on a global level that civil society is a central actor for creating sustainable peace. They maintain that “[t]he question in the international debate is no longer whether civil society has a role to play in peacebuilding, but how it best can realise its potential” (2006:1). Furthermore, research has shown that a higher level of participation by civil society can lead to a more long-lasting peace (Wanis St.-John & Kew, 2006; Bouvier, 2009:417).

Nevertheless, in her many publications on peacebuilding (see Paffenholz (ed.), 2010; Paffenholz, 2009; Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006), Paffenholz points out that there has been a lack of scientific and organised research to validate the idea of civil society’s peacebuilding
effect and efficiency. Together with Spurk, Paffenholz emphasises that “the mere existence of and support for civil society does not automatically lead to peacebuilding” (2006:1), and that the possible roles and functions of civil society in building sustainable peace must be further investigated. Even if more research has been conducted in recent years on civil society’s role in peacebuilding, for instance by Paffenholz (ed.) in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment* (2010) where eleven country case studies were carried out investigating the functions of civil society in peacebuilding, this field of study can still be seen as under-researched.

A highly relevant and topical peacebuilding opportunity can be found in one of the longest ongoing internal armed conflicts in the world: Colombia. As a result of the current peace negotiation that was initiated in October 2012 between the Colombian government and the largest guerrilla group in the country, FARC, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), there is now a renewed interest by national, as well as international actors, on how to best support the peace process. As Virginia M. Bouvier (2009:413) states, Colombia has a long history of several Track I led negotiations, which have all failed as the internal armed conflict still persists after more than half a century. To broaden the perspective of possible peacebuilding actors and their role and contributions to attain lasting peace is thus highly relevant.

1.2 Relevance

To further investigate peacebuilding in general and civil society’s role in peacebuilding in particular has not only a scientific purpose, but also a practical one as bilateral and multilateral international development agencies are also interested in learning more about how to best support peacebuilding efforts in the world’s conflict ridden countries. Michael Barnett et al. (2007:36) highlight that the support for peacebuilding activities so far has been more rhetorical than showing real investments: “[t]he danger, therefore, is that while peacebuilding looks highly supported on paper, in fact it receives little meaningful financial and political support relative to the costs of renewed conflict.” To investigate the many dimensions of peacebuilding and examine different aspects of building lasting peace is of interest for all, as the contrary is much more costly in human sufferings and economic terms.

National ownership and the role of civil society in building sustainable peace have been acknowledged, but civil society has also been viewed with scepticism by governmental officials and international donors. With an increased focus on demonstrating results in international development interventions, Paffenholz and Spurk (2006:19) highlight a growing unwillingness of donors in development aid to invest in peacebuilding efforts as many have not been able to demonstrate peacebuilding results within the timeframes set. The World Bank (2006:21) further underlines a growing scepticism towards the efficiency of civil society’s role and functions in peacebuilding. They stress that increased focus on funding to national, urban-based NGOs to channel support to peacebuilding has led to weakened support to local grassroots movements and other types of associations that have a larger member base and representativity, and could thus have more opportunities to bring about change. They also
call attention to the sometimes negative effect that International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) can have in peacebuilding by being culturally and contextually insensitive when implementing programs and projects. Furthermore, as many INGOs “mainly speak to the language and expectations of donors” (World Bank, 2006:21), there is also a risk of local needs being overlooked.

Hence, several critical points have been pointed out when it comes to civil society and peacebuilding, but civil society as a force for constructing peace has also been acknowledged. But as Paffenholz and Spurk (2006:1) emphasise, the mere support to civil society does not necessarily have a peacebuilding effect. Nevertheless, it can have positive results under the right circumstances. It is therefore relevant to further investigate the potential roles and functions of civil society in peacebuilding to understand how to it can contribute to building sustainable peace.

1.3 Previous research

Previous research has been conducted within the field of peacebuilding (for more information on the history and objectives of peacebuilding, see chapter 2.1 Conceptualising peacebuilding). The first scholar to use the term peacebuilding was Johan Galtung (1975), who in an essay differentiated between peacekeeping, peacemaking and peacebuilding. For him, peacebuilding is related to the concept of positive peace that takes into account underlying causes in its search for peace. The term peacebuilding was later also adopted by the UN in the 1992 report by the Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, An Agenda for Peace (1992). Paffenholz (2010a:45f) explains that the understanding of peacebuilding in the 1992 report was rather narrow as it concentrated on post-conflict peacebuilding to prevent a return to physical violence. In 1997, John Paul Lederach introduced his notion of peacebuilding and sustainable peace in Building Peace – Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies, with a focus on social relations and reconciliation as means to attain sustainable peace in war-torn societies. He advocates a long-term and holistic perspective, and contributed to a change in direction from a concentration on external to internal actors in peacebuilding. His work laid the foundation for a broader and more inclusive understanding of peacebuilding.

However, as Barnett et al. (2007) point out in Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?, peacebuilding is still approached and interpreted in different ways by different actors. Barnett et al. look at intergovernmental bodies and donor governments’ peacebuilding focuses, highlighting that some put more emphasis on security and military activities such as demobilisation processes and demining, while others emphasise socio-economic development, and yet others focus on the political dimension of increased democratisation, institution building and respect for human rights, etc. What becomes clear is that peacebuilding is a contested concept with various interpretations, leading to different strategies and practices of different peacebuilding actors.
As to civil society, it is also a contested concept that has been thoroughly investigated in different scientific disciplines, and in chapter 2.2 Conceptualising civil society I take a closer look at the understandings of civil society. However, civil society can be seen as different from the political sphere (state), the economic sphere (business) and the private sphere (family), and is made up by a wide range of actors such as NGO’s, associations, social movements, tribal organisations, churches, among other types of organisations (Spurk, 2010:6ff).

When it comes to civil society’s role in peacebuilding there are several studies made, but as Paffenholz has pointed out (see Paffenholz (ed.), 2010; Paffenholz, 2009; Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006), without a systematic approach that has been able to empirically confirm the effect and efficiency of civil society’s involvement in peacebuilding. Paffenholz argues that the normative perception of civil society as inherently the “good society” (2010a:43) at times obstruct an unbiased view of the same. In an attempt to fill the research gap on the role of civil society in peacebuilding, Paffenholz (ed.) (2010) evaluates eleven country case studies in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*. Having created an analytical framework for a more organised view of seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding; protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialisation, social cohesion, intermediation and facilitation, and service delivery, and by analysing their efficiency in relation to four different conflict phases – war, armed conflict, windows of opportunity for peace negotiations, and the period following large-scale violence – Paffenholz concludes that civil society can carry out a wide range of positive functions and activities related to peacebuilding in all phases. However, she maintains that civil society plays more of a supportive role in its effort as other actors such as the warring parties or important regional political actors have a more decisive role in comparison (2010b:425ff).

In terms of civil society and peacebuilding in Colombia, Angelika Rettberg is contributing to the ongoing debate on peacebuilding in the country in *Construcción de paz en Colombia* (2012). It is a topical publication that highlights many and complex aspects of peacebuilding in Colombia, from transitional justice, previous demobilisation processes, and economical considerations in peacebuilding, to the business sector’s and the international community’s role in the same. What cannot be found in this publication, however, is a perspective on the role of civil society in peacebuilding. Bouvier’s *Building Peace in a Time of War* (2009) also situates many aspects of the Colombian peacebuilding process on how to sustain peace in the midst of the internal armed conflict. The anthology deals with, among other themes, different civil society expressions of peacebuilding, for instance the role of the Catholic Church, indigenous movements or women’s movements, as well as overviews of previous peace negotiations. Nevertheless, there is no systematic study of the role of civil society in peacebuilding, but different initiatives are treated separately. Furthermore, the book was written at a time when the current peace negotiation seemed far away, therefore a more up-to-date view of civil society and peacebuilding in Colombia is desired.

Domestic Colombian investigations in the field of peace and peacebuilding have grown stronger in the last decade, and for instance CINEP/PPP, *Centro de Investigación y Educación*...
Popular/Programa por la Paz (Centre for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program), has a database on collective actions for peace from which they have published studies on the history of the peace movement in Colombia (CINEP, 2011). Also in academia the interest of peacebuilding has increased in Colombia, for instance Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano in Bogotá holds a peacebuilding observatory, gathering information on citizen’s initiatives for peace, legislation, public policy, and peace processes (Universidad Jorge Tadeo Lozano, 2013).

1.4 Research objectives and research questions

Based on the problem formulation and the presentation of previous research, the first research objective of this thesis is to draw from previous research to establish a general framework for what peacebuilding wants to achieve, i.e., identifying international peacebuilding objectives. The second objective is then to identify activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as described by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010), to determine in what ways civil society in Colombia through its work may contribute to the international peacebuilding objectives. This is of interest for internal as well as external actors working with peacebuilding, and the study can hopefully help to clarify how supporting civil society can contribute to building lasting peace in conflict-torn societies.

To achieve the research objectives, I am using Colombia as a case study, a highly recent case that has attracted a lot of attention in Colombia as well as abroad. To be able to fulfil the objectives of the study I have formulated three research questions that will help guide me in my research.

1. What activities is the Colombian civil society carrying out in terms of peacebuilding?
2. How do the activities of civil society in Colombia compare to the functions for civil society in peacebuilding, as outlined by Paffenholz and Spurk?
3. How do the activities and functions of civil society in Colombia compare to the international peacebuilding objectives?

1.5 Methodological and analytical research frame

This is a qualitative study where I am using an interpretative, abductive approach and treat the topic at hand as a case study. The material for the findings and analysis is gathered through the use of both primary and secondary data. Interviews with civil society representatives in Colombia along with text analysis of material presented on official web-pages (activities, reports, statements, declarations, etc.) of civil society actors have been used as basis for the findings. In addition, secondary data on peacebuilding, civil society, civil society in peacebuilding and Colombia have been processed.
1.6 Delimitations

Before proceeding further in the thesis some delimitations and clarifications are necessary to bring forward to the reader. Firstly, this study focuses on the activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding in Colombia, not in the peace negotiations as such. Peacebuilding is a broader and more complex process and can thus offer a wider understanding of the role of civil society in building sustainable peace in a country. Only focusing on the peace negotiation itself would have limited the scope of the research and would have not provided the answers I am looking for. Nor am I looking at the narrower notion of peacemaking either. Peacemaking aims at “...bring[ing] hostile parties to agreement by peaceful means” (UN, 1992:9), hence the concept is limited to bringing the conflict parties to the negotiation table and does not encompass all the elements that peacebuilding does (Paffenholz, 2010a:45).

Secondly, civil society is a broad concept and includes a wide range of organisations and associations at local, national as well as international levels. In this study I have focused on the role of local and national civil society, that is, both urban-based actors and grassroots actors, but excluded the role of the international and global civil society. To include the entire range of civil society actors requires more extensive research that was not deemed possible within the range of this Master thesis, and I therefore delimited the study to include only domestic civil society based on the emphasis of the UN (2010:5) on the importance of national ownership of peacebuilding processes.

Thirdly, it must also be made clear that I have had limited possibility to include the work and activities of all different civil society players that do have important roles in Colombia, also due to the limited scope of the research. Colombia holds a large and vivid civil society that has been active during the course of the internal armed conflict, and it was not possible to include all peacebuilding activities carried out within the frame of this thesis. Thus, this study includes a smaller, but rather diversified, selection of civil society actors and their activities and functions, and attempts to give more of an analytical perspective of the relation between peacebuilding and civil society.

1.7 Limitations

A limitation in terms of the execution of the study was the geographical distance between Colombia and Sweden, as I resided in Sweden during the time of the research. Although it was not ideal to conduct the study as a distance study, I managed to get interviews with strategic actors within civil society to build up the material. A few interviews were made in person when Colombian civil society actors visited Sweden in the beginning of July 2013, but the majority were conducted through telephone or by the use of Skype. However, the quality and depth of the interviews would have improved if I would have met all the interviewees in person instead of using the above mentioned mediums. For further considerations in terms of the methodological design of the study, see chapter 3.3 Methodological delimitations and critical aspects.
1.8 Disposition

In the next chapter (2) the analytical frameworks used for the study are introduced. First, the concept of peacebuilding is described. Then I turn to the first research objective, i.e., to identify the international peacebuilding objectives by exploring three works with different approaches to peacebuilding, namely Schirch (2004), Barnett et al. (2007) and UN (2010). Later, the concept of civil society is described in more detail. The chapter finishes by presenting the role of civil society in peacebuilding, and the reader is familiarised with the Comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010).

The third chapter (3) provides a description of the methodological approach explaining how the study was conducted and how the material was gathered and analysed.

Chapter four (4) gives a historical and contemporary overview of the Colombian internal armed conflict, to introduce the reader to the specific context of Colombia. The reader is also introduced to civil society’s role in former peace attempts in Colombia.

The two following chapters deal with the second research objective as the empirical material is presented and analysed. The first research question is handled in the findings chapter (5) where I identify the activities carried out by Colombian civil society and categorise them in an organisational way using Paffenholz and Spurk’s framework. The second research question, if the activities carried out compare to the functions of civil society in peacebuilding, is partly answered in the findings chapter, but is further analysed in the analytical chapter (6). The last research question where I relate the activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding to the international peacebuilding objectives is also treated in the analysis chapter.

Finally, the last chapter (7) contains the concluding discussion where my findings are summarised and problematised. I conclude in what ways civil society in Colombia through its work may contribute to the international peacebuilding objectives and discuss what the challenges for successful peacebuilding are.
2. Conceptual and analytical frameworks

In this chapter the conceptual and analytical frameworks that are used as tools to analyse the role of civil society in peacebuilding in Colombia are presented. Firstly we look into the contested concept of peacebuilding, and then we explore different views on the international objectives of peacebuilding. Thereafter we look into the peacebuilding actor that this study focuses on, civil society. Later, the role of civil society in peacebuilding is examined, and the chapter continues by presenting the analytical approach developed by Paffenholz and Spurk; the “Comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding”.

2.1 Contextualising peacebuilding

2.1.1 Different views on peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a response to the continued armed conflicts that we see in the world, and strives for building peace instead of sustained violence (Schirch, 2004:8). But what does peacebuilding entail? Paffenholz emphasises that “peacebuilding is essentially the process of achieving peace” (2010a:44), a wide description that shows the extent of the concept, but as highlighted by the World Bank (2006:7), too broad a definition of peacebuilding makes it difficult to differentiate from regular development activities, as both want to address themes such as democratisation and socio-economic development. Knight (2003:241) defines peacebuilding as a “…complex and multidimensional exercise that encompasses tasks ranging from the disarming of warring factions to the rebuilding of political, economic, judicial and civil society institutions”, while Lisa Schirch (2004:9) says that “peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people to recover from violence in all forms […], it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain them and their environment.”

Going back to the initial stages of the use of the concept, the Norwegian peace researcher Galtung introduced the concept of peacebuilding. He identified three different approaches to achieve peace, namely peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. The latter deals with the underlying and structural causes to war and conflict to be able to achieve a positive peace, while the other two concentrate rather on the termination of physical violence, that is, the creation of negative peace (Paffenholz, 2010a:45). A revival of peacebuilding came with the UN report An Agenda for Peace (1992) by the Secretary General at the time, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in which he identified four major fields where the UN as well as the international community bear a responsibility to act when it comes to violent conflicts. The four areas presented are preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding. Kjell Erling Kjellman and Kristian Berg Harpviken (2010:45f) maintain that the approach presented by the Secretary General created a renewed interest in peacebuilding. However his focus was on only preventing violent conflict from arising again, that is negative peace by Galtung’s definition, through disarmament, monitoring of elections, and security sector reform, which created a narrow definition of peacebuilding. In 1995, a supplement to An Agenda for Peace was adopted to include also preventative measures as part of peacebuilding efforts.
Contrary to Boutros-Ghali, Lederach (1997) argues that peacebuilding is much more than a post-conflict activity; according to him it must take place both prior, during, and after a conflict situation, a stand that today is acknowledged by most. Lederach takes an inclusive and relational approach to peacebuilding; it does not deal with the termination of violence, he says, but rather it comes down to creating and rebuilding peaceful relations between people. What Lederach advocates is sustainable peacebuilding that, as with Galtung, focuses on the root causes to conflict, trying to transform them to create a long-lasting peace.

Taking a more practical stand, Lederach (1997:77) and Paffenholz (2010a:49) identify the peacebuilding phase with a time-frame that extends up to a decade into the post-conflict period, the critical time needed to achieve social change, they argue. Paffenholz definition of peacebuilding limits the scope of peacebuilding as follows:

Peacebuilding aims at preventing and managing armed conflict and sustainable peace after large-scale organised violence has ended. It is a multidimensional effort; its scope covers all activities that are linked directly to this objective across five to ten years. Peacebuilding should create conducive conditions for economic reconstruction, development, and democratisation as preconditions for legitimate democratic order; but should not be equated and thus confused with these concepts. (Paffenholz, 2010a:49f)

2.1.2 The objectives of peacebuilding

What is it then that peacebuilding wants to achieve? Just as diverse perspectives define what peacebuilding means differently, there are also diverse views on what the objectives of peacebuilding are. However, there seems to exist a consensus that peacebuilding includes more than just reducing or eliminating the direct physical violence in a society.

Schirch (2004), inspired by Lederach (1997), takes a relational view on the objectives of peacebuilding in *The Little Book of Strategic Peacebuilding – A Vision and Framework for Peace with Justice*. She pinpoints three main areas as the objectives of peacebuilding, namely a) reducing direct violence, b) building capacity, and c) transforming relationships, to reach what Schirch refers to as “a peace with justice” (2004:6) The first objective is to reduce direct violence, or as expressed by Schirch, “…to restrain perpetrators of violence, prevent and relieve the immediate suffering of victims of violence, and create a safe space for peacebuilding activities” (2004:25). The second objective is to transform relationships, that is, transform and rebuild relationships at personal, societal, and structural level to attain reconciliation. The last peacebuilding objective is to build capacities at personal and societal level in an attempt to foster a culture of peace (2004:56).

Barnett et al. (2007:49ff) instead divide the objectives of peacebuilding into three different dimensions in *Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?*, namely a) stability creation, b) restorations of state institutions, and c) addressing the socio-economic dimensions of conflict. In the first dimension, Barnett et al. see disarmament, demobilisation, security sector reform, reintegration programs, etc., as objectives to achieve. The objectives of the second dimension are to restore central state functions to provide public goods and recreate legitimacy. Rebuilding of basic facilities, institution building, rule of law systems and democratisation etc. are important parts of the second dimension. In the socio-economic recovery dimension
the objective is to manage conflict peacefully which is made possible through transitional justice and reconciliation, community dialogue, strengthening of civil society, promoting economic development, trauma counselling, among other themes.

The UN, on the other hand, describes five main areas in *UN Peacebuilding: an orientation* (2010:12) in which peacebuilding needs to focus to attain its main objective of not relapsing back into violence. Support is necessary in five main areas; firstly, support to basic safety and security including rule of law, security sector reform, demining, disarmament, demobilisation, and protection of civilians; secondly, support to political processes, such as electoral support, dialogue, and conflict management capacity at national and sub-national level; thirdly, support to provision of basic services, including water and sanitation, health, education, and return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees; fourthly, support to restore governmental functions, such as public administration and finance at both national and local level, and finally, support to economic revitalisation, including employment opportunities and rehabilitation of basic infrastructure.

Looking at the different perspectives of what peacebuilding should work for and attain, and as part of the exercise of this thesis as outlined in the research objectives, I draw from the work of Schirch (2004), Barnett et al. (2007) and the UN (2010) to create a single framework for the international objectives of peacebuilding. First, in *Table 1*, I summarise the three different views given above on the overarching objectives of peacebuilding, and the instrument and activities included. It is worth noting that the three views to a large extent are biased towards the state and/or international bodies as the main actors in peacebuilding. Second, I build a new framework for the international peacebuilding objectives that incorporates the three different perspectives, illustrated in *Figure 1*. This framework is later on used to analyse the activities and functions performed by Colombian civil society, to determine in what ways civil society may contribute to the international peacebuilding objectives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Overarching objective</th>
<th>Instruments/activities</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transforming relationships</td>
<td>Trauma healing, Conflict transformation, Restorative justice, Transitional justice, Governance and policymaking, Ritual/symbolic transformation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Building capacity</td>
<td>Training and education, Research and evaluation, Military conversation, Development (economic, political and social)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Barnett et al. (2007) | Stability creation | Disarmament and demobilisation  
Security sector reform  
Demining  
Early-warning systems  
Peace agreement/mediation  
Repatriation and return  
Security stabilisation  
Systems for arms control  
Media support  
Defence diplomacy  
| Restorations of state institutions | Institution building  
Rule of law systems  
Rebuilding of basic facilities  
Good governance  
Democratisation  
Financial assistance  
Election assistance  
Policy/technical assistance  
Decentralisation  
| Addressing socio-economic aspects | Infrastructure  
Economic recovery  
Reconstruction  
Health and education  
Strengthening of NGOs  
Respect for human rights  
Food/agricultural support  
Truth and reconciliation  
Community dialogue  
Bridge building  
Trauma counselling  
Leader dialogue  
Security sector reform  
Demining  
Disarmament  
Demobilisation and reintegration  
Protection of civilians  
| Political processes | Electoral support  
Dialogue and reconciliation  
Conflict management capacity (national/sub-national level)  
| Provision of basic services | Water and sanitation  
Health and education  
Return of refugees and IDPs  
| Restore governmental functions | Public administration (national/local level)  
Public finance (national/local level)  
| Economic revitalisation | Employment generation and livelihoods  
Rehabilitation of basic infrastructure  
|

**Table 1.** Three different views on the objectives of peacebuilding.
Figure 1. Framework of the international peacebuilding objectives.

The new framework for the international peacebuilding objectives is divided into four main components which are all necessary to attain a comprehensive and inclusive approach to peacebuilding. The first dimension is related to the creation of security and stability, in which DDR processes, demining, system for arms control, protection of civilians and creation of peace zones are important parts. The second dimension has to do with the restoration of political and judicial institutions and processes to restore the legitimacy of the state. Here institution building, legal and justice systems, democratisation, public administration, etc. is necessary. The third dimension has to do with socio-economic development of the society, including economic recovery, reconstruction, health and education, and employment generation. Lastly, the dimension of transforming relationships at individual and societal level is required. Truth and reconciliation, conflict transformation, trauma healing and dialogue are integral parts of transforming relations.
2.2 Contextualising civil society

In the struggle to end violent conflict and achieve peace, peacebuilding is performed by a wide range of actors, ranging from governments, business leaders and the media, to religious leaders, development aid organisations and grassroots organisations. All have important roles to play and can contribute to building peace in different ways. This study is limited to focus on domestic civil society as a peacebuilding actor, despite the existence of many other possible and important actors.

But what is civil society? Berg Harpviken and Kjellman (2004) argue that one always must take into consideration the local context when defining civil society, stating that “[t]he complexity of the social infrastructures, networks, and relationships that characterise civil society vary greatly from context to context, thereby necessitating a broad definition” (2004:4). Spurk (2010:3) along with other scholars (see Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006; Berg Harpviken & Kjellman, 2004) maintain that term civil society is contested and ambivalent, and that it is used in diverse ways in both science and policy making. Thus, there is a lack of a general and undisputed definition of the concept in current literature.

Rather than using it as a clear cut analytical tool, civil society can be looked as a means of understanding social and political processes (Berg Harpviken & Kjellman 2004). Spurk (2010:6ff) presents two different views on civil society. Firstly, civil society can be seen as an independent sector. When treating civil society as a sector it is seen as different from the political sphere (state), the economic sphere (business) and the private sphere (family). Secondly, civil society can also be viewed as the space between the three sectors (state, business and family), an outlook that takes into account a wider range of actors within civil society, such as tribal leaders, rural groupings and “uncivil” constellations, among others, that traditionally do not fit when civil society is treated as an independent sphere. For a graphic view of the two ways of presenting civil society see Figure 2.

Figure 2. Two views of civil society. To the left, civil society seen as an independent sector, and to the right civil society seen as an intermediate sphere between the sectors. Adapted from Spurk (2010:7).
When combing the two viewpoints Spurk summarises his definition of civil society in the following way:

Civil society is a sphere of voluntary action that is distinct from the state, political, private, and economic sphere, keeping in mind that in practice the boundaries between these sectors are often complex and blurred. It consists of a large and diverse set of voluntary organisations – competing with each other and oriented towards specific interests – that are not purely driven by private or economic interests, are autonomously organised, and interact in the public sphere. Thus, civil society is independent from the state and the political sphere, but is oriented toward and interacts closely with them. (Spurk, 2010: 8f)

In further exploring the concept of civil society, Spurk (2010:20ff) highlights two different models of understanding its role. Firstly, an actor-oriented approach that focuses on the different actors that belong to civil society. He argues that this approach is rather limited and fails to take into account the diversity of civil society organisations and associations that exist as it often focuses on a Western perspective of civil society, largely concentrated on solely NGOs, and thus overlooks other actors that belong to civil society and that can have important functions in many contexts. Therefore, Spurk advocates a second, functional approach to civil society that looks into the functions that civil society can fulfil, without limiting oneself to just one type of civil society actor. In this thesis I see civil society through Spurk’s functional approach.

2.3 The role of civil society in peacebuilding

2.3.1 Different levels of civil society in peacebuilding

There are diverging views of how peace should be achieved; from the top-down or from the bottom-up. Paffenholz (2010a:56) points out that civil society rarely is seen participating at the official negotiation table when trying to resolve an armed conflict, as the common standpoint is that the more actors involved, the harder it is to come to an agreement. Therefore the actual negotiation often consists of a limited amount of representatives from the conflict parties involved. Nevertheless, a study by Wani-S-St. John and Kew (2006), is referred to by Paffenholz (2010a:56) as showing “...a positive correlation between the degree of civil society involvement in peace negotiations and the sustainability of peace agreements”, which shows the importance of active civil society involvement in peacebuilding to create long-lasting peace.

Lederach (1997:37ff) developed an analytical approach to identify actors on different levels and how they can contribute to peacebuilding. He differentiates between the top leadership (level one), the middle-range leadership (level two), and the grassroots leadership (level three) while also identifying their possible contributions in a peacebuilding scenario (see Figure 3). Lederach argues that the first level leadership often consists of key representatives of the warring parties, i.e. government and opposing group. They are influential political, military or religious leaders that have the possibility to frame topics and questions on the agenda as their statements and positions are highly visible to the public. First level leaders have decision making power, or as Lederach argues, they have “... greater capacity to make decisions that
affect the entire population, but it also means that the individual is less affected by the day
today consequences of those decisions” (1997:43). The first level leadership often advocates a
top-down approach to peacebuilding where high-level negotiations to stop the violence are
prioritised. This approach is based on the assumption that an agreement between the
leadership of two conflict parties can transform the conflict reality at the lower levels, a kind
of “‘trickle-down’ approach to peace” (1997:45).

The middle-range leadership can be made up by a wide range of individuals and/or
institutions, groups or associations that are not directly tied to the conflict parties but still are
influential in society at large. Lederach (1997:41ff) identifies sectors such as business,
academics, religion, and health to encompass possible middle-range leadership, but also
leaders of specific regions and ethnic groups fit into this level. He emphasises that middle-
range actors have connections and relations to the first level leadership as well as to the
grassroots, which makes them important actors, facilitators, and networkers in peacebuilding
processes. The middle-range leadership’s approach to peacebuilding is what Lederach
(1997:46ff) names a middle-range approach, which can include informal problem-solving
workshops that “...provide a venue for persons who unofficially represent the parties to a
conflict to interact in the process of ‘collaborative analysis’ of the problems that separate
them” (1997:46). Conflict resolution training to improve skills is another activity that can be
carried out by middle-range actors, and peace commissions by middle range leadership have
successfully been implemented in Nicaragua and South Africa (1997:49ff).

![Diagram of Actors and Approaches to Peacebuilding]

Figure 3. Actors and approaches to peacebuilding. Adopted from Lederach (1997:39).
The grassroots leadership represents the large base of society, and includes leaders of local communities or members of ethnic organisations. The grassroots leadership is closely connected to the local populations, which means that they see conflict and suffering firsthand. The grassroots level often lacks decision making power but is regularly affected by the decisions made by the top-level leadership. Peacebuilding attempts from grassroots leadership may include local peace conferences to start peace talks and the creation of an infrastructure for peace at the local level, as was made in Somaliland in the 1990’s. There are also experiences from creating local peace programs by churches or UN bodies, efforts that includes seminar discussions, training to reduce intolerance or increase decision making at the community level (Lederach, 1997:51ff).

To clarify, civil society representatives can be found among the middle-level leadership as well as in the grassroots leadership. This study will analyse information from actors on both the second and third levels to get a broader vision of the scope, activities, and functions of civil society.

2.3.2 Civil society during times of armed conflict

During war and armed conflict the whole society is reshaped by the hostile environment which greatly affects political composition, economy, social relations, power relations, and security (Spurk, 2010:18; Kjellman & Berg Harpviken, 2010:37:ff). These changes also have implications on the room of manoeuvre of civil society in a conflict context, or as argued by Orjuela (2004:59, quoted by Spurk, 2010:18), “[c]ivil society... tends to shrink in a war situation, as the space for popular, voluntary and independent organizing diminishes”.

Civil society is negatively affected by armed conflict in different ways, explain Kjellman and Berg Harpviken (2010:37ff). State institutions are regularly weakened and undermined due to war, resulting in limited possibilities for civil society to communicate, interact, and put demands on dysfunctional institutions which decreases its opportunities to influence politics and put pressure on politicians. Furthermore, it is also common that a government becomes more authoritarian during armed conflict wanting to control and restrict civil society which also has a marginalising effect. In addition, increased violence, involving regular human rights violations and infractions of international humanitarian law, contributes to a deteriorated security situation for all, including civil society, further reducing its already limited space of manoeuvre. Moreover, armed conflict affects social relations between people as trust and confidence is replaced by fear and distrust. As such armed conflict can increase polarisation and cleavages in society, leading to divisions among civil society, for instance along ethnic lines, contributing to a fragmentation and conflicts among different civil society actors.

Nevertheless, Kjellman and Berg Harpviken (2010:40) also underline another perspective of civil society during armed conflict; they maintain that although civil society can be destroyed during times of war, it can also grow stronger and fulfil a supporting function to its citizens. “[C]ivil society can flourish in the absence of the state, provided that the state in question was either repressive or ineffective in the first place”, they argue (2010:40).
2.4 The comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding

Having presented an introduction to peacebuilding and civil society, as well as exploring the international peacebuilding objectives and different levels of actors in peacebuilding, it is time to present the analytical framework introduced by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:65ff) of how to understand the role and functions of civil society in a peacebuilding context. They call their framework the Comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding and emphasise that the application of the framework provides a more structured understanding of the functions of civil society in peacebuilding.

The seven functions of civil society in peacebuilding identified by Paffenholz and Spurk are explained in more detail below. In analysing the role of civil society, the authors argue that it is essential to take into account the uniqueness of each conflict and evaluate each function in relation to the specific context, taking into account the social, political, and cultural life as well as the regional and global dynamics. The relevance of each function must also be examined in relation to the specific context. In addition, Paffenholz and Spurk maintain that one must identify the activities carried out by civil society and consider the effectiveness of their execution in relation to the activities performed by other peacebuilding actors (2010:75ff).

2.4.1 Protection

Although it is the state that has the responsibility to protect its citizens, civil society also plays an important role to provide a protection function, especially in times of conflict/post-conflict where the state itself is often weak or can be one of the perpetrators, and where other armed groups also constitute a threat to the organised civil society. “During and after armed conflict, protection becomes almost a precondition for fulfilling other roles and functions, as civil society actors are hindered from acting up peacebuilding roles when threatened by armed groups”, argue Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:67). They list some of the protection functions that civil society can undertake, such as watchdog activities, delivery of humanitarian aid, or creation of ‘zones of peace’. The protection function can be performed by national as well as international civil society actors, and can also include removal of landmines, and other activities such as civil society participation in demobilisation and reintegration processes (2010:67).

2.4.2 Monitoring

The monitoring function that civil society possesses is a prerequisite for other functions to work, argue Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:68). A civil society that can monitor and hold a state accountable for its actions and behaviour is a core function in a democratic society. In peacebuilding, Paffenholz and Spurk highlight that monitoring is often related to the conflict situation and human rights abuses, as well as giving recommendations and spreading information about the same. The authors see an increase in relations between local, national, and international actors. Such connections can increase “safe spaces for local groups to fulfil monitoring tasks” (2010:68). However, the monitoring function is also associated with
violence. Monitors, persons as well as organisations, can be “...subjects to threats of violence and assassinations” for performing this task (Paffenholz, 2010c:384).

2.4.3 Advocacy and public communication

Advocacy and public communication is a way for civil society actors to put important social and political concerns on the public agenda and thus promote a positive societal change. “Advocacy is considered to be one of the core functions of peacebuilding,” emphasise Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:69) and they also argue that it is one of the most effective. Civil society can use advocacy to promote topics on the national agenda and hence act as agenda-setters, and also create public pressure on the warring parties, including mass mobilisations. Paffenholz and Spurk differentiate between two types of advocacy work; one is non-public and thus includes private or informal communication with political elites to bring certain issues and demands on the agenda. The second type is public communication where advocacy efforts are made visible to the public at large through actions such as demonstrations, mass mobilisations, press releases, and other public statements (2010:69).

2.4.4 In-group socialisation

Civil society is a milieu where people can meet, discuss, and be socialised into a democratic and participatory behaviour. It is an environment where attitudes and values are formed, and in terms of peacebuilding it is a place to inspire a “culture of peace”. In times of conflict a society, as well as civil society, is often divided and there is an increase in in-group relations and identification. Paffenholz and Spurk differentiate between what they call in-group socialisation and what they call social cohesion (see sub-chapter 2.4.5 for the latter), where “[in-group] socialisation takes place only within groups and not between or among former adversary groups” (2010:70). In peacebuilding, in-group socialisation can be achieved though peace education and conflict-resolution training, and it can be an important way of empowering and giving voices to former marginalised groups (Paffenholz, 2010c:393). However, Paffenholz and Spurk highlight that “culture-of-peace initiatives work at the individual level, rather than targeting society at large” (2010:71). They also underline that there are other limitations of initiatives to create a culture-of-peace; it is difficult to create an inclusive and continuous process that engages the masses to have a long-term effect, due to, for instance, coordination difficulties.

2.4.5 Social cohesion

Another important function performed by civil society is creating social cohesion, or integration (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010:71). As social relations between people and groups of people in a society often are destroyed during conflict, one important function of civil society is to build connections between groups and not only to strengthen the bonds within a certain group (in-group socialisation). In peacebuilding, Paffenholz and Spurk identify three activities related to social cohesion: a) relationship-oriented cohesion for peace between former warring groups through workshops and dialogues, b) outcome-oriented cohesion for peace that goes further in reaching specific outcomes through conflict resolution workshops between key warring actors, and c) outcome-oriented cohesion for business and development work, where
different groups come together to achieve other common tasks than just peace (e.g. joint work initiatives), which in turn can create social capital and create ties between groups in a more unpretentious form.

2.4.6 Intermediation and facilitation

One of the original functions of civil society in the democracy discourse based on Montesquieu is civil society as an intermediator and facilitator in the communication between the state/government and its citizens. In the context of peacebuilding the function extends to include intermediation also between armed and societal groups. Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:73f) stress that local civil society can have a facilitating and mediating role, for instance between civil society groups and warring parties at village/district level, between warring parties and aid agencies at national or international level in regards of delivery of services and supplies, or between aid agencies and local communities. However, “[facilitation at the national level between the main conflict parties is less of a civil society task”, argues Paffenholz (2010c:401). In the context of peacebuilding, civil society seldom holds a role in the official negotiation process as it is deemed more effective to limit the amount of people in hopes of more easily coming to an agreement.

2.4.7 Service delivery

In armed conflict the infrastructures of a state are often undermined or destroyed. In these cases civil society often takes over the responsibilities of the state in assisting the population and providing services (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010:74). Paffenholz and Spurk discuss whether or not service-delivery is part of the role of civil society in peacebuilding and if it can have peacebuilding effects. They take “...an exploratory approach to ascertain whether service delivery can provide entry points for peacebuilding by civil society actors, or whether it has been an obstacle to peacebuilding by distracting energy from other functions” (2010:74f). Finally, Paffenholz argues that it is possible that service-delivery can function as an opening to other peacebuilding efforts, principally when it comes to the functions of protection, monitoring, and social cohesion (2010c:401). Furthermore, service-delivery is the function where civil society can get the most resources from donors, while also running the risk of redirecting the attention away of from the other civil society functions in peacebuilding (2010c:403).

2.4.8 Critique towards the comprehensive framework

One weakness of the analytical approach by Paffenholz and Spurk is that they analyse the effectiveness and efficiency of the seven peacebuilding functions carried out by civil society without identifying what they see as the objectives and goals of peacebuilding as such, making it difficult to analyse how the activities and functions of civil society actually contribute to building sustainable peace. In the analysis part of this thesis I therefore intend to strengthen the link between the peacebuilding activities and functions carried out by civil society and the objectives of peacebuilding, i.e. the international peacebuilding objectives.
3. Methodological approach

In the third chapter the methodological design of the study is explained. The section starts by exploring the inference of abduction, followed by a description of a case study as a research method. Thereafter the specific techniques used to collect the empirical material for the study are described, that is, qualitative interviews and text analysis of primary and secondary sources. The processing of data is later presented and the chapter ends with a methodological discussion where I reflect upon methodological limitations and critical aspects of the study.

3.1 Abduction

A complementary research method in the social sciences to deduction and induction is *abduction*. Danermark et al. (2002) stress that discoveries within the social science field today are to a large extent based on abduction, since new events are seldom “discovered” within social sciences. Rather, new understandings and explanations of existing events becomes visible when applying a different perspective that can give new insights and thus result in expanded knowledge, and this is what an abductive approach can offer (Danermark et al., 2002:88ff).

By the use of concepts, that is, a language that gives the material meaning; structures, events, and mechanisms in social science can be more easily understood (Danermark et al., 2002:117ff). By taking the starting point in a theory or a framework, an abductive approach can be used to re-describe and re-contextualise events, or as Danermark et al. (2002:91) illustrate it: “[t]o observe, describe, interpret and explain something within the frame of a new context.” Consequently, abduction is an interpretative method. It cannot give an answer as to whether the conclusions drawn by using the inference are true or false. Instead, a phenomenon can be re-contextualised in different ways by using different angles and approaches, but it cannot be said that one re-contextualisation is more correct than another (2002:92). Hence, interpreting the role of civil society in peacebuilding in Colombia with help from the frameworks used in this study is only one way of understanding the situation in Colombia, and if applying another framework other information can be deemed more important and other conclusions can be drawn.

3.2 Case study

In addition to an abductive approach, this study is constructed as a case study. “The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” argues Robert K. Yin in *Case study research; design and methods* (2009:4), in which he explores when a case study as a research method is the most useful in comparison to other data gathering methods, such as surveys, experiments or historical accounts. He argues that case study methodology is most relevant when asking research questions wanting to find out the how or why behind social events, while other methods can be more useful if the questions are formulated in terms of who, what or where. Yin (2009:15) also highlights some of the criticisms attributed to the use of case studies. Case studies have, for example, been
viewed as not being able to provide generalisations as they focus on single cases. Yin opposes this view, and argues that a case study is more than just a sample; it can provide for analytical generalisations leading to expanded knowledge.

Yin conceptualises a case study the following way: “A case study is an emperical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (2009:18). In this definition Yin includes various important key ideas. Firstly, he argues that a case study is useful when wanting to examine current, ongoing events. In addition, he maintains that it requires the researcher to go deep into the theme and that it should be studied within its context. Therefore, the gathering of primary data often includes more engaging research techniques, such as observations of, and interviews with, actors involved in the studied event. However, Yin (2009:15) makes it clear that a case study should not simply be confused with ethnographic studies or participatory observations that often require long periods of time in the field. The way of conducting a case study is broader than that, and Yin maintains that it is possible to conduct in-depth case studies using the Internet or the telephone as material gathering techniques.

3.2.1 Qualitative interviews

Qualitative interviews are an effective and widely used method in development research, ethnographic studies and case studies as a key source of data (Aspers, 2007; Yin, 2009). In this study I have conducted ten interviews to gather material. Three interviews were conducted in person as a few Colombian representatives visited Sweden during July 2013 to participate in the Almedalen Week, an annual political event in Gotland, Sweden. The other seven interviews were conducted during July and August 2013. Six interviews were conducted as phone interviews or through the use of Skype, and one interview was done via e-mail.

In the selection of what actors to contact for interviews, I used Rettberg’s (2012:24) list of important national and international NGOs and think tanks when it comes to peacebuilding in Colombia as a starting point. But as Aspers (2007:92) highlights, a researcher must be careful to not get caught in just one specific network of people, and therefore must actively try to reach out to different actors. Since I wanted to expand the range of civil society actors by going beyond urban-based NGOs and national networks, the main focus of Rettberg (2012), I continued the search for other types of civil society actors and drew from contacts and organisations that I was familiar with after my years of working in Colombia (for further information on my relation to the field of study see chapter 3.3 Methodological delimitations and critical aspects). In this way I came in contact with ethnic organisations, victim’s organisations and religious organisations at local, regional as well as national level. Colombia consists of a vivid and diverse civil society, and although the scope of this study is too small to find representatives from all corners, I have actively tried to diversify the respondents to reflect the diversity of Colombian society.

Of the interviewees, five were women and five were men. Nine represent civil society, of which six work on a national level (although with local and regional reach) and three work
directly at a regional or local level, the so called grassroots level. In addition, one interview was conducted with a governmental agency, Agencia Nacional para la Reintegración (National Agency for Reintegration), as a representative of the agency could be met in person during the Almedalen Week.

Of the interviewed civil society actors, two represent ethnic groups. First ONIC, Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (Colombian National Indigenous Organisation) that gathers all the indigenous groups of the country, and works for their rights on a national level. Second, FISCH, Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó (Interethnic Solidarity Forum of Chocó), a regional umbrella organisation that gathers 63 indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasants’ organisations in the department of Chocó working for their cultural and territorial rights. Another two organisations interviewed are women’s associations, OFP, Organización Femenina Popular (Feminine Popular Organisation) that works in the Magdalena Medio region with women’s human rights, and Mujeres por la Paz (Women for Peace), a newly created platform and network of around 80 women’s organisations around the country working for a positive outcome of the peace negotiations with increased participation of women. The church as an actor for peace in Colombia is also important, and two religious entities have been interviewed for the study, Diócesis de Quibdó (Diocese of Quibdó) that works for a peace with justice in the department of Chocó, and JUSTAPAZ, Asociación Cristina Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolenta (Christian Mennonite Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action), that assists evangelical churches around the country in their peacebuilding activities. One interviewed actor represents victims of the armed conflict, MOVICE, Movimiento Nacional de Víctimas de Crímenes del Estado (National Movement of Victims of State Crimes), with a special focus on victims of crimes committed by state actors during the armed conflict. Fundación para la Reconciliación (Reconciliation Foundation) is an NGO that works with education on matters of forgiveness and reconciliation to achieve sustainable peace, and CINEP, Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (Centre for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program) is an education and investigation centre on peace and democratisation, with its roots in the Jesuit order of the Catholic Church.

In getting in contact with the interviewees, I sent out requests to various civil society actors through e-mail where I presented myself and the purpose of the study. Thereafter I called them to ask if they were interested in participating in the study, and if they said yes we scheduled a time for conducting the interview. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended in character so the interviewee was able to elaborate on the answers more freely, except the e-mail interview that was structured. Before starting the interview, all interviewees where informed again about the purpose of the study and that their participation was voluntary. This is what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) refer to as informed consent. The interviews lasted 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the availability of the interviewee. All interviews were conducted in Spanish and recorded on tape, to later be partly transcribed. Due to time restraints the interviews were not completely transcribed. Eight out of ten interviewees agreed upon having their names mentioned in the thesis, while two wanted to remain anonymous.
3.2.2 Text analysis of primary and secondary data

Another important method used to gather data for the study was through review and analysis of primary data, principally information found on the official web-pages of Colombian civil society actors. On the web-pages I could attain an understanding of the background, mission, and vision, as well as a description of activities and projects carried out. In addition I could study publications, reports, press releases, and official statements made by civil society to get a greater understanding of the scope of work. However, it is important to take into account that the information provided by civil society itself can be somewhat subjective as the actors want to portray themselves in a positive way.

Therefore, as a complement to qualitative interviews and review of primary data produced by Colombian civil society, I have used various books, scientific articles and other texts and investigations from academia and international organisations to be able to obtain a comprehensive and more objective understanding of the internal armed conflict in Colombia, the achievements of Colombian civil society, peacebuilding in Colombia, former peace negotiations in Colombia, etc. that can be said to have a higher objectivity and reliability.

3.2.3 Data processing

After collection, the gathered primary and secondary data was analysed and related to the analytical frameworks used in this study. To facilitate the analytical process the interviews were partly transcribed. By transcribing the material it could be more easily handled in processes of categorising and analysing it. Thereafter the material was organised into seven subheadings based on the activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding, depending on the information, topics, and ideas that were brought up.

During the analytical process I have acknowledged that theory can enable some understandings and reasoning, while obstructing others. Based on the premises of the analytical frameworks used, attention is drawn to certain aspects at the same time as others get obscured (Aspers, 2007:35). Nevertheless, Danermark et al. (2002:136) argue that coding and categorising material without direction of concepts runs the risk of being thoughtless and superficial. The use of frameworks and concepts are therefore central when structuring and analysing material. The gathered data for this study was categorised and analysed in accordance with the analytical frameworks presented.

3.3 Methodological delimitations and critical aspects

Firstly, it can be seen as a drawback to conduct the majority of interviews with only domestic civil society actors about their role in peacebuilding, as the input and perspective of other actors, such as the state or international organisations, is valuable to increase the impartiality and diversity of opinions. However, as this study is abductive and analytical it was deemed possible to limit the sources of information to the voices of civil society itself, although certain bias towards their own work and impact cannot be completely disregarded.
Secondly, I also find it important to highlight my own pre-understanding of, and relation to, the field of study, in an attempt to make visible my own background and biases for the reader. Prior to the research I have been living and working in Colombia. To start with, I worked as an intern at the Swedish Embassy for six months in 2010 and later I worked with human rights for a Swedish NGO financed by the Swedish Embassy through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), for more than two years in 2011 to 2013. This implies that I have been part of a governmental donor agency with their perspective and furthermore I have been a part of the international NGO world.

During my time in Colombia I have worked in close cooperation with grassroots civil society, primarily in the department of Chocó, the poorest region in Colombia, with large populations of Afro-Colombians and indigenous people. I have on a regular basis been engaged in formal and informal conversations with a wide range of official and unofficial actors of Colombian society, and I have been observing the life in a remote and marginalised part of the country. These experiences have given me a pre-understanding of the history, politics, and culture of the country as well as insight into the armed conflict and its consequences for local populations and civil society. In this sense my former knowledge and understanding of Colombia has also affected, and contributed to, the analysis made in this study. Consequently, my impressions and observations from the time spent in the field are also indirectly reflected in the present study.

Finally, my former experience from Colombia tells me that strangers are met with certain suspicion due to the distrust and cleavages that the armed conflict has created in the country. One way I tried to counteract this was through a thorough presentation of myself where I explained who I am and how I have become engaged in this field in an attempt to gain the interviewee’s trust. Nevertheless I remained an unknown stranger for most interviewees. A further impediment to a deep and honest conversation is the scepticism many civil society actors have towards using the telephone or e-mail for correspondence on sensitive matters. Due to various wire-tapping scandals in the recent years by the Colombian state, many civil society actors assume they are bugged, and can therefore be hesitant in discussing certain themes over the phone or e-mail. For these reasons, a firsthand, in-depth field study in Colombia would have facilitated the interview stage of the study and could have given more information and a deeper understanding of the various actors and their role in the Colombian peacebuilding process.
4. Contextualisation

In the fourth chapter, an introduction and contextualisation of Colombia is given for the reader to gain a better understanding of the internal armed conflict. The history of the conflict is first described, and later a review of former peace attempts is given. The chapter finishes by shortly exploring civil society involvement and activities in relation to former peace processes. All in all, the chapter functions as background to the empirical findings and analysis discussed in the following chapters.

4.1 The history of the Colombian internal armed conflict

Colombia is said to be the oldest democracy in Latin America, yet at the same time it hosts one of the longest on-going internal armed conflicts in the world where various guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups, criminal gangs, and state forces have fought for territorial control for the last 50 years (Kurtenbach, 2005:15). The Colombian conflict is often described as a conflict hard to explain due to the many motives behind it, the involvement of a wide range of different actors and the particularities of each region making the conflict dynamics highly diverse. From 1958 until the end of 2012, more than 220,000 persons have lost their lives in the conflict, of which almost 82 percent were civilians. This demonstrates that the civilian population has been the conflict’s primary victim (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2013:19f). Estimates show that more than 5.7 million people have been internally displaced from 1985 until the end of 2012. The massive displacements continue today; for example in 2012 almost 260,000 persons were forced to leave their homes (El País, 2013). Other features of the Colombian conflict are forced disappearances, forced recruitment of children, kidnappings, massacres, extrajudicial killings, political assassinations, sexual violence, the use of anti-personal landmines, and continuous violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, resulting in a humanitarian crisis in the country (Rey Marcos & Pineda Ariza, 2013:4).

Sabine Kurtenbach (2005:13ff) summarises four main foundations of the internal armed conflict in Colombia. Firstly, she argues that Colombia developed an early political culture of violence, where elites have used violence as a means of governance since the country got its independence from Spain in the beginning of the 1800s. Secondly, the lack of state presence and monopoly on the use of force over large parts of the territory hindered an inclusive state-building process. Instead it allowed for local elites to violently take power, creating regional conflict dynamics that persists up until the present day. Thirdly, although claiming to be the oldest electoral democracy in Latin America, there have been limited possibilities for political participation for large segments of the society, which has especially marginalised rural populations and ethnic minorities. Finally, unequal access to land and natural resources can be seen as a main conflict source. Highly concentrated land ownership has led to struggles over natural resources such as land itself, but also gold, petroleum, emeralds, and coca, further aggravating the conflict.

In the more recent political history of Colombia, the Liberal and Conservative parties, despite their small ideological difference, have been fighting against one another to control the country’s recourses since the mid 1800s. The political elites mobilised the people of the countryside which led to several clashes and armed conflicts throughout the country.
“Violence helped to forge partisan identities, in the sense that the memories of one’s relatives killed by members of the other party resulted in deep hatred between Liberal and Conservatives”, argues Carlos Nasi (2006:220). In the 1940s the conflicts intensified due to unsuccessful agrarian reforms and urban strikes. In 1948 the Liberal presidential candidate Gaitán was murdered, an event that led to massive violent uprisings in the capital city, El Bogotazo, that spread to other parts of the country. In the following years violence continued to escalate, and in 1953 General Rojas Pinilla took power through a military coup. Five years later, through a power-sharing agreement between the Liberal and Conservative parties, called the National Front, Colombia left the years of dictatorship behind them. However, the National Front hindered other political actors from entering the political scene, and economic exclusion and inequality affected the general population. Instead of consolidating democracy and peace, a second cycle of violence set off in the mid 1960s and onwards when several leftwing guerrilla groups¹ and rightwing paramilitary groups² were formed (Nasi, 2006:220).

4.2 Second cycle of violence and former peace attempts

The second wave of violence that started in the 1960s remained rather unnoticed to the political elites and the general public as guerrilla groups were mostly acting in remote zones of the country (Isacson & Rojas Rodriguez, 2009:21). In the 1980s President Betancur (1982-1986) broke new ground when he supported a negotiated solution to the years of violence. Several cease fires, that later fell short, were agreed upon by the FARC, M-19, EPL and parts of ELN. Betancur did not have the backing of the political elites in his efforts and during this period political murders and massacres increased. The next president, Barco (1986-1990), adjusted and institutionalised the politics of peace initiated by Betancur, and launched a peace initiative that opened the negotiation with the guerrilla group M-19, which was successfully demobilised in 1989. During the initial years of the 1990s, violence further increased in Colombia and in the midst of the violence the next president, Gaviria (1990-1994), used the call for a constitutional reform in 1991 as a means for pressuring several smaller guerrilla groups to negotiate, such as EPL and MAQL, who eventually laid down their weapons (García Durán, 2009:28ff). The constitutional reform allowed for increased political rights and reforms, and recognised the multicultural aspects of Colombia, acknowledging the ancestral

¹ In the 1960s the two largest guerrilla groups were established, first FARC, Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) with links to the Communist party, and a few years later ELN, Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army) which was inspired by the Cuban revolution. EPL, Ejército Popular Liberación (Popular Liberation Army) was also created in the mid 1960s on Maoist grounds. The first urban based guerrilla group was founded in 1972, M-19, Movimiento 19 de abril (The 19 April Movement). In the 1980s several smaller rebel organisations were formed like the PRT, Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Workers’ Revolutionary Party) and the indigenous guerrilla group MAQL, Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (Armed Movement Quintín Lame) (Nasi, 2006:220ff).

² Paramilitary activity can be dated back to the 1970s when self-defence groups started as a death squad operation. Later they turned into private armies funded by drug trade and drug cartels in the late 1980s. Under the coordination body of AUC, Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia), military action increased in the 1990s, targeting leftist groups and civilian populations with massacres and political assassinations. Paramilitary groupings have had long connections to state forces and elite groups at the regional and national levels (Tate, 2009:111ff).
rights of the country’s indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations (Wouters, 2001:499ff). Peace talks were also initiated with the two largest guerrilla groups, FARC and ELN, but when the talks fell apart, the government exchanged its negotiation strategy for a military solution to the conflict.

From the mid 1990s FARC grew stronger and paramilitary groups under the umbrella organisation AUC expanded simultaneously leaving the country with unprecedented numbers of dead, disappeared, kidnapped, and internally displaced (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:22). A new peace attempt with the FARC and ELN guerrillas started in 1998 by President Pastrana (1998-2002). In the talks with FARC, which lasted for more than three years, a demilitarised zone was created for the guerrilla group in the region of Caguán. The FARC took advantage of this zone to strengthen their position, rearm, and regroup. In February 2002, the talks with FARC finally fall apart, and in May of the same year the less high-profile talks with ELN also broke down (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:21ff). The next presidential election was won by rightwing Uribe (2002-2010), who had launched his political strategy of Seguridad Democrática (Democratic Security Policy) which implied a military defeat of the country’s guerrilla groups. Uribe changed the official discourse, denying the internal armed conflict by calling the fight against the guerrilla groups a fight against terrorism. Military expenditure increased with financial assistance from the United States, and guerrilla groups were weakened when important leaders were killed (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:33). During Uribe’s mandate a demobilisation process of the paramilitary umbrella group, AUC, was made. By 2007, 32,000 paramilitaries had supposedly been demobilised, but many never handed in their weapons and instead new armed groups emerged and paramilitary violence continues (Rey Marcos & Pineda Ariza, 2013:1).

In the 2010 Presidential elections Santos, Minister of Defence in Uribe’s government won, claiming he would continue the Democratic Security Policy. Instead, as a first step towards the current peace negotiation process, Santos recognised the internal armed conflict in May 2011. In September 2012 the pre-accord for peace talks with FARC was officially announced, and since October the two negotiation teams are talking, on the first occasion in Oslo, Norway, and now in Havana, Cuba. The agenda consists of six subjects: an integrated agrarian development policy; political participation; termination of the conflict; solution of the problem of illicit drugs; victims; and implementation and monitoring (International Crisis Group, 2013:34ff). Santos has recently opened up to the other large guerrilla group, ELN, to also allow them to proceed in peace talks, and in the beginning of August 2013 Santos expressed that the dialogue will commence soon (Semana, 2013).

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3 In the last national survey 3.4 percent of the Colombian population recognised themselves as belonging to an indigenous group, and 10.6 percent recognised themselves as having African decent (Afro-Colombians) (DANE, 2005).
4.3 Colombian civil society and its role in former peace attempts

Colombia holds a diverse and strong civil society working for the rights of the Colombian population and for a termination of the internal armed conflict. The diversity of civil society players reflects the diversity of the country itself, and includes a wide range of actors, such as Afro-Colombian organisations, indigenous organisations, workers unions, peasants’ movements, victim’s organisations, women’s organisations, religious organisations, among others.

During the 1970s and 1980s the leading civil society actors in the country were worker’s unions and peasants’ movements (Rojas Rodríguez, 2004:35). Discussions on ethnical rights also emerged in the 1970’s, where indigenous mobilisations took place and indigenous organisations that combined issues of class and race were created (Benavidas, 2009:18ff). Also the voices of the Afro-Colombian populations started to be heard in the 1970s, first in the form of urban based intellectuals, but later transformed into the formation of Afro-Colombian peasants’ associations in the 1980s. They used the same discourse as indigenous organisations of recognition of ethnical, territorial and cultural rights (Wouters, 2001:500). In the 1980s, NGOs focusing on human rights also entered the Colombian civil society scene, and in the 1990s civil society peace activism started to grow (Rojas Rodríguez, 2004:35).

During the first peace negotiation attempt of President Betancur (1982-1986), a peace commission was created where there was room for two “civil society” representatives, posts occupied by a church and business sector representative respectively. However, the negotiation process granted the rest of civil society the ability to start talking about alternatives to violence which had not been on the agenda before, and marches in favour of the negotiations and against violence were organised in smaller scale (García Durán, 2009:28ff). During the presidency of Barco (1986-1990), civil society participated in forums leading up to the negotiations with M-19, as well as in regional peace talks that were promoted by Barco. The first Semana por la Paz (Peace Week) was announced in 1987 by various civil society actors, a yearly event that continues up until today (García Durán, 2009:32ff).

When the peace talks with FARC and ELN failed under the presidency of Gaviria (1990-1994), the president turned to a military solution of the conflict. However, the insurgent groups grew stronger and violence increased during the whole 1990s. Civil society reacted and there was a large increase in local and regional peace initiatives protesting against kidnappings and advocating a peaceful solution of the conflict (Sarmiento Santander, 2008:38; García Durán, 2009:36). For instance, the National Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War (REDEPAZ4) in 1993 was one instance where a peace initiative pushed for renewed peace negotiations. In 1997 diverse civil society groups arranged the Citizens Mandate for Peace, where 10 million Colombians voted in favour of a peaceful ending to the armed conflict during municipal elections, showing the large societal support for a negotiated solution. The government created a National Peace Council to help develop its peace policy.

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4 REDEPAZ was contacted for an interview in this study but declined to participate.
In which half of the members consisted of civil society representatives (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:22f). Furthermore, in 1999 more than 10 million people participated in marches for the mobilisation of No Más (No More) around the country.

In the negotiation process between the government and the FARC guerrilla during the presidency of Pastrana (1998-2002) civil society tried to make its voices heard. For instance, televised thematic forums were created in which citizens could leave suggestions to the negotiators in Caguán (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:31). In addition, several civil society actors went to the region and handed over their proposals to the negotiating parties, among them different women’s organisations (Ramírez, Skype interview 2013-08-31). As the negotiations continued without showing concrete results, civil society became more and more frustrated and divided in its efforts. At the same time public opinion started to turn away from a negotiated solution to the armed conflict. The following Presidential election was won by the rightwing candidate Uribe who “…helped solidify the left-right split in the peace movement, recruiting many supporters from the elite/business wing of the late 1990s civil society peace efforts” (Isacson & Rojas Rodríguez, 2009:31). Uribe signed a framework for peace accords with AUC that turned into the Justice and Peace Law, which regulated the demobilisation process of the paramilitaries as well as victims’ right to truth and justice. Large segments of civil society have criticised the law, arguing that it contributes to impunity and favours the offenders instead of the victims (Carrillo, 2009:133). Meanwhile, the space of manoeuvre for civil society decreased as Uribe launched a stigmatising discourse of civil society, which reduced them to collaborators with the guerrillas.
5. Empirical findings

In this fifth part I present the empirical findings derived from the interviews and reviews of primary and secondary data. I categorise the findings in seven sub-headings with help from the “Comprehensive framework for the analysis of civil society in peacebuilding”, presented in the second chapter.

In the initial part of the empirical findings I answer the first research question regarding what activities civil society in Colombia are performing in terms of peacebuilding. To structure the answers I am using Paffenholz and Spurk’s framework in an organisational way, rather than analytical. The activities are divided into seven sub-headings in accordance with the framework. It is important to point out that not all activities that the actors perform in relation to the different sub-headings are possible to describe herein, and the data illustrates examples of civil society activities. All the information provided in this section derives from the interviews if not otherwise specified.

5.1 Protection

Protection is a prerequisite for civil society to be able to perform the other activities, argue Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:67). When it comes to civil society in Colombia all actors interviewed are addressing protection in different ways. Local and regional actors with grassroots member bases, such as Feminine Popular Organisation (OFP) in the conflict ridden region of Magdalena Medio, Interethnic Solidarity Forum of Chocó (FISCH) and the Diocese of Quibdó constitute in themselves a protection for local communities and the civilian population. Father Sterlin Londoño explained that the Catholic Church in Quibdó that he represents is working hand in hand with indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities in the department of Chocó, one of the poorest and most marginalised regions of Colombia where all types of armed actors in the conflict are present. The Diocese of Quibdó has a Life, Justice, and Peace Commission that works specifically for the respect of human rights and international humanitarian law to construct peace with social justice. For Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities protection is closely related to territory, and both groups can have the right to collective ownership of the land they historically have inhabited if they organise themselves. Father Londoño highlighted that the Diocese of Quibdó has been a driving force behind the formation of ethnic organisations, and continues to be strong ally in the strengthening and capacity building of the organisations. Having earned credibility from the armed actors and by having the possibility to reach out to isolated and marginalised communities, the presence of the Catholic Church in the department of Chocó is fundamental for the protection of the civilian population, Londoño argued. The Diocese of Quibdó has hindered internal displacements as well as accompanied thousands of internally displaced persons to safely being able to return back home. When the Atrato river was completely paralysed in the middle of the 2000s due to the armed actors in the region, leading to a severe humanitarian crisis for the civilian population, the Diocese of Quibdó organised a large humanitarian commission under the name Ark of Noah opening up the space for humanitarian action. In 2005, the Diocese of Quibdó was rewarded the National Peace Prize for its work to protect human rights.
There are several other examples of protection activities to be found in Colombia; Christian Mennonite Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action (JUSTAPAZ) explained that the presence of the church, evangelic as well as the catholic, is different from the presence of NGOs as the coverage and the credibility by always having representatives in the field makes the church a strategic actor in regards protection. One of the areas of work for JUSTAPAZ is accompaniment of local evangelic churches in their peacebuilding initiatives, and the organisation is part of a network with economic funds making it possible to take out threatened community leaders from their immediate surroundings until the situation has calmed down. Furthermore, in its workshops with local populations and victims, JUSTAPAZ highlights the importance of autocuidado, self protection, for increased awareness of protection strategies that people can use in their everyday life.

For the indigenous population in Colombia the Colombian National Indigenous Organisation (ONIC), along with local and regional organisations that make up the national organisation, are important in terms of protection, as explained by Patricia Tobón Yagarí, a human rights lawyer for ONIC. One of the protection activities that various indigenous groups are using are indigenous guards, so called guardia indígena, which consists of men and women armed with wooden sticks patrolling their territory protecting the communities from armed actors and other intruders. At one occasion, explained Tobón Yagarí, a local indigenous leader in Andágueda, Chocó, was threatened to death by the FARC guerrilla. 2,000 people from the surrounding communities marched to the guerrilla camp armed with machetes and sticks, making clear that if one of them was hurt they would kill the guerrilla group.

Gloria Amparo Suárez at OFP explained that they are offering physical, judicial as well as emotional accompaniment to the women and men in the organisations and to the local communities in the Magdalena Medio region. Their work adds to the protection of the members. National organisations and networks such as the National Movement for Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE) or Women for Peace have common effects upon the organisations belonging to them. Being part of a network or platform is a way of to reduce one’s isolation and vulnerability. Nevertheless, working for the respect of human rights, as many civil society actors in Colombia do, is associated with risks. In the first six months of 2013, 154 attacks against human rights defenders were registered in Colombia, including death threats, arbitrary detentions, and assassinations. 37 human rights defenders were murdered, eight more than during the same period of the previous year, which in turn was the most violent year since 2002 (Somos Defensores, 2013).

Other activities in relation to protection can be DDR processes. In this area of work the Reconciliation Foundation is collaborating with state institutions and private companies in generating work opportunities for former combatants in an attempt to improve the possibilities for reintegration in society. Leonel Narváez Gómez at the Reconciliation

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5 A human rights defender is anyone who, by peaceful means, works for the protection and promotion of human rights, for instance through collecting and disseminating information on violations, carrying out advocacy work towards governments to fulfill their international obligations, or supporting victims of human rights violations. The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1998 (OHCHR, 2013).
Foundation explained that they were the first ones in Colombia to offer a course on reconciliation and reintegration in 2004. This course called GRECO, *Gestores de Reconciliación y Convivencia* (Managers for Reconciliation and Coexistence), was created in relation to the demobilisation process of paramilitary groups under the umbrella organisation AUC. The Reconciliation Foundation still gives psychosocial support to about a thousand demobilised paramilitary and guerrilla members each year.

5.2 Monitoring

Monitoring is closely related to the function of protection, as argued by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:68). It becomes clear that monitoring is an activity that almost all civil society actors interviewed are performing, with somewhat different focuses depending on the type of organisation or association they represent. FISCH, a regional umbrella organisation representing 63 indigenous, Afro-Colombian, and peasant organisations in Chocó, has a social observatory of ethnic development, armed conflict, and displacement that is monitoring the situation for Chocó’s population (FISCH, 2013a). FISCH, together with the Diocese of Quibdó, are key sources of information on the situation in area, and they are also the ones that react to human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law.

National actors such as ONIC and MOVICE work in the same manner, becoming a key source of information regarding their area of expertise. Tobón Yagarí explained that ONIC holds an extensive information system on indigenous and territorial rights and has monitored the situation of the country’s indigenous population for decades. The organisation regularly publishes a wide range of publications regarding the effect of the armed conflict on the indigenous people, the danger of extinction of several indigenous groups, as well as the effects of extraction of natural resources, such as mining and petroleum, on indigenous territories. For the end of 2013 a report is planned to be released discussing the indigenous territory in relation to the current peace process, explained Tobón Yagarí. MOVICE monitors areas such as the internal armed conflict and crimes committed by state actors, while OFP focuses its monitoring on sexual violence and the effects of the armed conflict on women. OFP also has an observatory related to food security in the Magdalena Medio region.

In turn, the Peace Program at the Centre for Research and Popular Education (CINEP), as a research and educational organisation, holds various databases as, explained investigator Fernando Sarmiento Santander. CINEP has a database on collective actions for peace, one on social struggles, and another on violations of human rights and political violence. The organisation publishes reports and materials within these themes. JUSTAPAZ holds an observatory about the situation for evangelical churches in the country, monitoring the effect of the internal armed conflict for local churches. The Reconciliation Foundation is the only actor interviewed that does not directly work with monitoring.
5.3 Advocacy and public communication

Advocacy and public communication go hand in hand with activities of monitoring and protection, and are used by all actors interviewed in different ways. Local and regional actors, such as the Diocese of Quibdó, FISCH and OFP, direct their work to a higher degree towards local and regional authorities at municipal and departmental level. They provide information and act as agenda setters within the themes of human rights, women’s rights, ethnic rights, etc. Ivonne Caicedo, a social communicator at FISCH, explained that they work extensively with advocacy and public communication. As a regional umbrella organisation, many public denunciations of human rights violations or breaches of international humanitarian law that are reported by one of the member organisations are made public through FISCH as it gives more weight to the claims as well as it increases the protection by diminishing the risks of reprisals to the individual organisation. FISCH (2013b) also has a monthly bulletin in addition to being an organiser of local and regional events to raise awareness about the human rights situation in the region, including cultural and territorial rights.

Other civil society actors also work with advocacy and public communication. JUSTAPAZ, through its accompaniment of evangelic church in various parts of the country, has been a driving force behind the advocacy work for creating a municipal council of peace in the municipality of Caucasia, Antioquia, and is to a large extent strengthening local victims’ organisations in their advocacy work at local and regional level. On a national level they are at the moment broadcasting a series of radio talks on the regional challenges of the peace negotiations under the name Tune in the Peace. They are also a part of an ecumenical peace board of evangelic churches that have directed statements to the government regarding the necessity for a ceasefire, for including ELN in the current peace talks, and for specific protection of women and youth in the conflict.

Additionally, Amparo Suárez explained that OFP has worked extensively with public communication at the regional and national level, using printed material such magazines as well as radio and television programs in their work for women’s rights. National organisations and networks such as CINEP, Women for Peace, ONIC, and MOVICE are working more on a national level to raise awareness on the issues close to them. Public statements and press releases on current matters are widely used, and in relation to the ongoing peace negotiation between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla, all civil society actors are following it closely to report on the progress of the peace talks from their perspective. For instance, CINEP (2013) has made a pronunciation for the Constitutional Court on the matter of the Legal Framework for Peace, which is the government’s proposition on how to regulate a demobilisation process with the guerrilla groups.

Advocacy work and public communication towards international actors are another core strategy that is used by several of the actors interviewed. Narváez Gómez from the Reconciliation Foundation explained that they work with advocacy and public communication directed to the local, national as well as international level. They advocate what they have come to call a “political culture of forgiveness and reconciliation” in the political, community, and interpersonal level. As the founder and president of the organisation, Narváez Gómez, is
travelling internationally to promote the working methods of the organisation. Other civil society actors interviewed are also directing their efforts and claims at an international level to gain further support. Amparo Suárez explained that OFP is building alliances with women’s organisations in for instance Spain, and that they do advocacy work directed towards various Embassies in Colombia, as a way of gaining support of their work so that the allies can in turn influence Colombian policymakers and politicians.

Mass mobilisations and other public acts are also commonly used by Colombian civil society. Whether it comes to indigenous organisations, victim’s movements or women’s organisations, taking the streets is a core strategy to get public attention. The representatives of MOVICE, Women for Peace, and CINEP all mentioned the mass mobilisation on the 9 April 2013 under the name *Ahora sí la Paz* (Now, Yes to Peace) as an important public statement of support to the peace negotiation in Cuba. Hundreds of thousands of people from various segments of Colombian society dressed in white took the streets of Bogotá, and several smaller mobilisations were seen all over the country. Sarmiento Santander at CINEP underlined that in the last decade there have been more mobilisations against continued violence (e.g. forced disappearances, kidnappings), focusing on what Galtung what call negative peace, than mobilisations aimed at achieving positive peace. The march on 9 April is in that sense an exception, and shows that there is a public support for peace in Colombia. Other collective action in favour of peace is *Semana por la Paz*, the peace week that was introduced in 1987. Sarmiento Santander stressed it has been consolidated throughout the country and is celebrated with a wide range of peace-related activities at the national as well as the local level each year.

### 5.4 In-group socialisation

Civil society is place where democratic values are fostered, as stated by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:70). One of the functions of civil society within peacebuilding is to promote a culture of peace which is especially important in societies divided by armed conflict. In-group socialisation takes place within groups, not between or among former rival groups, and can be a form of strengthening the group identity. In Colombia, indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups are disproportionally affected by the internal armed conflict (Rey Marcos & Pineda Ariza, 2013:4f), but the 1991 Constitutional reform and the organisational processes of the ethnic groups are important to strengthen the ethnic identity, as explained by Tobón Yagarí at ONIC. Also Caicedo at FISCH emphasised the importance of working for the cultural, territorial, and spiritual recognition of ethnic groups to reinforce the in-group socialisation and empowerment of these groups. FISCH (2013c) is currently offering a training program for local leaders in political policy from an ethnic perspective.

In terms of the women’s movement, the group identity as women has been bringing different women together in Colombia. Amparo Suárez at OFP and Maria Eugenia Ramírez from Women for Peace both highlighted that the women’s movement is bringing peasants, indigenous, Afro-Colombian, feminists, communal mothers, youth, and workers together under the common denomination of being women affected by the armed conflict. Women for
Peace is one such initiative that gathers around 80 different organisations together, explained Ramirez. Also Amparo Suárez explained that OFP is a part of a broader initiative called Women’s Social Movement against War and for Peace, which brings together around 50 organisations to generate a greater social and political impact than they can do individually. Also the victims’ movement is gathering people from different backgrounds together in the form of being victims in the armed conflict. Alfonso Castillo at MOVICE highlighted the work of MOVICE and other victims’ organisations as successful attempts of strengthening the identity as victims. He underlined that only 15 years ago no one was talking about the victims in the conflict, and today reparation to the victims is one of the topics on the negotiation agenda between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrilla (International Crisis Group, 2013). Additionally, the Reconciliation Foundation also works with victims of the conflict, where their ESPERE program, *Escuelas de Perdón y Reconciliación* (Schools for Forgiveness and Reconciliation) allows victims, within a safe environment, to share their trauma with each other in a small group setting. This program has won several international peacebuilding awards, including UNESCO’s peace education prize (Narváez Gómez & Díaz Ferrer, 2013:13).

### 5.5 Social cohesion

Social cohesion deals with bridging gaps between former adversary groups, according to Paffenholz and Spurk, for instance through workshops, dialogue or joint work efforts (2010:71f). In Colombia most of these efforts cannot be seen as the conflict is not dividing identity groups as it does for instance in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict or the conflict in Sri Lanka, where these efforts are more common (Paffenholz, 2010c:393). Besides, Paffenholz also highlights that “a deeper analysis, however, reveals that societies often face divisions among all sorts of groups” (2010c:393), i.e. not only the conflict parties, arguing that attention must be paid also to these divisions. In the case of Colombia, I have therefore paid attention to various sources of tension beyond the main conflict line as these expressions of societal divides can also hamper the work for social integration.

In this sense, the concept of social fabric, *tejido social*, is more commonly used by the interviewed civil society actors. Most see themselves and their work as contributing to bridging ties and building trust, although not specifically between former adversary groups, but rather in the society as a whole. Amparo Suárez maintained that the work of OFP and other women’s organisations is rebuilding the social fabric that the armed conflict has broken by bringing together, and empowering, women. In the Colombian countryside where Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities live side by side there have been inter-ethnic councils created to solve territorial disputes among the groups. In these, FISCH as a regional umbrella organisation gathering both groups, and the Diocese of Quibdó as a trusted and bridge-building actor, play important roles in reducing divisions among ethnic groups. JUSTAPAZ on their part supports local evangelic churches in their effort to bridge divides. In Caucasia, JUSTAPAZ is involved in a youth network that works for peace and human rights through arts, bringing different youth groups together to increase integration.
The Reconciliation Foundation works for creating a political culture of forgiveness and reconciliation to restore trust and coexistence in Colombian society. They hold various initiatives that work more specifically with social cohesion. Narváez Gómez explained that the organisation carries out workshops where perpetrators and victims meet; the offenders can ask for forgiveness and the victims can accept the apology as a way for both to move on. Narváez Gómez highlighted that “although victims have received reparation from the state, such as the right to truth, justice and guarantee of no-repetition, many are still blinded by anger and feelings of revenge. This anger is the seed to continued violence” (Skype interview 2013-08-04). At the moment the Reconciliation Foundation is working to facilitate sessions between former paramilitaries under the leader Mancuso from the AUC and the victims of their atrocities in a specific region in the country. In addition, the Reconciliation Foundation has created Reconciliation Centres in highly vulnerable locations that promote meeting points between ex-combatants, IDPs, and victims of various forms of violence. Through workshops, job training, and psychological attention people can come together, participate, and re-establish trust and social fabric (Fundación para la Reconciliación, 2013).

5.6 Intermediation and facilitation

Intermediation and facilitation by civil society can be carried out between the state and its citizens, but it can also take place between citizens and the warring parties, often at a local or regional level (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2010:73). All actors interviewed are executing intermediation and facilitation to different degrees, although primarily as intermediators in state-citizen relations, and to a lesser degree in terms of facilitating initiatives with armed groups.

In dialoguing with the state, Tobón Yagarí underlined that the main function of ONIC is to be the mediator and facilitator for the indigenous groups in their dialogue with the Colombian state, putting forward claims with a stronger, unified voice. Through advocacy work and mobilisations, a Permanent Board for the Cooperation with Indigenous People and Organisations has been in existence since 1996. This is where the Colombian state is obligated to sit down and discuss all administrative and legislative decisions that have an effect upon the indigenous people of the country. At a regional and local level, organisations like OFP and FISCH that represent the grassroots are recognised actors in dialoguing with municipalities and regional governments on social and political matters. JUSTAPAZ is a part of an initiative in eight conflict ridden departments of Colombia. The organisation has been the driving force behind the creation of dialogue opportunities where civil society, the local government, the local police and military can sit down and discuss drafting of public policy or solutions to a local conflict. Women for Peace works in a similar manner but more on a national level, trying to dialogue with the state in matters of women’s political participation and the peace process.

Some of the interviewed actors work with the second type of facilitation and mediation, i.e., dialogue with the warring parties. ONIC, the Reconciliation Foundation, JUSTAPAZ, and the Diocese of Quibdó have all been involved in dialogue with insurgent groups around releasing
kidnapped persons or forcibly recruited minors. JUSTAPAZ and the Diocese of Quibdó, as religious entities, have the status and logistical capacity that makes it possible for them to engage in such dialogue, argued the representative from JUSTAPAZ. However, most of the mediating and facilitating work takes place in the secret and never becomes known to the public or the state. JUSTAPAZ has also taken initiative to create dialogue opportunities between local governments and spokespersons for rebel groups to handle acute humanitarian crises in rural areas for the benefit of the civilian population.

5.7 Service delivery

When it comes to service delivery and aid in the Colombian context, some of the actors interviewed are performing such tasks. One of the most clear cases is ONIC, the national indigenous organisation. Due to the autonomy enjoyed by the country’s indigenous groups, Tobón Yagarí explained that ONIC and the local and regional indigenous organisations that it represents are important providers of services, such as healthcare and education. “The only way to provide services to indigenous communities is if the same indigenous people provide it, no other actor will ever get there,” argued Tobón Yagarí (personal interview 2013-07-07), taking into account that many indigenous communities can be found in remote areas of the country that are more than several days a walk away from urban centres. Furthermore, with indigenous organisations as service providers the indigenous population can be tended to in a culturally appropriate manner. One example that Tobón Yagarí put forward is the regional indigenous organisation of Chocó. Since last year they are responsible for the education of indigenous children in the department. Money from the Ministry of Education is transferred to the organisation and they in turn are the providers of everything from the materials to the teachers. They are now fighting to consolidate a proper health system as well, where cultural practices and traditional medicine is an integral part. Also Caicedo at FISCH emphasised the importance of ethno-education for indigenous as well as for the Afro-Colombian population.

Other civil society actors interviewed also function as service providers. Amparo Suárez explained that OFP provides academic training, and women can validate their high school education through the organisation. They also offer courses in beauty and agriculture, among other themes, that can provide women with an income opportunity. They also do food production, such as baking bread and producing milk and coffee, and have a health program where women can have access to alternative medicine in accordance with their cultural beliefs. Also the Diocese of Quibdó is delivering services through for instance agricultural projects; many development interventions by external donors are executed through the Catholic Church as they are a trusted entity in the region. In addition, through the community churches, the Diocese de Quibdó is collaborating with the national family welfare agency to provide school lunches as the state agency does not have the logistical capacity to do so. The Catholic Church has also been of foremost importance in assisting humanitarian crises and has provided food packages and shelter as no other actor has been able to enter certain conflict zones, as explained by Father Londoño.
5.8 Summary of activities

In chapter five I have gathered data from the interviews and exemplified activities civil society actors in Colombia are executing in terms of protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialisation, social cohesion, facilitation and mediation, and service delivery. I provide herein a scheme to summarise the activities carried out by the different actors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CINEP</th>
<th>Diocese of Quibdó</th>
<th>FISCH</th>
<th>JUSTAPAZ</th>
<th>MOVICE</th>
<th>OFP</th>
<th>ONIC</th>
<th>Reconcil. Found.</th>
<th>Women for Peace</th>
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<td>Monitoring</td>
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<td>Advocacy/public com.</td>
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<td>In-group socialisation</td>
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<td>Facilitation/mediation</td>
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<td>Service delivery</td>
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</table>

Table 2. Activities carried out by interviewed civil society actors.

6 The activity under the respective actor marked with an X means that the actor does perform this task, while the (x) implies that the actor partially perform the task. Regarding social cohesion only the Reconciliation Foundation is marked with an X as it is the only organisation that performs activities aimed at bridging divides between adversary groups (in this case, perpetrators and victims). The other actors rather contribute to rebuild the social fabric in general and are thereby marked with an (x). In terms of facilitation and mediation ONIC, the Diocese of Quibdó, JUSTAPAZ and the Reconciliation Foundation are marked with an X as they occasionally mediate with armed groups. The other actors marked with an (x) only facilitate dialogue between citizens and the state.
6. Analysis

The sixth chapter consists of an analysis of the findings presented in the previous chapter. First the activities of civil society in peacebuilding are related to the functions of civil society in peacebuilding. Later, the activities and functions are compared to the international peacebuilding objectives to find out how they relate. The chapter finishes by an illustrative figure on how civil society in Colombia contributes to the international peacebuilding objectives.

6.1 Civil society functions in peacebuilding

In the previous chapter the activities of the nine civil society actors interviewed were presented. In this first part of the analytical chapter I aim to bring the analysis further, to answer the second research question of how the activities of civil society in peacebuilding compare to the functions of civil society, as presented by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010).

6.1.1 Protection

Regarding the first function of civil society in peacebuilding, protection, all actors interviewed perform activities related to this. Paffenholz maintains that although it should be the state that provides protection, during armed conflict this function is often taken over by other actors, such as the UN or civil society itself (2010c:382). This can be clearly seen in the case of Colombia where several civil society actors are providing protection to member organisations and the civilian population in the area from attacks from armed actors by physical, judicial, and emotional accompaniment. Through their presence in the field, local and regional civil society actors can act as watchdogs over the conflict situation. In the Colombian case indigenous groups perform physical protection through the use of indigenous guards in many of the indigenous reserves. Organisations like OFP, FISCH and MOVICE can in one respect increase the protection for their member organisations by uniting and talking in a single voice regarding human rights violations or when pursuing a specific cause. But on the other hand violence against human rights defenders and civil society actors is continuous. The situation shows that the protection function of civil society is important, but it also becomes clear that it is not enough, and that civil society actors working for the respect of human rights are targeted, which in turn reduces the space for civil society to act.

Other functions identified by Paffenholz and Spurk in relation to protection are disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes, demining and control of arms, in which Colombian civil society has not been particularly involved, other than the Reconciliation Foundation that is working with demobilised paramilitary and guerrilla members as part of its reintegration and reconciliation work. Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:68) maintain that it is more likely to see civil society involvement in these questions at a community level. This is confirmed by Tobón Yagarí who sees the importance of engaging local indigenous organisations in a future demobilisation and reintegration process of guerrilla groups.
6.1.2 Monitoring

A civil society that monitors and holds a state accountable for its actions and behaviour is a core function in a democratic society as maintained by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:68). In peacebuilding, monitoring can be performed in relation to conflict situations, human rights violations, implementation of peace agreements, and other themes as explained by the authors, and it is a function widely carried out by Colombian civil society. Paffenholz and Spurk see providing information and giving recommendations to decision makers as an integral part of monitoring, something that can be seen with the actors interviewed as they publish reports and statements on the matters they monitor. In Colombia monitoring is highly connected to the thematic focus of the actor at hand, meaning that ONIC reports mostly on indigenous issues, MOVICE reports on matters related to victims of crimes by state actors, and OFP reports on women’s issues. However, human rights and the effects of the internal armed conflict are the common denominators.

6.1.3 Advocacy and public communication

Advocacy is identified as a core function of civil society in peacebuilding, and Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:69) emphasise that it is a way of putting issues on the public agenda and creating public pressure. Advocacy is used by all of the civil society actors interviewed, on the local, regional, national as well as international level. Through their work, civil society fulfils the function as put forward by Paffenholz and Spurk when reporting on human rights abuses, and the consequences of the internal armed conflict on different segments of society. Press releases and public denunciations are often used. Mass mobilisations are commonly used to protest against the consequences of the internal armed conflict or in favour of peace, and some events have become institutionalised nationwide, such as the annual Peace Week.

6.1.4 In-group socialisation

In-group socialisation as described by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:70f) deals with creating a culture of peace by upholding democratic behaviours and strengthen in-group identities. Civil society actors in Colombia are through their work strengthening the democratic culture, for instance, in the case of ethnic organisations their representatives at local, regional and national levels are elected every three years. Father Londoño highlighted the importance of the organisational processes in supporting the cultural identity and empowerment of ethnic minorities in claiming their rights. Women’s organisations and victim’s organisations have also helped to strengthen the identity of the respective group and both victim’s and women’s rights are part of the public debate in Colombia today. But, Paffenholz (2010c:389ff) highlights, in-group socialisation can also lead to reinforcement of existing divides in a society, which was brought to light by some of the interviewees. Fernando Sarmiento Santander, researcher at CINEP, maintained that Colombian civil society is rather divided where each civil society segment is pursuing its specific cause without taking into account others’ needs and priorities.
6.1.5 Social cohesion

Due to the character of the conflict in Colombia the attention of bridging divides between former adversary groups is exchanged for bridging ties between other dividing lines in society. Paffenholz (2010c:394) concludes after eleven case studies in her book that social cohesion activities, especially in conflicts that are not framed as identity conflicts, should have a broader outlook on societal divides and work for societal integration among all sorts of groups. Analysing the case of Colombia, most civil society actors interviewed used the concept of social fabric instead of social cohesion when describing their work to rebuild trust and coexistence between people. Of the interviewed actors, only the Reconciliation Foundation works explicitly with integration between perpetrators and victims. Paffenholz (2010c:396) points out that is difficult to see concrete results of social cohesion initiatives in the short term, and that it is yet too soon to be able to analyse long-term effects of social cohesion activities. Nevertheless, in the case of Colombia several interviewees emphasised the importance strengthening the social fabric in society and rebuilding trust and relationships that have become broken by acts of violence.

6.1.6 Facilitation and mediation

Facilitation and mediation are commonly used by Colombian civil society, mainly in dialogue between the state and citizens at the local, regional or national level, but also in dialogue with the armed groups. Paffenholz (2010c:398) argues that facilitation and mediation is particularly relevant on a local level as it has a greater chance to have an impact than on a national level. For instance, Colombia civil society is involved in discussions on public policy or solving local conflicts. Regarding facilitation and mediation with armed groups in the conflict, the religious organisations of civil society have a higher degree of independence and legitimacy to conduct such dialogue, as other actors run a greater risk of being stigmatised and accused for collaborating with guerrilla groups for engaging in dialogue. The Diocese of Quibdó, JUSTAPAZ, the Reconciliation Foundation as well as ONIC have been and still are occasionally involved in dialogue with rebel groups to release hostages or solve humanitarian situations, although their efforts are not always seen nor heard by the public.

6.1.7 Service delivery

In terms of service delivery several of the interviewed actors are involved in this, some to a higher degree than others. Paffenholz and Spurk argue that “…aid delivery can be important for civil society peacebuilding only if donor and agencies are aware of this role and explicitly try to find entry point for peacebuilding” (2010:74), underlining that service delivery per se does not contribute to peacebuilding. Paffenholz (2010c:401) argues that service delivery can open up room for the functions of protection, monitoring, and social cohesion under the right circumstances. In Colombia, especially regarding ethnic organisations, but also women’s organisations, it seems like service delivery can also be a way of strengthening that particular group, i.e. contribute to in-group socialisation, particularly when analysing the proper administration of educational and health systems in accordance with cultural beliefs of indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups. In addition, the exercise of self-determination of the
ethnic groups in the country can be seen as an important contribution to increased democratisation.

Paffenholz (2010c:401) maintains that the importance of service delivery in a certain context is connected to the capacity of the state to provide services. Looking at the case of Colombia, several of the actors interviewed expressed a concern for corruption and the limited abilities of municipal and departmental governments, in comparison to the national government. As a consequence, providing services to the citizens is a more common activity at a local and regional level where the state is generally weaker.

6.2 Activities and functions of civil society in relation to the international peacebuilding objectives

Having analysed the activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding as presented by Paffenholz and Spurk, I now intend to take the discussion further and answer the third research question on how the civil society activities and functions earlier described compare to the international peacebuilding objectives identified in the second chapter.

6.2.1 Create stability and security

The first international peacebuilding objective identified is to create stability and security, i.e., to reduce violence in society. It is a wide area that includes several important processes such as the DDR mechanisms, demining, security sector reforms, return of IDPs and refugees, etc. These are large efforts where the state has a leading role to implement these mechanisms. The question is how the activities and functions of civil society compare to the objective of attaining stability and stability.

Analysing the material gained from the interviews with Colombian civil society it becomes clear that civil society in several ways can contribute to the creation of stability and security, although not all activities/functions compare to those outlined in the peacebuilding objective. In the function of protection, for instance the physical, judicial, and emotional accompaniment that civil society actors provide to grassroots organisations and communities constitute in itself a protection of civilians, as does the indigenous guards on indigenous territory. The Catholic Church providing humanitarian assistance or accompanying returning IDPs are further examples of civil society’s contribution to the first peacebuilding objective. Also in the function of facilitation/mediation, the help of civil society actors to initiate dialogue with armed groups to solve local humanitarian crises or to release kidnapped or forcibly recruited children can contribute to stability and security.

The research conducted also shows that civil society can be part of the DDR processes. Actors engaged in reconciliation, as the Reconciliation Foundation in this study, can collaborate with state actors in the effort to reintegrate former combatants into civilian life. When interviewing the representative from ACR, *Agencia Colombia para la Reintegración* (Colombian Agency for Reintegration) she nevertheless maintained that the agency seldom works together with
civil society actors in reintegration projects. However, she remained positive to the idea as it could create a more sustainable process and greater local ownership. Regarding reintegration of indigenous or Afro-Colombian ex-combatants, the cultural particularities motivate the use of internal facilitators and grassroots organisations in the future reintegration processes. This was highlighted by Tobón Yagarí from ONIC.

Moreover, also civil society functions of monitoring, and advocacy and public communication can contribute to the dimension of increased stability and security. By monitoring situations in the field and by then conducting advocacy work and external communication work, civil society can draw attention to certain aspects of the themes addressed in the stability and security dimension and put them on the public agenda, and in that way pressure the state to perform its tasks.

6.2.2 Restore political and judicial institutions

The political and judicial dimension of the international peacebuilding objectives is, just as the first peacebuilding objective, to a large extent dependent on the state as a main contributor. Nevertheless, the classic role of civil society as a facilitator and mediator in the communication between the state and its citizens becomes crucial in restoring legitimacy for political and judicial institutions. In Colombia, which has a rather well educated and professional civil society, a wide range of civil society actors are performing advocacy and public communication work to influence decision makers at the local, regional and national level. However, the capacity of local and regional governments is often less than at the national state apparatus. Institution building, rule of law, good governance, public administration and finance are therefore a bigger challenge, and are perceived with more distrust at the local level. Still, civil society can participate in different aspects of political decision making; in municipal or departmental councils formulating public policies such as local and regional development plans or by commenting on national legislation drafts, as it has been done with the Legal Framework for Peace that will regulate the demobilisation process of the guerrillas.

Several civil society actors have also organised workshops and training for their members in laws and regulations so that people are more aware of their rights and duties. Carrillo (2009:148ff) emphasises that the professionalisation of Colombian civil society, in regards to human rights from the 1990’s and onwards, has had an impact upon various political processes. When the Justice and Peace Law was discussed for the demobilisation process of the paramilitaries, Colombian civil society used its international networks and allies to put forward its concerns. Carrillo (2009:149) maintains that “Colombian NGOs have been especially effective in invoking international oversight mechanisms and procedures and in reinforcing their pronouncements on the ground.”

Another aspect in Colombia is related to the indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations and the degree of self-determination that these groups enjoy. The Permanent Board for the Cooperation with Indigenous People, where the national government consult with indigenous people regarding all administrative and legislative decisions that have an effect upon them, is
important in this matter. Also on the local and regional level, public policy should reflect the multiethnic and multicultural features of the country in accordance with the 1991 Constitution. Here the voices and perspective of ethnic organisations are important to make sure that their views are taken into account.

6.2.3 Address socio-economic dimensions

The third part of the international peacebuilding objectives is to address socio-economic dimensions, where economic recovery, infrastructure and rebuilding of basic facilities are central together with restoration of healthcare and education. Provision of employment opportunities and livelihoods are also important to give people the chance to improve their quality of life. Also these efforts are to a large extent dependent on a state for their realisation, but the research conducted shows that civil society has a role to play in this dimension. Paffenholz and Spurk (2010:74) maintain that service-delivery per se does not lead to peacebuilding. However, when including a socio-economic dimension as an objective for peacebuilding, there are several activities and functions that civil society performs that do address socio-economic dimensions.

At the municipal and departmental level, local governments can be weakened and corrupted after years of armed conflict, which obstructs the attention to civilian populations and hampers development. Here, civil society often steps in to assist the citizens. In Colombia, grassroots organisations often conduct activities to increase their members’ knowledge and skills. Indigenous organisations can administer their proper healthcare and education systems in accordance with their cultural beliefs and practices, which in addition to addresses socio-economic issues also strengthens the in-group identity. Tobón Yagarí at ONIC is convinced that peacebuilding is achieved by tending to peoples’ socio-economic needs from their cosmology, and emphasised that no one else knows better what they need than the ethnic minorities themselves. To attain this, ethnic organisations often create Life Plans that are local development plans based on the cosmology of the ethnic communities (Hermission, 2010). Also the in-group identity of women can be strengthened by the work of women’s organisations. At the local level they can engage in and create productive activities to help women generate livelihood opportunities. Courses in agricultural production, beauty, handicrafts or other skills are used to empower women at the same time as it improves their socio-economic situation.

The facilitating and mediating function of civil society between citizens and the state is also crucial when it comes to facilitating communication about socio-economic issues with the local, regional and national governments. In Colombia, municipal, departmental, and national development plans are created, where for example the regional government of Chocó consulted with civil society actors and citizens to include the development visions of the ethnic minorities in the region into the plan (AMUNAFRO, 2013). Another way for civil society actors to have an impact on the socio-economic dimensions of peacebuilding is through their monitoring and advocacy work for the kinds of socio-economic interventions they want to see. OFP is, for instance, monitoring the food security situation in the Magdalena Medio region and performs advocacy and public communication work in relation to this.
Advocacy work can be directed towards the local, regional or national governments, as well as to international donors.

6.2.4 Transform relations

Transforming relations is the fourth part of an integrated view on the international peacebuilding objectives. Schirch (2004:45ff), who puts the most emphasis on this dimension, argues that it is a long-term but key principle in peacebuilding. Relations at all levels; individual, family, community, and national must transform to promote partnership and respect instead of violence and domination, she maintains. As well in this dimension the state carries a main responsibility, for instance by creating mechanisms for truth and reconciliation, such as truth commissions. But also here civil society efforts can contribute. Narváez Gómez and Díaz Ferrer emphasise the importance of individuals to “…recover their dignity and resume a trust in the Other. Otherwise, retaliation will continue to escalate violence at individual and communal level”, they maintain (2013:4). In this sense, the work of civil society actors and their contribution to in-group socialisation and social cohesion (social fabric) play a part in restoring the confidence and the social relations destroyed by violent conflict. In this thesis, the Reconciliation Foundation stands out for focusing their work on the creation of a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation. By facilitating the meeting between perpetrators and victims, an opportunity is created where the offenders can apologise for their crimes, and the victims get a chance to accept the apology and leave sentiments of anger and revenge behind. Moreover, through group sessions in trauma healing the Reconciliation Foundation also contributes to this peacebuilding objective.

A further aspect of transforming relations lays in the dialogue efforts to bridge societal divides. Different civil society initiatives aim at increasing the bonds within society. In Colombia, this can for instance be seen in the initiatives that JUSTAPAZ is behind; the youth network for peace and human rights through the use of arts, and the Reconciliation Centres of the Reconciliation Foundation where victims, IDPs, and former combatants can meet and interact in joint workshops and job training.

Furthermore, civil society’s role in bridging divides between the state and its citizens, i.e. the function as a facilitator and mediator, is also vital in this matter. However, the internal armed conflict in Colombia has effects upon many different relations, including the relation between the state and civil society. A mal-functioning and distrustful relationship complicates the facilitating and mediating role that civil society should hold between the state and the citizens. My own experience from interacting with both civil society and state actors at different levels in Colombian society has brought my attention to the lack of confidence and trust between the two.

Nevertheless, Rettberg (2012:35f) maintains that peacebuilding in Colombia has been a shared effort between the state, civil society, and the international community. In contrast to peacebuilding in other countries, the Colombian state has taken a central role in constructing peacebuilding policies together with national and international organisations, she argues. However, the distrust and cleavages between the state and civil society in Colombia that
comes up in the interviews conducted for this thesis shows an area of work where the relations between state and civil society have a lot of potential to improve. To be able to generate positive peacebuilding results the relationship between the state and civil society needs to develop in a positive direction.

6.2.5 Summary of Colombian civil society’s contribution to peacebuilding objectives

In this last section of the analysis I will summarise and show how the activities and functions of Colombian civil society compare to the international peacebuilding objectives. This is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Colombian civil society’s contribution to the international peacebuilding objectives.
Not all aspects of the work of civil society can fit into the figure; rather it is a way of exemplifying and demonstrating how civil society in Colombia contributes to peacebuilding. The research demonstrates that civil society carries out different actions that fit within the four dimensions of the international peacebuilding objectives. In comparison to the actions of the state, civil society actors are smaller entities that often perform smaller initiatives connected to the area of work of the particular actor. The activities of civil society often take place closer to peoples’ realities (compare to Lederach’s (1997) pyramid of actors and approaches to peacebuilding, Figure 3). In this sense, the efforts made by civil society often add to those of the state when the state does not have the capacity to respond to its population. To summarise what functions of civil society in peacebuilding that have an effect upon what dimension of the general peacebuilding objectives, I have created a final illustration in of this relationship in Figure 5.

![Figure 5](image_url)

**Figure 5.** Functions of civil society in relation to the international peacebuilding.
7. Conclusion

In this thesis I have been looking at the role of civil society in peacebuilding, using Colombia as a case study. The research objective was twofold, first to draw from current literature to create a general framework for what peacebuilding wants to achieve, i.e., to identify the international peacebuilding objectives. This was made in chapter two. The second research objective was to identify the activities and functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as described by Paffenholz and Spurk (2010), to determine in what ways civil society in Colombia, through its work, may contribute to the international peacebuilding objectives. This has been explored and analysed in chapter five and six. It is important to underline that this study has involved only a small, but diversified, segment of civil society actors in Colombia. There are thousands of civil society organisations and associations in Colombia that are involved in different peacebuilding activities at the local, regional and national level. This thesis serves as an example of what civil society may contribute with in peacebuilding, but the activities of civil society in peacebuilding are not limited to solely those presented in this study.

The first research question posted in this investigation aimed to answer what activities Colombian civil society is carrying out in terms of peacebuilding. Inspired by Lederach’s (1997:39) pyramid of actors at top-level, mid-level and grassroots level, both mid-range and grassroots actors were chosen for interviews to represent different types of groupings on the local, regional and national level. The study reveals that of the nine interviewed civil society actors, the majority carries out roles that coincide with the framework presented by Paffenholz and Spurk. Consequently, almost all actors execute activities related to protection, monitoring, advocacy and public communication, in-group socialisation, social cohesion, facilitation/mediation, and service delivery. The range of peacebuilding efforts reaches from trauma healing sessions to empower victims of the conflict, to nationwide mass mobilisations for peace. The different actors have distinct target groups and goals for their work, and the activities performed are to a large extent related to the type of organisation or association that they represent and where they are located. Sarmiento Santander (2008:31) underlines that due to the conflict dynamics that vary in different parts of the country, civil society has developed diverse strategies on how to approach the armed conflict, and consequently, how to approach building peace.

The second research question asked how the activities performed by civil society in Colombia compare to the functions of civil society in peacebuilding, as outlined by Paffenholz and Spurk. The investigation shows that civil society to a large extent fulfils the functions of civil society in peacebuilding. What was noted in the study regarding the work for social cohesion, only one organisation interviewed is carrying out work to bridge divides between adversary groups, in this case interpreted as the relation between perpetrator and victim. This low number must be understood in the context of the Colombian internal armed conflict, therefore understood as not being an identity-conflict. However, the interviewees still argued that Colombian society is deeply divided, and maintained that the work they perform helps to restore the social fabric. Another observation was made regarding the function of
facilitation/mediation. Almost only religious organisations are occasionally engaged in dialogue with armed actors, while the other segments of civil society rather focus their facilitating and mediating role on the dialogue between the state and its citizens. The view of religious entities as rather independent and impartial in the conflict facilitates their negotiation possibilities with armed groups.

The final research question was asked on the subject of how the activities and functions of civil society in Colombia compare to the international peacebuilding objectives. The results show that many of the activities and functions executed by civil society in Colombia contribute to the fulfilment of the four international peacebuilding objectives. We should bear in mind that the peacebuilding objectives, i.e. to create stability and security, restore political and judicial institutions, address socio-economic dimensions, and transform relations, have been formulated mainly with national governments and international bodies in mind. Nevertheless, the research demonstrates that civil society can have an important role in adding to the state’s efforts to achieve peacebuilding. In addition, as civil society generally works closer to peoples’ realities, especially at the grassroots level, the peacebuilding efforts undertaken by civil society actors may, to a higher degree, reflect the needs of the people.

What can we learn from the study? We know that peacebuilding is a comprehensive concept that includes a wide range of activities prior, during as well as after violent conflict. Paffenholz (2010a:49) identifies peacebuilding as all efforts that are directly linked to achieve sustainable peace within a time-frame that extends up to a decade into the post-conflict period. During this time, peacebuilding efforts must take place at all levels of society; at the personal level, community level as well as the national level. The UN emphasises that “[i]t is the citizens of the countries where peacebuilding is underway, with support from their governments, who assume the responsibility for laying the foundations of lasting peace,” (2010:5). This statement clearly demonstrates a view of peacebuilding as a joint effort of different forces in the society.

Nonetheless, it is the negotiation team of the Colombian government that sits down with the negotiation team of the FARC guerrilla to discuss a peace agreement in Cuba. This top-down approach to peace, assuming that peace will “trickle-down” to the rest of Colombian society, is questioned by all civil society actors interviewed. Peace, they argue, in line with Galtung’s (1969) notion of positive peace, is not the same as the termination of violence. Signing a peace agreement at the national level will not automatically bring peace to the local or regional level. One of the interviewees rather emphasised the opposite; that peace is only possible to achieve on a national level if it comes from the different regions in the country. Just as the UN (2010:5) emphasises the importance of national ownership of peacebuilding processes in order for them to be sustainable, the diverse conflict dynamics in the different regions of Colombia also call for local ownership of peacebuilding processes – adapted to the regional contexts and conditions. This view is confirmed by Paladini Adell (2012:50), who argues that local peace proposals and agendas must be taken into account to construct a functioning peace infrastructure from the bottom-up. “Peacebuilding must be based and rooted in local level peace infrastructures; this gives peace its address and its legitimacy”, she
argues while emphasising that “...the national level should recognise these local efforts as the foundations of any peacebuilding effort” (2012:50). In relation to Colombia, Rettberg (2012:37) argues that the different realities at the national, regional and local levels constitute a problem when trying to consolidate nationwide peacebuilding efforts, as national initiatives and new policies have been difficult to adapt and implement to the regional and local political logic. In this sense, the argument of Sarmiento Santander at CINEP, of the importance of implementing regional and local peace talks when the peace accord at the national level is signed, is valid. In these local peace negotiations, the civil society at grassroots level plays an even more central role, he argues.

However, the research conducted for this Master thesis also draws attention to the polarisation that exists between the state and civil society in Colombia. The high level of distrust between the two is hampering joint peacebuilding collaborations on local, regional and national level, and constitutes a risk in the continued peacebuilding process that Colombia needs to confront. What can be concluded is that the state as an actor in peacebuilding is here to stay, and so is civil society. Based on the understanding gained from the conducted research, this thesis affirms that peacebuilding must be adapted to the local realities and requires an active participation from both the government and civil society to be successful.
References

Books and articles


Electronic sources


Unpublished material

Appendix I

List of interviews


6. Fernando Sarmiento Santander, Investigator in peacebuilding and development. Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular/Programa por la Paz (CINEP/PPP) [Centre for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program]. Skype interview, 2013-07-31


8. Man, Coordinator for peace initiative project. Asociación Cristiana Menonita para Justicia, Paz y Acción Noviolenta (JUSTAPAZ) [Christian Mennonite Association for Justice, Peace and Nonviolent Action]. Skype interview, 2013-08-03


10. Ivonne Caicedo, Social Communicator, Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó (FISCH) [Interethnic Solidarity Forum of Chocó]. E-mail interview, 2013-08-05
Appendix II

Map of Colombia