

[FROM THE MARGINS TO THE CENTRE?]

a study into the role of women's organisations
in Colombia's peace negotiations

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[Preface]

Before you lies the work in which all I've learned in the past years at Utrecht University ought to come together. Creating it was a long process of thinking, writing, erasing and rephrasing. What helped me along the way was to realize that this is in fact a story, written according to the rules and procedures agreed upon by scholars in the field of international relations and political science. In this story, many other small and big stories are embedded. The story of Colombian women, fighting courageously in the midst of violence to change their future for the better. The story of scholars, rightfully questioning the ability of civil society to participate in political peace negotiations. The story of organisations, promoting women's claim for a place at the negotiation table. The story of politicians and armed actors who seem unable or unwilling to broker peace and stop the violence that continues to affect the lives of many Colombians day after day.

It was my job to bring these stories together; to decide what to include and not; which linkages to identify and not; to set the tone and create order in the madness of all the information. At times I felt uncomfortable with that responsibility, wondering if I were able to analyze the case in a way that does justice to its complex reality. You are invited to read the story I created. I hope it inspires, informs, surprises, and intrigues you.

There are many people to thank for their inspiration, support and encouragement. Most of all Antonie, who never stopped believing in my ability to finish it. Chris van der Borgh, whose input I have certainly not sought enough, but who believed in the plan to devote my final thesis to this topic and managed to let me walk out of his office time and again, feeling that I could handle the job. Mum and dad for your hospitality. Charlotte for sharing the joys (Gutenbergs!) and sorrows of writing. And lastly, those people I was privileged to meet in Colombia throughout the summer of 2004, who inspired me to dive into the Colombian case in the first place. Thanks a million!

When I chose to write my thesis on the debate around civil society's role in peace negotiations, I feared this would eventually mean that I had to let go of my personal belief that even a small group of citizens can actually make a change. Looking back, I am relieved to see that I do not have to let it go. Conviction has grown that indeed, they can change the course of history, provided that they remain honest and specific about their successes and failures, never stop reflecting on their weaknesses and limitations, continue to learn from the past, and recognize that perhaps they play a small but significant and complementary role in a bigger story. As such, Margaret Mead's words are an appropriate end of the preface and a good start for what follows.

*never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has*

- margaret mead -

[List of Abbreviations]

ANMUCIC	National Association of Peasant, Black and Indigenous Women of Colombia
AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ELN	National Liberation Army
FARC	The Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia
GRO	Grassroots organisation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IGOs	International Governmental Organisations
IMP	Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz [women's initiative for peace]
La Ruta	Ruta Pacifica de las Mujeres
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAS	the Organisation of American States
OFP	Organización Femenina Popular [popular women's organisation]
OSCE	the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RNM	Red Nacional de Mujeres [national women's network]
TC	Thematic Commission
UN	United Nations
WEC	Women's Emancipatory Committee
WNC	Women's National Consensus Table

[Introduction]

'Some of us join a movement against war when we're jolted into an act of compassion and responsibility by something we see on TV. Others create such a movement because it's the only thing left to do, because violence walked into our village, our street or our home one time to many.'

Cynthia Cockburn, July 2005

That is the case in Colombia, where women have mobilized and organised themselves in a diverse movement that is increasingly speaking out against the armed conflict and the violence that has been robbing generations of lives of hope, of safety and of a peaceful future. Colombia's history is an endless cycle of periods of violence, rivalry and attempts of the political elite to negotiate peace, in which the civilian population pays the highest price for the inability or unwillingness of the ones in power to broker peace and start building their country up in stead of tearing it down.

The women's movement's growing call for a negotiated solution to the to conflict in Colombia is no exception. Over the past years, a tremendous increase in attention for women's rights and gender equality in conflict transformation processes can be noted, partly due to the global campaign called 'Women Building Peace: From the Village Council tot the Negotiation Table', launched in 1999. This campaign was a reaction to the failure of implementing the majority of security policies relating to women, which left them vulnerable during conflict and excluded from the determination of possible solutions to their problems (Fitzduff and Church 2004: 96). The campaign raised a remarkable amount of awareness for women and security, and culminated in a UN Security Council Resolution, calling for increased participation and representation of women in conflict resolution mechanisms and peace processes at all levels. Both the campaign and the resolution were a great support for women in conflict areas all over the world, building peace and claiming place at the negotiation table.

The increasing call from women to participate in peace negotiations is part of a bigger call from civil society for the democratisation of formal peace processes. It is backed by the non-state sector that promote a discourse that implies that, if left to states alone, peace negotiations are unlikely to succeed. Instead, what is needed is to base these in the lives of civilians. The state and the formal peace process are considered the domain of men and the already empowered. Other voices should be heard, in particular women's voices to bring a women's perspective to the table and guarantee a peace process that reflects needs and priorities of all civilians. The discourse entails many prescriptive claims regarding the benefits of opening up the process to civilian and women's participation, assuming that it is inherently beneficial for the negotiations.

Then there are the scholars who have responded rather reluctant to this vigorous call from civil society to get access to negotiations. Peace negotiations traditionally belong to the domain of track-one actors, leaders of governments and armed groups. Opening up this space to civilian actors does not go easily, and often requires civil society actors to be very persistent. While civil society groups all over the world have been claiming space in formal peace processes, and have collected many case studies and research to highlight their possible contributions, scholars still hesitate to embrace their claims. Firstly, because only little is known about the interaction between track-one and civil society actors. Secondly, they argue that the prescriptive nature of the civil society discourse ignores the weak impact measurement and evaluation methods used to support the claimed influence of civil society organisations in peace negotiations.

Therefore, this thesis will present an in-depth case-analysis of the participation of civil society organisations - women's peace organisations - in peace negotiations. It will attempt to find out how exactly these organisations interact with track-one actors and processes, and it will examine the external and internal dynamics that influence the space these organisations have to shape peace negotiations meaningfully. Also, it will be analysed what meaning is attributed to their interventions to participate and influence the negotiations.

Colombia's women's peace movement is an excellent case to analyse the interaction between actors of formal peace processes and women's peace NGOs. Since the 1990s, national women's associations from bundled their forces to engage with the negotiations between the Government and armed groups, in particular with the FARC and the paramilitary organisation AUC. This research will shed light on how and to what extent Colombian women's organisations managed to participate and influence peace negotiations since 1999.

The first chapter will provide a theoretical introduction into peace negotiations, and a conceptualisation of space for civil participation in such processes. The civil society discourse will be analysed, along with the response of scholars, leading to the formulation of the research question and methodology.

In the second chapter the Colombian story will be set out. After a peek into the history of the conflict, both negotiation processes will be described, followed by a sketch of Colombia's civil society, in particular the women's movement.

Chapter three introduced the four case organisations, whose participation in the negotiations will be assessed and analysed, both during the negotiations with the FARC as well as the negotiations with the AUC.

Consequently, chapter four will zoom in on how the organisations and their supporting network interpret the impact of their interventions and participation.

In the reflection and conclusions, the outcomes of the case analysis will be connected to the questions that were asked in the first place and conclusions will be drawn.

Opening up the Peace Process: Theorising the participation of civilian actors in peace negotiations

This first chapter contains the theoretical framework for this thesis. It starts with an exploration of peace negotiations, followed by an analysis of the growing call of civil society actors, in particular the women's movement, to open up the formal peace process and allow them to participate in the negotiations. Consequently, the reluctant and sceptical response of scholars and core actors of peace negotiations is discussed, leading to the formulation of the research questions and the proposed case study that will be examined. The last section presents the methodology to come to an answer to the questions that are central to this research.

1.1 Peace Negotiations & Discourses on Civil Participation

In the resolution of contemporary protracted conflicts, it is often through negotiations that armed groups seek to find a peaceful solution for the causes and results of the conflict. These negotiations are embedded in a larger process in which parties in conflict attempt to build confidence through step-by-step reciprocal moves, trying to resolve complicated issues such as ceasefire, disarmament and demobilisation while attempting to redefine the future through the design of peace agreements (Sisk 2001: 787). This overall process is often referred to as the peace process, encompassing all efforts at different levels and by various means and actors to promote peace in a society, torn by violent conflict. The setting in which negotiations occur is highly complex and multiple factors and actors add their share to the dynamics of it. To enable an analysis of how, where to and with what success civilian outsiders participate in and possibly shape peace negotiations, key characteristics and dynamics of peace negotiations will be further clarified.

1.1.1 Negotiations versus Peace Processes

Though the term 'peace process' gained popularity throughout the nineties, defining it still remains an awkward and difficult job. There is no universal definition of what constitutes a peace process, when it starts, what it should address and when it has successfully been completed. In scholarly literature the term is used to refer to the myriad of activities in the field of conflict prevention, management and resolution as well as peace building. The term recognises that the cycle of activities, necessary to produce a just and sustainable agreement between parties in conflict, ranges from long before to long after the official signing of the peace. Though some models strike the impression that the road from conflict to peace follows bell shaped or cyclical models with clearly marked phases and logical steps, many contemporary conflicts defy such a conceptualisation. Instead, as Darby states, they show that the many steps involved often take place simultaneously, on different speeds and at various levels (Darby 2001: 11).

Thus, a peace process typically consists of a series of rapid moves and shifts, interrupted by longer periods of impasse and stalemate. Not only is the peace process dynamic and difficult to predict, also actors, standpoints and issues at stake change over time. Logical as it seems, Väyrynen who studied the ending of conflicts, argues that the bulk of conflict theory still regards actors, issues and interests as a given. Rather, anyone who analyses peace processes should be aware that those elements are fluid as a consequence of the social, economic and political dynamics of societies, especially those entrenched in armed conflict (Väyrynen quoted in Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 162).

Both in public media and in scholarly literature the term peace process is occasionally used as a synonym for peace negotiations between opposed armed groups, adding to the confusion around the concepts. The reason might be that most definitions of 'peace process' consider negotiations as the core of the process. For instance, Darby and Mc Ginty compared several peace processes from the nineties and formulated five criteria for a peace processes. Four refer to negotiations between opposed armed groups: armed groups should be willing to negotiate in good faith, negotiations should not avoid the root causes of the dispute, negotiators should be committed to a sustained process and they should not use force to achieve their objectives (2000: 7-8). Arnson, a Latin America expert, defines peace processes as a period of "*dialogue over time between representatives of contesting forces, [...] aimed at securing an end to hostilities in the context of durable agreements*" (1999: 2). Both examples illustrate that negotiations are central in the conceptualisation of the peace process.

To avoid confusion, this research regards the peace process as the overall, multi-layered societal process, in which many other actors and dynamics play an interacting and sometimes reinforcing role. The peace process functions as the dynamic context in which the actual peace negotiations take place. Negotiation can be defined as 'the actual bargaining process in which disputants seek to find a solution to a common problem and try to reach an agreement on how to settle the dispute(s) by peaceful means.'¹ In a setting of armed conflict it often occurs through exchanging proposals to resolve short term concerns, such as ceasefire and DDR procedures and to address underlying causes and dynamics that fuel the conflict. Negotiations are generally designed to arrive at a mutually acceptable outcome, which accordingly becomes formalised in a peace agreement that can be implemented. Analysing the fluid stages of peace negotiations, Bell distinguished three types of peace agreements: pre-negotiation agreements, framework-substantive agreements and implementation agreements (Bell 2000: 20).

Most scholars and practitioners argue that successful negotiations should always deal with core issues in the conflict. Addressing the superficial symptoms of the conflict only, such as DDR processes and security concerns might result in negative peace (the absence of violence), but is not considered to provide a solid base for sustainable positive peace (Hampson 1996: 218-220, Arnson 1999: 2-3). Addressing issues that lie at the heart of a protracted armed conflict is perhaps the biggest challenge of negotiating peace. Especially when conflicts have continued for

¹ Glossary at Conflict Resolution Information: www.crinfor.org. Consulted: May 10th 2006

decades, society has become adapted to a state of continuous violence: parallel illegitimate economic systems emerge, many people and sectors thrive by the conflict, and daily life is often marked by high levels of violence. Underlying factors fuelling the conflict are not easy to address, let alone change, especially when they are linked to factional interests of elites and other powerful groups in society (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 138-141). For some, dialogue between opposed armed groups can only be called 'peace negotiations' when the root causes of the conflict are discussed. If parties only discuss pre-conditions or the agenda of the negotiations or if negotiations do not result in peace agreements (Rojas et al. 2004: 3), they speak of dialogue or peace talks. However, this research will use the term peace negotiations for all forms of dialogue and peace talks that take place between opposed actors, as it considers initial talks in the so called pre-negotiation process as an essential part of the entire negotiation process, which should not be dismissed when the end results are not satisfactory or when the process is not completed.

Traditionally, peace negotiations are part of the formal peace process. Conflict resolution through peace negotiations has a long tradition of being the task of political leaders, formal diplomats, military leaders and leaders or representatives of armed groups, the so called core actors of the formal peace process. The formal peace process is also referred to as track-one diplomacy or elite peace-making. It generally takes place at the level of governments, elites and high-level leadership, the 'formal' domain. Traditional means to resolve armed conflict include preventive diplomacy, mediation, negotiation and developing agreements, solving disarmament and demobilisation issues, designing reconstruction strategies and arranging provision regarding humanitarian aid (McKeon 2005: 572, Hottinger 2005: 58). Core actors in the formal process may be assisted by large international institutions, such as the United Nations (UN), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), humanitarian organisations, or by external mediators and negotiators (Darby & Mac Ginty 2000: 8).

However, over the past decades, peacemaking approaches in which non-state actors play an important role have increased, alongside traditional conflict resolution. They challenged the idea that the resolution of conflicts is restricted to top-level leadership and diplomats, confined to political realm. Consequently, also the body of theory started to regard conflict resolution as a more holistic and transformative process, in which actors and activities at all levels and sectors of society play a role in the dynamics that shape the peace process (Miall 2004: 74-80, Hottinger 2005: 57). New actors came into the picture: non governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) but also United Nations entities, international and regional bodies, private actors, the media and social movements increasingly got involved in conflict resolution and peace building. These actors perform a variety of activities, mostly political and governmental structures, such as reducing or resolving conflicts within society by improving communication and understanding by (re-)building relationships; decreasing tension, anger, fear or misunderstanding by humanising the 'face of the enemy' and introducing personal experiences from both sides; influencing thinking and action of Track I actors by bringing root causes, feelings and needs of

citizens to light; deliver input and make suggestions or for reframing policies; build constituencies for peace at civil society level (Diamond & McDonald 1996: 2-4, Barnes 2005: 9-20). Their contributions are referred to as the informal peace process, track II diplomacy or multi-track diplomacy.

Among and between the formal and informal peace process there are overlapping, collaborative, complementary and contesting activities. Scholars from holistic conflict transformation approaches argue that for a peace process to move forward, linkages should be created between the tracks and that when key actors at multiple levels interact and cooperate with each other, it can have a positive reinforcing impact on the peace process. Two well-known scholars who developed these approaches and plead for bottom-up peace building, linking informal and grassroots-level initiatives to the formal peace process are Lederach and Curle. Both have extensive experience in grassroots conflict transformation work, and strongly underline the need to make use of the internal or indigenous capacities for conflict transformation (Ramsbothan et al. 2005: 51-52, Lederach 2001: 841-854). They focus on the relational and social dimensions of conflict and peace, and stress that political and military peacemaking is insufficient to bring sustainable peace – those efforts need the involvement of grassroots actors and mid-level social, political and economic leaders and groups. Though large part of the non-governmental sector embraced this perspective and have build a discourse that supports their plead for greater involvement, other core actors tend to be less eager to do so and remain reluctant about the need to involve and include civil society actors in the formal process. Their motivation to do so will be addressed later in this chapter.

1.1.2 Negotiations: Phases, Actors, Structure and Dynamics

Before negotiations about substantive issues between opposed groups set off, participants have go through an important part of the process, the pre-negotiation phase. This is nearly as important as the negotiations themselves, as important decisions about the process are being made. It typically evolves around communicating willingness to talk with the opposed party, agreeing on who participates under what particular conditions, setting the agenda and identifying the issues – possibly culminating in a pre-negotiation agreement (Bell 2000: 21).

For Zartman, they start when one or more parties consider negotiation as a policy option and communicates this intention to the other party. They end when parties officially agree to formal negotiations or abandon the negotiations. However, Saunders argues that setting the agenda, staffing the negotiation teams, defining ground rules and solving problems concerning the setting should also be considered a part of pre-negotiations, as it belongs to setting the stage and preparing for the actual formulation of proposals and agreements. Even later in the negotiation process, it can be useful to revisit some of the pre-negotiation-issues again: to adapt the agenda and revise pre-conditions, for instance to get out of a deadlock situation, or when the talks move forward and parties will have to tackle completely new issues (Saunders 2001: 483-485).

Scholars extensively discussed when it is best to start peace negotiations with most chance for success. A well-known concept regarding when to start is developed by Zartman, who explored the conditions under which conflict situations are 'ripe' for a negotiated solution. In his concept of 'ripeness', the central condition for starting a potentially successful negotiation trajectory is the 'mutually hurting stalemate'. In his wordings this means the following:

"Both sides are locked in a situation from which they cannot escalate the conflict with their available means and at an acceptable cost. Such a stalemate provides a window of opportunity that is narrow and highly conditional; it depends of perceived rather than objective reality, on a stalemate that affects both sides, and on a discomfort (preferably increasing) felt by both parties." (1995: 8)

Though this is widely accepted in conflict resolution approaches, it has its limitations. Starting negotiations timely might increase chances for success, but does not guarantee anything for the outcomes, as different criteria and conditions might apply to the latter process. Others argue that Zartman fails to acknowledge that the degree of 'ripeness' can change over time, along with context dynamics, such as leadership changes, policy changes or the influence of pressure groups (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 166). Some argue that it leads to a passive attitude in which parties wait until the 'ripe' moment appears. Rubin moved the debate forward by arguing that stalemates can be created and enforced with incentives and threats, by information-sharing, by reframing the conflict and through third party intervention (Rubin 1993: 240-242, quoted in Salla 1997). As 'ripeness' relates to perceptions of stalemate, rather than the objective reality this makes sense.

Beside the importance of parties to be mutually hurt and consider negotiations as the most viable way out, scholars also stress the need for opposed groups to acknowledge each other (Darby & Mac Ginty 2000: 7, Rudas et al. 2003: 12). Instead of dehumanising the other party to justify violence and domination, it should be understood that cooperation with and recognition of the other group is key to resolve the conflict. At this point, parties often struggle with the 'legitimacy' dilemma. Governments consider most armed groups as terrorists or rebels and generally speaking they are not keen on conferring legitimacy on them by engaging in dialogue. Vice versa, insurgent groups often consider the government illegitimate. However, this step cannot be overlooked when starting negotiations, as acknowledgement is closely linked to confidence. Confidence begins with trusting the other to be seriously willing to negotiate, committed to find a way out and willing to make the effort needed to continue, also during setbacks. Sometimes shifts in the context, such as leadership changes, national elections or changed elite standpoints can get parties at the table. Also, third parties can contribute significantly to confidence-building.

establishing ground rules and agenda-setting

Before negotiations begin, parties have to discuss and agree on the conditions on which the parties agree to engage in dialogue. Establishing ground rules or pre conditions – for instance concerning the use of violence – is an indispensable step which can be laid out in an official accord to strengthen and guide the further negotiation process (Rudas et al. 2003: 15). It is

certainly not the easiest step, as the process is still vulnerable and trust low. For all parties, there are possible threats and at this stage. In case of negotiation between a guerrilla group and the government, the government might demand a cease-fire because they will not negotiate with an actor that uses illegitimate violence. Guerrillas might perceive this as threatening, since the armed struggle is a core component of their identity. Renouncing it could be seen as giving up the entire struggle. When a government demands disarmament, it is even more threatening for the guerrillas, as they therewith would not have the means to take up the armed struggle again, in case negotiations collapse. Especially when the level of trust is low and the divide between opposed parties large, peace negotiations run the risk of getting deadlocked at this stage already. To prevent that, both parties should present negotiable and flexible pre-conditions. It is also possible to renounce all proposed preconditions when parties cannot agree, and design a set of general ground rules for all parties to stick to throughout the further process, if needed with the assistance of an external facilitator (Harris & Reilly 1998: 79-90).

Hereafter, the agenda-setting can begin. This is not just a matter of collecting issues and topics for discussion, but includes coming to a shared definition of those topics and assessing the importance of each topic to the parties. It can become complicated when one party prefers to maintain the status quo on an issue while the other aims to negotiate structural changes. Agenda setting also involves deciding the sequence of the agenda items: tackle the most complex issues first to get them out of the way, or later, after some of the easier issues have been negotiated successfully and confidence has grown? Parties can exchange proposals or a comprehensive agenda could be developed in which each new topic builds on the outcomes of the agreements on the previous issue (Harris & Reilly 1998: 92). If the public is aware that the negotiation-agenda is being set, interest groups could take their chance to try to get their issues on the agenda, for instance by mobilising the public to raise awareness for their cause, by drafting proposals or by influencing negotiating parties through lobby and advocacy work.

actors & inclusiveness

A myriad of actors can be involved in peace negotiations, ranging from political and military leaders, to leaders of armed groups, ex- or internal facilitators and mediators, special advisors and civil representatives. Scholars underline that inclusiveness is essential to reach sustainable peace agreements, meaning that at least the core parties of the armed conflict should be sitting at the table, and that various standpoints and opinions within the participating groups are included in the negotiation design (Hampson 1996: 217-219, Darby & Mac Ginty 2000: 7). It is not always possible and desirable to negotiate with all core parties at the same time, particularly in complex armed conflicts that consists of multiple intertwined conflicts with actors who require a tailored and separate approach. Harris and Reilly stress the need to think through how starting negotiations with one armed groups could influence negotiations with the other groups (Harris & Reilly 1998: 76-77). Including all factions within the core parties at the table, also those opposed to the negotiations is key as they might disrupt the process (adopt a spoiler role) or remain sceptical and unwilling to

move along with proposed changes. It requires strong leadership skills to manage this internally, but the chance for those factions to support the agreements increases significantly when they have been involved. It also requires the spokespersons in the negotiations to be acknowledged by all significant political factions and forces within the party (Zartman 1995: 22-23, Harris & Reilly 1998: 71-72). The composition of negotiation-teams can thus influence the negotiation process significantly.

Not just theorists underline the importance of inclusiveness. Civil society groups do as well, though differently: inclusion means that the public can participate and is represented at the negotiations. Though no core actors in the conflict, they are highly affected and argue that participation is needed to ensure that their needs and priorities are included in the formal process (Barnes 2002: 11). However, the core actors in peace negotiations seldom share this view.

Earlier, Väyrynen was mentioned, who underlines the fluidity of actors, structures and issues of armed conflict. Who is a core actor and sits at the table and who not is less static than we might think. It is possible for uninvolved parties or parties from the margins to progressively become an actively influential party in the conflict resolution process. This fluidity is visualised in a model that depicts gradients of 'outsider' involvement in a conflict. The spectrum ranges from uninvolved and marginal parties to actively influential parties and core parties. It illustrates the possibility for actors in the broader process to move along the continuum towards the centre or back (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 24-25). The closer actors move towards the core parties, the bigger their opportunities to end up sitting at the negotiation table and participate in negotiations.

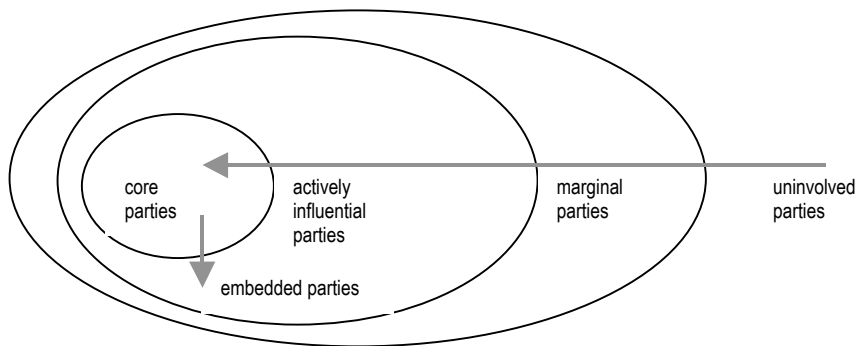


Figure 1: Gradients of Conflict Involvement. Source: Encarnación et al. 1990: 45

Actors in conflict can seek the assistance of an insider or outsider third-party to facilitate the negotiation process. Especially when trust is eroded by many years of protracted violent conflict, it can be helpful to have a neutral and impartial actor who facilitates can facilitate the process and manoeuvre the parties through the highs and lows. This role can be played by negotiators on behalf of organisations such as the UN, the EU or by specialised NGOs such as the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, or by high officials. Sometimes, governments involved in an armed conflict prefer to handle it as an internal affair, refusing any outsider involvement. Involved parties then form their own negotiation teams who will facilitate the process. Whether an internal or external third party is

involved, it remains extremely important that they are considered credible, legitimate and acceptable by all parties at the negotiation table (Rudas et al. 2000: 13).

Third parties can fulfil various roles in peace negotiations: conciliation (reducing tensions, increasing mutual understanding to encourage parties to move towards negotiations), peace enforcement (imposing a settlement by a powerful third party), and mediation (facilitation of process in which parties settle their conflicts non-violently), possibly with muscle i.e. positive and negative inducements to move the process forward (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 29-30).

When bringing opposed groups together for peace negotiations, there are various strategies to consider. Theorists distinguish integrative (positive sum) from bargaining (or zero sum) approaches. The first tries to find ways to reconcile the conflicting positions and to meet underlying interests, values and needs. Bargaining instead divides a figurative fixed cake; it is all or nothing, sometimes with compensation. In practice, most negotiations include both approaches and negotiators make use of persuasion, reason, information and creativity to manoeuvre parties through the process (Hopmann 2001: 445-469, Miall et al. 1999: 167).

process dynamics: turning and sticking points

A negotiation process is marked by turning points and sticking points – turning points occur when parties see a way forward, either because of new political space that opened up or due to redefined goals, finding a new basis for agreement or due to a favourable combination of political leaders and circumstances. Then it is key to find ways to capitalise on the momentum, as use the chances to persuade critics and establish a process with clear goals and benchmarks towards further agreements. Sticking points can develop when elites are not in favour of the process, when core parties bail out, when political space closes or conditions attached to the negotiations prevent forward movement. Then the aim is to find ways around obstacles by drawing on internal and external support, establishing procedures to overcome and learn from previous mistakes in agreements and negotiations (Ramsbotham et al. 2005: 171-174, Zartman 2001: 297-300).

To manoeuvre parties through the negotiation process, incentives and threats (carrots and sticks) are often used. Due to the dynamic process, it is crucial that also incentives and leverage used is continually reassessed by the negotiators and linked to context changes, for instance in leadership, political climate, intra-party standpoints, fatigue of discussing a certain topic, or public opinion pressure (Zartman 2001, 297-300).

Violence is considered one of the most disruptive forces that can impact peace negotiations, especially in early stages when negotiations or pre-negotiations have just set off. However, in the usually turbulent and volatile context of negotiations, opposed groups seldom completely stop the use of violence. Darby noted that the level of violence tends to rise when compromise is in the air, and in some cases violence is an impediment to negotiations – either from negotiating parties or spoilers who purposefully use violence to disrupt the process (Darby 2001: 38). If a party curbs the use of violence and abides to humanitarian standards agreed upon at the negotiation table, it adds to their credibility and it builds confidence. Likewise, when parties return

to use violence, it often has a negative impact and easily sets off a new cycle of violence. When parties resist a call for ceasefire, it often leads to a stalemate in the negotiations and it can eventually cause a breakdown of the entire process (McCartney 2006b: 6-7). Therefore it is important that agreements are detailed about the conditions and consequences of the use of certain types of violence by the parties. The disruptive influence of violence is not limited to the (pre)negotiation stage. As Kumar points out, violence may continue even after an agreement has been reached, since post-conflict societies remain highly fragmented, polarized and prone to violence. Deep political cleavages still remain, violence has become a familiar means to achieve goals and rule of law still has to be rebuilt. In later implementation stages, demobilisation and reintegration processes of ex-combatants can threaten the peace process (Kumar 1998: 7-8).

differences in negotiations with paramilitaries or guerrillas

The combination of actors that embark on a negotiation process influences the challenges that they will encounter along the way. Negotiations between the government and guerrilla groups differ from negotiations between a government and paramilitary forces. A comparative research project of Conciliation Resources in Colombia and the Philippines sheds light over these differences and highlights three key issues that play out (McCartney 2006b: 10-11).

Firstly, as mentioned here above, legitimacy poses a challenge, particularly in negotiations between governments with guerrilla groups. In case of negotiations with paramilitary groups there can also be a legitimacy problem, but for other reasons. The legitimacy of paramilitaries tends to be highly disputable due to allegations made by international human rights agencies concerning grave human rights violations. By negotiating with paramilitary groups, governments risk condemnation by the international community. This explains in part why negotiations with paramilitary groups often start off in secret.

Secondly, the relation between the negotiating parties influences the negotiation process. Paramilitary groups are likely to have linkages with the government (paramilitaries often defend interests of influential elites and right-wing political factions). As they have a common enemy, their relation is different than the one between governments and guerrilla movements, who instead tend to have hostile relations, and lack a common enemy which hampers confidence building.

The third issue is the compatibility of interests. Understandably, guerrilla groups oppose most of the government's socio-economic policies and strive after a revolutionary break with the past. Differences to overcome are enormous and require concessions from both sides to reach an agreement. Among paramilitary groups and governments it is easier to find compatible interests, thanks to their common enemy and because of the close ties between the elites and right wing political factions. Paramilitaries' 'friends in political high places' allow them an easier way to come to agreement. These issues should be taken into account when analysing negotiation processes.

1.1.3 Civil Participation in Peace Negotiations

The fact that negotiations and the formal peace process are not anymore the private realm of high-level political and military actors only, is illustrated by many examples of peace negotiations in which civil society groups have tried (and sometimes succeeded) to participate and shape the decisions made. The model of Encarnación et al. pointed out that it is possible that parties, traditionally considered outsiders to the armed conflict and its resolution become influential, and move from the margins to the centre of the process where the decisions are made. However, space for outsiders (others than traditional core parties in peace negotiations) to engage in negotiations is seldom offered and often reluctantly given by the core actors (Oliver 2002: 92). As those who participate have a chance to determine the decisions made and formulate peace agreements that could lead to structural changes in the state and governance system and in human rights, security and development policies, it matters how the negotiation process is structured and who gets to participate in it. Therefore, deciding who sits at the negotiation table and who does not, is not just a matter of participation but moreover a matter of power and voice.

participatory mechanisms

This research evolves around interaction between civil society organisations (CSOs) and core actors in peace negotiations. A specification of what particular type of CSO will be focused on, will follow later. However, CSOs are generally speaking outsiders and don't automatically earn a seat at the negotiation table. They need institutionalised access in order to participate in negotiations. This can be organised in various ways. By comparing six peace processes, Barnes identified three mechanisms to facilitate public participation into formal peace processes and negotiations: representative, consultative and direct participation (Barnes 2002: 6).

Representative participation mostly facilitates public participation through political parties: this mechanism was used in South Africa and Northern-Ireland, because there it was unlikely to produce sustainable agreements without participation of all political parties. A pre-condition is that there are already well-developed systems of multi-party politics that can meaningfully facilitate the democratization of the peace process. When representation by political parties is limited, there is a risk that the concerns and needs of the public are not fed into the process, and that the process becomes commandeered by political elites and their interests. Additional constructions can be used to provide space for those outside the political realm: in Northern Ireland the Women's Coalition managed to raise a sufficient constituency in order to win a seat at the negotiation table and broaden the range of issues discussed at the negotiation table (Barnes 2006: 8).

Secondly, consultative mechanisms can allow civil society groups to voice their opinions and formulate recommendations via discussion tables, consultative bodies or special commissions. In Guatemala and the Philippines civilians participated via civil society assemblies including many civil society sectors, such as businessmen, churches, women and indigenous organisations. They identified key issues and formulated recommendations for the agreements that were drafted by

the core actors in the negotiations. Though not legally binding, some of their recommendations were included in the final agreements (Barnes 2006: 8-9).

Finally, there are direct participation mechanisms, where individuals or civil society representatives engage directly in developing and implementing peace agreements. In Mali, several attempts of the government to negotiate a political settlement to the armed insurgency in the North failed. Then, non-governmental facilitators initiated locally-led inter-community meetings, based on traditional decision-making structures. This resulted in local ceasefire agreements and strategies to address the main sources of conflict, ending the war and initiating national reconciliation. It gave communities a sense of ownership and responsibility for the implementation. If direct participation is chosen in a national level process, one has to work with leaders who represent (but are not always willing or able) the stakes of their constituency, requiring participatory processes for the stakeholder groups to ensure representation. In smaller scale conflicts, such mechanisms are easier to implement (Barnes 2006: 9).

external factors defining space for outsider participation

Public participation in peace negotiations is not merely a matter of finding the right mechanism and becoming part of the process. Participation is a means to an end, being to influence the negotiations (agenda, structure, process, decisions-made, policies that are drafted etc). Though these mechanisms might provide stakeholder a place in the process or at the table and thus enlarge their opportunities to contribute to the process and outcomes, it is no guarantee for sufficient power to meaningfully influence the political peace process. In the light of increased emerging of spaces and opportunities for citizen engagement in policy processes levels from the local to the global level, Gaventa, one of the primary researchers into power and participation issues, points at the need to critically question if these emerging spaces and opportunities actually change the power relations that surround these policy processes. Widespread acceptance of participatory mechanisms alone is not enough, and easily results in window-dressing, leaving inequalities of power unchanged and simply re-legitimizing the status quo (Gaventa 2006: 23).

Whether or not participation of outsiders leads to influence in negotiations and changes in unequal power relations depends on variables in the context, in relations between stakeholders, the core decision-makers and most powerful stakeholders, the nature of demands and interests, the decision-making power and position that is granted to them or not and their own capacity to contribute substantially to the process. However, in discussions on civil participation in peace negotiations it is often assumed that participation equals influence - mostly positive. This contributes to the current lack of clarity on how the interaction between core actors of negotiations and civil society groups occurs, on the conducive and constraining factors to meaningful participation and how impact or changes in the formal peace process can be explained by participation. These questions are hardly discussed in literature on civil participation in peace negotiations. Hilhorst observed that it's remarkable that social movement theory is not consulted more to understand how CSOs actually can influence political policy-making processes and what factors

shape their successes and failures, as they have a history of looking into the dynamics between political and social actors (Hilhorst 2003: 27-28). Especially since social movements and civil society organisations that aim to influence peace negotiations on behalf of their constituency have many things in common: they both have to present their cause in a way that people join them; they both have to ensure legitimacy of their organisation by proving their capacity to benefit a particular group in society; they need followers or a constituency that is motivated and committed to participate, as changing political policies is a long-term process; in their quest for legitimacy, they both claim space on behalf of their followers; internal dynamics and everyday politics as well as discourse have always been on the agenda of social movement researchers but are just as relevant to the work of NGOs (Hilhorst: 29-30).

Social movement theory started to flourish by the end of the 1960s and was triggered by the rise of movements in Europe and the US among groups outside the classic class categories, such as students, women and environmentalists. Two strands are distinguished: new social movement theories have their centre of gravity in Europe and sought to understand the logic of new movements that emerged in the context of post-industrial societies, with Scott and Tarrow as key researchers within this strand of research. In the 1970s another strand of thinking was formed by resource mobilisation theories. These researchers focused on the organisational dynamics of collective action, such as mobilisation processes and formal organisational manifestations, with McCarthy and Zald as the initiators. Later research switched to analysis of the conditions and context-settings in which collective action emerged and the effects of its. The argument was advanced that collective action does not come about in response to deprivation, but in response to changes in the political-opportunity-structure (POS). Theorists like Tilly, McAdam and Tarrow further developed this concept by focusing on the linkage between social movements and institutionalised politics, analysing the broader set of context specific political constraints and opportunities that shape the possibilities a social movement has to influence political decision-making processes. The political opportunity structure has become a central notion in the study of social movements, and is useful to understand more of the interaction between civil society movements and political decision-making processes, especially of factors that enlarge or limit space for social movements to shape decisions made at political level (McAdam et.al. 1996: 1-7).

McAdam distilled four key variables from the work of scholars on key characteristics of political systems that determine the space social movements have to promote their interests and influence decisions made in the political realm: Brockett, Kriesi et al., Rucht and Tarrow (McAdam 1996: 27):

- openness or closedness of the political system (access to decision-making bodies/actors)
- (in)stability of elite- and political alignments
- presence or absence of allies among political decision-makers
- state's capacity and propensity for repression.

Changes in these variables render the political system less or more vulnerable to change, and therewith enlarge or limit space for social movements to exercise influence (McAdam 1996: 28-30). Formal peace negotiations are a specific sort of political decision-making processes, and efforts of a civil society group to influence them can very well be compared to a social movement, trying to influence political policy processes. Therefore it will be assessed if and how these variables can be useful for later analysis of the Colombian case study.

First, is the openness or closedness of the political system: does the system and its decision-makers allow others to bring in their demands and opinions or even co-decide? This is a relevant factors, since governments are often reluctant to grant space to CSOs in peace negotiations out of fear to lose control over their agenda's, having to change political structures, leading to increased scrutiny of political practice (Jackson 2000). One can distinguish institutionalised or formalised access (e.g. through participatory mechanisms) from informal or non-institutionalised access (e.g. through strategic relations with key decision-makers). This factor, analysing the political system, will be useful in the case analysis, especially as Gaventa underlines that the nature of the space for outsiders influences their chances to make meaningful use of it: whether it is an invited space, a claimed or created space or a closed space (Gaventa 2006: 27-28).

The (in)stability of political and elite alignments is for social movements relevant for their chances to steer decision-making processes in a certain direction, as instable alignments offer social movements opportunities to find allies, like unsatisfied groups who are not happy with the direction that the political process is taking are easier to influence. This factor is less useful for the analysis of CSO's participation in peace negotiations, due to their specific dynamics. Liaising with spoilers or other unsatisfied actors in negotiations is generally not considered to increase the chance to influence negotiations, as instable alignments generally lead to instable negotiations.

Thirdly, the absence or presence of allies within the political system with power and leverage to influence decisions regarding the policies of interest to a social movement. This is just as relevant for a social movement as for a CSO aiming to influence peace negotiations from an underdog-position. They could strategically enhance their chance for success when they liaise with powerful actors, convince them of their standpoints, or find them prepared to promote their interests. For instance, Luz Méndez proved a strategic ally in Guatemalan indigenous women's efforts to include their rights in the peace agreements in 1996, as Luz was both part of the International Secretariat of the URNG as well as a leader of various indigenous women's organisation (Anderlini 1999: 17-18). Consequently, this factor will also be analysed when assessing the participation of women's organisations in Colombia's peace negotiations.

Lastly, state-capacity for repression is argued to influence the space for social movements to speak out and challenge the status quo. In the context of peace negotiations, this factor might be good to take into account when assessing the opportunities CSOs had to put their demands on the table. Especially as in situations of armed conflict it generally is risky to engage in social or civil activism with a clear agenda and opinion regarding the conflict. Armed groups and governments

have proven to use repression, threats and harassment as mechanisms to keep certain voices far away from the negotiation table and therewith limiting CSOs' capacity to participate effectively.

internal factors influencing space for outsider participation

Besides external factors, the internal capacity of CSOs also influences their potential to claim space in peace negotiations and use it meaningfully (Oliver 2002: 92). Fowler et al. found that for NGOs to be effective, three areas of ability are required: the ability *to be* (to maintain a specific identity, values and mission), *to do* (to achieve stakeholder satisfaction) and *to relate* (to manage external relations effectively while retaining autonomy (Fowler 1996: 179-180). Relevant issues for CSOs' capacity identified by scholars and practitioners can be categorised as such.

Regarding the ability *to be*, CSO's can become less effective as an opposition force to governmental policies and standpoints when either they are becoming too closely involved in the political peace process or when their participation financially depends on the same political bodies or core actors in the negotiations (Edwards & Hulme 1996: 7), thus losing track of their own identity and mission. This can also happen when donor's political agendas overshadow the advocacy agenda of the CSO's constituency, or when CSOs advocate for their organisational interests under the guise of feeding 'civilian' interests into the negotiations (Assefa 2004: 47-48).

Concerning the ability *to do*, the capacity to develop a coherent strategy is crucial, involving clarity regarding the changes one seeks, coherent outsider and insider strategies to exert influence, all well adapted to the context. This requires CSOs to be well informed, aware of the policy debates, the history of the issues on the agenda and the standpoints and interests of the negotiating parties. It also requires insight in key stakeholders, and secured resources to implement their policy impact work. Regarding the way of working, capacity to be flexible, to seize opportunities and momentum brought about by changes in the context is key, as well as making good use of the power of media, both for public outreach or indirect communication with core actors of the negotiations (Fitzduff & Church eds. 2004: 166-168).

Another aspect of achieving stakeholder satisfaction is linked to the capacity to ensure true and effective representation. Advocacy NGOs that aim to influence negotiations often speak on the behalf of their constituency. However, there are few mechanisms by which people supposedly benefiting from their advocacy work can control the activities of organisations that claim to speak on their behalf (Assefa 2004: 47-48), which can hinder effective representation of civilian interests into the peace negotiations and the satisfaction of their constituency.

It also happens that CSOs are too depoliticised to link their interests and issues effectively to the complexity of the socio-economic issues discussed at the negotiation table, so that it hampers their ability to be, and they may hamper the negotiations with unreasonable demands and proposals, being unable or unwilling to take into account the full scope of the agenda and the interests of other parties (Barnes 2002: 11-12, Carroll and Vignard 2002: 1).

As for the ability to relate, there are many factors impacting their potential to make effective use of space to participate in negotiations. Sometimes, civil society is too polarised and

divided regarding the conflict and their views on its resolution, so that bringing them into the negotiations would add more complexity than quality. CSOs' capacity to collaborate and join forces with other organisations thus influences their opportunities to participate meaningfully significantly. It is considered helpful if CSOs relate to international, national or local actors for all kinds of support (financial, symbolic, technical or strategic). Especially international support can bring CSOs distinct advantages, as it can give them an importance and weight that cannot be found domestically. National coalitions and networks can be useful when they build on mutual strengths and legitimacy of each other and when there is sufficient coherency in goals, vision, strategic cooperation and accountability. In addition, it is considered key for CSOs to be capable to secure access to official actors in the process, to develop and maintain strong and productive relationships with the various stakeholders in the negotiations, for instance by being consistent in terms of who of the staff liaises with which stakeholder (Fitzduff & Church 2004: 12-13, 169-172).

1.1.4 Leading Discourses on Civil Participation

In recent decades, a growing call for inclusion has come from civil society groups and movements to have a place at the negotiation table. This call is broadly supported by the non-state sector, such as aid organisations, conflict resolution bodies, UN policy institutes and other civil society formations (Vincent 2003: 6). From all civil society sectors, the women's movement in particular has become a visible actor in this struggle for participation. Since 2000, their claim for greater involvement in formal peace processes is backed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which underlines the gendered nature of armed conflict and peace building processes and calls for the inclusion of women, women's needs and priorities in all policies and processes from armed conflict to sustainable peace and reconstruction (UN 2000: SC Resolution 1325). This section will analyse the evolution civil society's call, and the claims and discourse that supports their struggle, in particular regarding the participation of women in political peace negotiations. Consequently, the more reluctant response of scholars and core parties to negotiations will be analysed.

The civil society concept has become popular over the last decades, especially in the field of development cooperation and conflict resolution. Against the backdrop of the disintegration of the state concept in the late 1970s and 1980s, civil society gained a prominent place in discourses on political and social organisation. Triggered by the failing provision of public services by the state in Eastern Europe and Latin America, civil society became the symbol of self-organisation, autonomy, participation and democracy as opposed to totalitarianism, militarism and exclusion (Howell & Pearce 2001: 3, Kaldor 2003: 586). In the 1980s, civil society became a counterbalance to state governance, as CSOs took on the role to put a check on authoritarian governments and unfavourable market forces. They mobilised citizens, increased social cohesion and provided social services. After the Cold War, issues like human rights, good governance and democracy became prominent, and an active and legitimate civil society the precondition for development and security (Douma & Klem 2004: 9-10).

CSOs, working in the field of conflict resolution and peace building have mushroomed ever since the nineties, and many nowadays present themselves as vehicles for peacebuilding and conflict resolution (Fitzduff 2004: 7-8). Traditionally, their activities were focused on building peace and reducing conflict at grassroots level. Ever since the nineties, they increasingly developed linkages and partnerships with states and international governmental organisations to extend their power and influence to the decision-making structures of formal peace processes (Fitzduff & Church 2004: 4-9). CSOs tend to have a positive self image and present themselves as inherently peace-seeking, enhancing good governance, to have access to and expertise in grassroots needs, to fulfil a watchdog function towards the state, to represent their constituency and to advocate for disadvantaged and marginalised groups – these notions are often the starting point in their claims for access to peace negotiations. However, many scholars argue that these characteristics should not to be taken at face value, but empirical studies should explore to what extent and in what contexts the notions apply or not (Douma & Klem 2004: 3).

In discussion on civil society's role in peace processes, 'civil society' can refer to a myriad of things and it resists easy definition. Civil society in its broadest form can be seen as the web of social relations that exist in the space between the state, the market and the private lives of families and individuals (Barnes 2005: 7). It is the domain in which small and large, local and national, formal and informal organisations attempt to articulate, mobilise and pursue their needs, interests and aspirations. Civil society can include churches, community based organisations, knowledge institutes, the media, political parties and movements, as well as armed groups or other less 'civilised' forms or organisation.² To provide some boundaries on how civil society is understood throughout this thesis, the classification of Douma and Klem from a research project on peacebuilding through civil society is useful. They use the generic term CSOs for all associational structures of civil society intervention, and distinguish between NGOs (formal organisations that support and represent civilian interest on an international, regional, national or local level, including external non-governmental donor organisations) and CBOs (community based organisations) or GROs (grassroots organisations) that serve particular community interests in geographically limited areas (2004: 4). This thesis evolves around the interaction between CSOs and track-one actors in peace negotiations, more specifically around NGOs that have taken up the task of channelling the input and demands of a broad and diverse women's movement into political peace negotiations. They are not so much involved in providing services, but aim to speak on behalf of their local and regional constituency into national political decision-making processes. The NGOs in this study have in common that they are network organisations, who have a web of members around them joint in a common cause. They fulfil a connecting role, some act as capacity builders for their networks, but most of all, they mobilise smaller organisations and bring them together to make a strong voice and conduct lobby and advocacy work. The distinguish

² Though these are understood as 'uncivil' society they also function outside the realm of state, market and family and operate via the same mechanisms through which 'civil' actors and associations operate.

themselves by not being neutral or a-political, but have very specific interests to defend and promote, and gain power and space in high-level political peace negotiations. Considering the international support for civil political participation in general and of women in particular, these organisations can relatively easily gather support, financially or otherwise, from external donors, such as international development NGOs, other women's movements and so forth.

claims in favour of civil participation in negotiations

The claim for civil society involvement is strongly backed by the non-state sector, with a discourse that underlines the possible added value of engaging CSOs in formal peace negotiations. Scholars and practitioners present a number of key arguments in favour of their inclusion, related to contributions they can make throughout the various stages of peace negotiations, be it in the agenda-setting process, in the formulation of policies and agreements, in decision-making or during the implementation phase (Ross in Fitzduff & Church 2004: 25).

A major argument often put forward by supporters of increased civil participation, is that it is a way to ensure that policies and agreements developed at the negotiation table will not only reflect the needs and priorities of the warring factions, but also include those of civilians, as their lives are deeply affected by the conflict (Barnes 2002: 11). This argument relates to the fact that civilians have become the major targets of contemporary armed conflicts.

At the start of the 20th century, up to 85-90% of all war fatalities were members of armed forces, whereas today civilians constitute at least 75% of all fatalities (Skjelsbaek & Smith 2001: 3). It is argued that as civilians are most affected, the peace process and its outcomes should be responsive to their needs. To ensure this, civil society should be involved in formal peace processes as a counter-weight to state power, since they are seen to be more responsive to and aware of civilian needs and interests than the state. Though rarely made explicit, the argument assumes that if left to leaders of states, military and armed groups alone, peace negotiations will not lead to long term and sustainable peace (Benhabib 1996: 20, Vincent 2003: 8).

Civil society groups can bring their needs, priorities and perspectives to the negotiation table in various ways, for instance by identifying policy priorities and formulating recommendations on how to address them in the negotiations and the agreements, by addressing underlying dynamics to the conflict, such as particular structural socio-economic inequalities within society and pushing for discussion of these issues, or by bringing experiences and concerns of particular groups to the table, such as women, the business sector or indigenous people (McKeon 2005: 572-573, Rissanen 2002: 32-33). Fitzduff, Anderson and Olson concluded from comparative research that especially bringing contextually relevant and locally sourced knowledge to the negotiation table is a necessary dimension to successful policymaking in divided and violent societies, as well as ensuring that decisions made at the negotiation table are linked back to key figures and leaders within civil society to create a support base for the political process at the other levels of society (Fitzduff 2004:13-14). This suggests that negotiating a way out of conflict should not be an

isolated high level political affair, but a process that's woven into the fabric of society by allowing civil society stakeholders to be part of the formal peace process.

Another key argument in the discourse is that opening up formal peace processes is an opportunity to reinforce democratisation, originating from the view that democratic systems are more peaceful than authoritarian or other non-democratically composed states where people do not have to resort to violence to defend their interests (Sisk 2001-786). Opening up formal peace negotiations is argued to be a step towards inclusive and representative decision-making. This argument should be understood in the wider context of civilians' right to effective participation in government. Peace negotiations are political decision-making processes, as they generally encompass the design of policies that address state structure, the political system and the allocation of resources. International human rights standards can therefore be considered to put an obligation on governments to facilitate meaningful participation of the general public (Barnes 2002: 10). However, stakeholders in peace negotiations hold different opinions of what 'meaningful' participation means and how it should be organised.

women's, gender and peace negotiations

One sector that is particularly interesting to analyse in the light of civil society's struggle for participation, is the women's movement, first of all because they have a prominent track-record of struggling for a voice and power in political decision-making. Since the end of the eighties, global attention for gender dimensions of poverty and the persistent exclusion of women in political decision-making has increased, also leading to growing awareness of the way gender plays a role in armed conflict and the marginalisation of women in formal peace negotiations (UNRISD 2005: 229). Secondly, women's struggle for participation is backed by the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, adopted in October 2000. The resolution is based on the understanding that effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding ought to acknowledge the differentiated impact, roles, needs and perspectives of men and women in times of conflict and peace. Moreover, it calls all states to particularly enable and empower women and girls to be active participants in both formal and informal conflict-resolution and peace building processes (UNSC 2000: resolution 1325).

Now what is the relevance of looking at gender in situations of conflict and peace? Gender refers to the socially constructed identities of men and women, as opposed to the biologically determined aspects. Gender roles and identities are specific to a given culture at a given time, are assigned to men and women early in the socialisation process and are shaped by other characteristics such as ethnicity, class and age. They are not fixed but vary in different socio-political and cultural contexts. The articulation of gender roles and identities in situations of political violence and armed conflict is particularly marked (Moser & Clark 2001a: 2-3). Due to their different roles and identities, armed conflict affects women and men differently. These different experiences lead to distinct priorities and needs in the peace process and the reconstruction phase.

The field of conflict resolution has been criticised for being gender-blind in its development, conceptualisation and methods (Reimann 1999). For a long time, armed conflict was seen as executed by men, be it as armed forces, guerrillas, paramilitaries or peace-keeping forces and women were not in the picture (Enloe 1993). Later analysis did include women, but continued to portray a stereotypic division of roles, essentialising women as victims and men as perpetrators. Women were generally related to peace and passivity and men to war and aggression, and some feminist writers even argue that women are inherently more peaceful than men (Kaplan in Skjelsbaek 2001: 50). Though it is legitimate and even necessary to acknowledge empirical generalizations about men and women in war and peace – for instance more men than women engage in armed combat - and to assess their weight and meaning, the danger lies in exaggerate and freezing generalizations, leading to essentialism (Skjelsbaek 2001:39-40). Essentialist thinking denies both women and men any form of agency - the capacity as social actors to process social experience and to devise creative ways of coping with life, within the limits of information, resources and other constraints existing in their context (Moser & Clark 2001a: 4-5) and denies them the possibility to move beyond fixed stereotypical images. More recently, theoretical analysis expanded to understand and analyse the complex roles, responsibilities and interests of women and men in conflict and peace. A broad variety of women's roles in conflict is now recognized: women as victims of violence, as combatants, women working for peace in NGOs and in formal peace politics, women as survivors, as household heads and women in formal and informal employment (Bouta et al. 2005). In addition, Cockburn identified five fields in which women's organisations in a (post)conflict context work: getting women back to economic independence, addressing violence against women, offering legal advice, empowering women for political participation and reconciliation work (Cockburn in El Bushra et al. 2005: 10-11).

Gendered differences cut across all dimensions of conflict and peace. During armed conflict, men are more likely to be involved in the actual fighting than women, and men are the majority of civilian fatalities. Though armed groups also recruit women for strategic leadership and combat roles - in Colombia up to one third of the FARC are women – an increased presence of women in armed forces does not seem to change the masculine character, culture and hierarchy at work within. Controversy abounds about their 'proper role', and it is still widely felt that women should not be in the military; if they are, they should be confined to fulfilling 'support roles', such as providing medical, secretarial, logistical or sexual services (Skjelsbaek & Smith 2001: 4-5).

Regarding consequences of war, women are disproportionately hard-hit when it comes to socio-economic violence and suffering. This is reflected in the high percentage of women among displaced populations, and relates to women's traditional responsibility in most societies for the daily reproduction of life and community. While the men are off to war they provide for their families, and particularly the poorest are least able to escape war zones or to buy protection. Gendered use of violence also occurs in contemporary conflicts, and though rape as a means of

torture is of all times and affects men and women, it is nowadays increasingly systematically used as a weapon of war, especially targeted towards women and girls (Cockburn 2001: 21).

Another obvious gender dimension is the marginalisation of women in formal conflict resolution mechanisms and related decision-making structures. Instead, they constitute the majority of those involved in informal peace initiatives and grassroots peacebuilding work (Bouta et al. 2005: 50-51). Given the particular ways in which a conflict situation impacts the lives of men and women differently, it is obvious that this should also be taken into account in the formal peace process and in developing policies and agreements to move conflict towards peace.

gender sensitising the formal peace process

Making the formal peace process more gender-sensitive involves both ensuring a better *gender balance* in the formal peace process as well as *gender mainstreaming*. Gender balance refers to equal representation and participation of women in all stages of the peace process. Gender mainstreaming involves assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, be it policy, legislation or peace agreements in any area and at all levels (Chinkin 2003: 8). So both women and their needs and priorities ought to be taken into consideration in the structure and design of the process, as well as in the contents and implications of agreements and policies developed at the negotiation table.

An elaborate World Bank study suggests several strategies to make political peace processes more gender sensitive, in which women's organisations are considered instrumental: developing wider processes of political consultation or representation by engaging with women's organisations, linking informal peace processes to the formal; capacity building and empowerment of women to participate in local, regional and national level politics; fostering discussion within public and political bodies about women's involvement & leadership; setting legislative quotas to ensure a minimum number of female political candidates and establishing indicators to assess the influence of female and male politicians on political outcomes, culture and process; sensitise politicians involved in the peace talks on key gender dimensions of conflict and peace (Bouta et al. 2005: 58-63).

claims made by women at the negotiation table

Women's movements and NGOs all over the world have responded to the need to gender sensitise formal peace processes by presenting themselves as the vehicle to do so. The discourse supporting their goal to gain more space in the formal peace process builds in part on arguments derived from the discourse that calls for democratisation of the formal process. In addition, one finds a variety of arguments from the spectrum between standpoint feminist thinking and post-structuralist perspectives on women, conflict and peace: at one extreme end arguments like 'women are better peacemakers than men' can be found and at the other end of the continuum there are those who claim that there is no such thing as a women's voice to represent in

negotiations due to the great diversity among women, as gender is not the only social identity that defines people's perspectives and experience of conflict and peace (Trend 1996: 15).

The discourse often implies that involvement of women inherently leads to gender sensitised peace negotiations (Vincent 2003: 7-8). As gender blindness combined with the absence and marginalisation of women in formal peace processes left women's needs and priorities unconsidered, indeed, increased female participation could counterbalance this and bring women's voices and perspectives to the table, making the entire process and outcomes responsive to both men and women, and more inclusive and sustainable. However, what often goes unsaid is that this all depends on which women participate in the negotiations and their level of gender awareness. The case of El Salvador illustrates this: female FMLN combatants were part of the negotiation process, but in the first place as representatives of the FMNL, not as representatives of a 'women's perspective' on what was needed to broker peace. Though the negotiations led to sustainable peace agreements, in hindsight many women regretted their lack of gender awareness, as they did not make optimal use of their opportunity to contribute to women's needs in the post conflict period (Conaway & Martínez 2004: 15).

Standpoint feminist thinking tends to bring in the argument that women are inherently peaceful as more men than women are involved in war and the actual fighting than women, and that therefore women should participate in formal conflict resolution processes (Skjelsbaek 2001: 50, Vincent 2003: 7). Beside the rightful response from a constructivist approach that women as such do not form a homogeneous group, this perspective forgets that gendered identities are not given but created through our interactions with our social environment, making it too easy to conclude that women are better at negotiating peace than men. What should be considered though is that women can bring different experiences and perspectives to the negotiation table, flowing from their distinct position and roles within society. They can expand the scope of conflict transformation, as women's perspectives tend to include psychosocial, relational and spiritual dimensions besides the visible political and economic aspects (El Bushra et al. 2005: 11).

Scholars and practitioners have identified several differences in formal peace processes where an increased number of women actively participated. Anderlini noted that it enlarges the chance that gender issues will be discussed in the negotiations. Women tend to introduce other conflict experiences into the negotiations and set different priorities when it comes to peacebuilding and reconstruction policies: they enhance understanding of social justice and gender equity in the political process. Interviews with women engaged in formal peace processes show that women tend to define peace and its pre-conditions in meeting basic human security needs and improve livelihood circumstances, by addressing issues like health, education, economic development and equity and justice for marginalised groups (2003: 30-33, UNRISD 2005: 227). According to Vincent, this flows from their position in society as wives, mothers and caretakers. Being relatively absent from the realm of production, politics, war and science, they hold different perspectives to what sustainable peace means, and to how conflicts among armed groups could be resolved (2003: 8).

Therefore, women's struggle for space at the negotiation table is not always a feminist struggle, as women's response and contribution to the peace negotiations often stem from the impact of conflict on their daily lives and on the - traditional - roles they fulfil within society (Bouta et al. 2005: 52). Sometimes women even deliberately use traditional and depoliticised images of womanhood for mobilisation and advocacy, like the Argentinean *mothers* of the Plaza de Mayo.

It is also found that women's participation in formal peace processes has the potential to increase space for political participation of women in general, for instance through lobby for measures such as quota's, ministries for gender equality and women's affairs, equal rights to voting and increased gender equity in legal frameworks (Bouta et al. 2005: 52-53). However, women's increased political agency during conflict is no guarantee for the period thereafter, and might even decrease like in Somalia, as it requires long-term commitment, resources, empowerment to institutionalise gender equality within society (Nakaya 2003: 469-472).

At the same time, accounts of women who do gain a place at the negotiation table mention various obstacles and challenges, including dealing with discrimination, hostile responses from male participants, being considered less credible and capable to contribute to negotiations (pressure to perform well) and the difficulty of combining care- and domestic work with fully participating in the negotiations (UNRISD 2005: 227-228, Anderlini 2000: 28-31, Rojas et al. 2004: 18).

The discourse for increased civil society inclusion and for women's inclusion in peace negotiations have their positivist nature in common. Their added value is highlighted, while self-criticism is seldom found. The discourses presume that civil participation is inherently beneficial for the peace negotiations without clearly grounding that in conflict resolution theory and backing such claims with empirical evidence. The tone of the discourses is rather prescriptive and tends to avoid critical and underlying questions that still abound regarding how it actually works to open up peace negotiations to civil society groups and enabling or limiting factors that allow for participation to yield positive results or not. This brings us to the response of theorists and scholars.

1.1.5 Reluctant Responses: hollow claims and insufficient evidence

The debate on civil participation in formal peace negotiations could best be typified as 'bipolar', with the non-state sector as the 'believers', promoting claims of civil society and women for increased access to formal peace negotiations, versus the reluctant and sometimes cynical response from theorists and scholars in the field of conflict resolution theory. Without denying civil society's potential to contribute to peacebuilding in general,³ they raise several critical issues. Two main concerns can be distinguished: the nature of the endorsing discourse is considered problematic, and they point at the lack of empiric evidence that sustains the positive claims made by civil society groups that advocate for a place at the negotiation table.

³ These include providing peacebuilding assistance at grassroots level, a people centered approach that enables the reconciliation between and among communities and their appreciation for local coping mechanisms and capacities for peace (Zeeuw 2001: 24).

The first concern is well voiced by Miall, who noted that *“there is a somewhat uncritical willingness to embrace multi-track diplomacy, without an adequate conceptualisation of how activity in the various tracks can fit together”* (Miall 2004: 86). He challenges the discourses' starting point of participation being beneficial for the peace negotiations and calls for more clarity about how the interaction between track-one and civil society actors occurs and under which conditions or circumstances their interaction could be beneficial to the negotiations or not.

In her criticism of the discourse for women's participation, Vincent states that the call for integrating a 'women's perspective' in formal conflict resolution mechanisms has become *“a somewhat hollow talisman whose real meaning is unclear. Constantly repeating the refrain of the absence of a 'woman's perspective' tells us little about what such a perspective might be and is falsely universalising in its premise”* (Vincent 2003: 6). Again, a call for more clarity about what women's CSOs aim to bring into the negotiations and how that adds to the outcomes.

Douma and Klem take their criticism a step further and state that the claimed benefits of including CSOs in general in formal peace processes refer to what these organisations aim to be or achieve, rather than what they really are and achieve in practice (2004: 3). CSOs promote their participation as a magic bullet for inclusive and sustainable peace negotiations, while they are often unable to step up to their promises. For many scholars, these critical issues are reason enough to disregard civil society's claims for a place at the negotiation table.

Though they indeed rightfully point out that CSOs do not always live up to their promises and that the discourse is rather prescriptive, lacks clarity and critical self reflection, it would be too easy to dismiss CSOs call for participation right away. There is more to say about discourses and the role they fulfil for CSOs. In a research project on the working of development NGOs in the Philippines, Hilhorst found that social movements or civil society groups in an disadvantaged position often strategically use discourse to enlarge their political space and to work towards their objectives (Hilhorst 2003: 32-33). Discourse could be seen as a 'collective action frame'. This term is derived from social movement theorists like Snow and Benford, who found that social movements are essentially agents that carry, transmit, mobilise and produce meaning for participants, antagonists and observers: this practise is called framing (McAdam et al. 1996 5-6). The discourse supporting the participation of women in peace negotiations could be seen as a collective framework, meant to convince people of the need to include women in peace negotiations, to mobilise a constituency for their cause, so they can make a powerful demand for space at the table.

Though this function of discourse certainly does not justify the ample use of assumptions, the lack of self-criticism and theoretical evidence, it should be taken into account. Rather than dismissing the claimed contributions of CSOs to formal peace negotiations due to their use of a sometimes misleading discourse, Hilhorst pleads for research on NGO performance that critically observes and ask how the claims and performances of NGOs acquire meaning in practice. Add to this advice some more humility from CSOs regarding their added value and more clarity about what role they aim to fulfil and how that is linked to changes in the peace process, and then it

should be possible to move beyond the bipolar debate between believers and cynics towards a constructive dialogue that offers valuable clues to better understand how the interaction between track-one actors and CSOs within the formal peace process occurs, and how CSOs attempt to contribute to the negotiations and the consequences this has for the process and the outcomes.

The second critical issue raised by scholars and theorists is the lack of research-based evidence that reveals the impact of participation of civil society groups such as women on peace negotiations. The bulk of research supporting their call for inclusion consists of collections of case studies and best practices that shed light on the positive contributions of civil society groups and women's organisations in formal peace processes – often issued by large NGOs or international multilateral policy institutes such as UNIFEM or the Women Waging Peace Policy Commission (Douma & Klem 2004: 10, Vincent 2003: 6). Their publications underline women's contributions, mostly based on stories and experiences of women who participated in peace negotiations but tend to leave presumptions on which their struggle for participation is based unquestioned. When considering the mission of these institutions - *"successfully broadening the base of support for women's participation by raising awareness of the roles they play in promoting security"* (Women Waging Peace 2004: 2) – it is no surprise that this evokes cynicism and questions among scholars and those less convinced of the need to include women in peace negotiations.

Measuring impact and evaluating the effectiveness of conflict resolution interventions by CSOs is still an underdeveloped aspect in the field. Church and Shouldice made an inventory of evaluation approaches for conflict resolution interventions by peacebuilding NGOs, and concluded that the sector itself rates its projects as overall positive, useful and productive – in line with the discourses. However, these ratings are based on their own perceptions and interactions, rather than on quantifiable data or qualitative research outputs (Church & Shouldice 2003: 6).

So how are peacebuilding interventions by CSOs monitored and evaluated? Analysts and donors have come up with various approaches. Most common is the use of narrative evaluations, added with log-frames in which CSOs systematically describe the intervention, the output, outcome and overall impact. However, substantive statements about causality between the intervention and its broader socio-political impact requires a certain amount of 'professional interpretation'. There are evaluations that go beyond micro-level and assess the broader impact, allowing for conclusions at a general level. But the more macro the level of analysis, the more actors and dynamics are involved, the more professional interpretation is needed. Some methods assess strategies and approaches,⁴ linking them to structural causes and dynamics of the conflict and the ways in which interventions affect these (Douma & Klem 2004: 29-30, Church and Shouldice 2003: 23-25). Progress

⁴ For instance ALNAP uses criteria such as appropriateness, coherence, connectedness, gender equality, flexibility, location of responsibility, pressure for success and institutional competence. Others methods focus on internal culture and capacity of CSO as key criteria, f.i. commitment and motivation of staff, access to tools, knowledge and capabilities for accountability and effectiveness.

is made with assessments to make development interventions more conflict sensitive,⁵ but few models enable reliable impact assessment of interventions or activities by CSOs in formal peace processes, let alone assessing impact in a way that fits the approach, roles and values of women's organisations (El Bushra 2005: 7, Fitzduff 2004: 14-15, Douma & Klem 2004, 28).

This is not without any reason, as challenges abound when measuring impact of CSO interventions in general, and on formal peace negotiations in particular. Firstly, due to the dynamic context of peace negotiations, the political policy- and decision-making processes reflect more chaos than clarity (Ross 2004: 24-27), making it extremely challenging to prove any kind of impact of an intervention on the course and outcomes of the negotiations. This is also related to the attribution problem, which arises when there are more actors involved who also try to shape the decisions made at the table: claiming unilateral influence is rather problematic (Fitzduff & Church 2004: 15, Church & Shouldice 2003: 3). In addition, the claimed contributions of CSOs to the peace negotiations are often intangible and difficult to measure, and often cannot be measured over a short period of time: feeding a women's perspective into negotiations; enhancing sustainability of negotiations by ensuring that experiences and needs of marginalised groups are taken into account in the decisions being made; linking the formal peace process to the informal process at grassroots level or increasing gender awareness among the negotiating parties. This is called the 'intangibility problem' (Douma & Klem 2004: 28-29, Fowler 1996: 172-173).

Then there are specific challenges for lobby and advocacy work targeted to influence political decision- and policy making processes. Negotiations are messy non-linear processes: input (developing an agenda, networking, building relations, developing proposals for agreements, participating in decision-making structures) does not necessarily and directly lead to concrete output that can point out the exact influence of an actor on the negotiations. Also, one-size-fits-all impact assessment tools rarely provide reliable and useful information, and even run the risk to be misleading. Not only because they don't take context specific factors sufficiently into account, but also as strategies and approaches of CSOs to influence policy making processes often change due to unforeseen opportunities and limitations arising in the context, and heavily depend on the nature of the decision-making system that is being influenced, the space CSOs have, their strategic relations with other actors, resources and internal capacity (Coates and David 2002: 534-535).

Also women's CSOs involved in conflict transformation themselves plead for improved methods. Current approaches are mostly donor-driven, due to donors' need to justify how grants lead to expected results and changes achieved by southern partner NGOs. Southern NGOs receiving funding from Northern NGOs in turn have to prove performance and effectiveness, to secure donor funding and public support. This often leads to very bold and presumptuous statements on performance and effectiveness. Donor's systematic M&E approaches rarely match with the context in which women's peace organisations work, their organisational values and way

⁵ For instance Anderson's Do No Harm Approach, the Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment tool developed by Bush or the Conflict Sensitive approaches to Development by International Alert and several collaborating agencies.

of working. Though women's peace organisations acknowledge the need for impact assessment, they express different reasons to improve their work. For them the value of impact assessment is not so much donor compliance, but moreover deriving courage and hope from achieved results, creating space for women to tell their stories, enhancing their strategic thinking on what steps to undertake to reach their goals, enhance learning and improve their work in terms of using more effective strategies, increasing the sustainability and efficient resource allocation, effectively making use of unexpected opportunities (El Bushra et al. 2005: 11-12, Fowler 1996: 170-171).

Key suggestions to come to better evaluation and impact assessment methods entail the specification and examining of underlying ideas about how change is brought about, in stead of assuming that change will occur, and that it will be positive. One way to do this is by breaking up an 'impact process' in smaller steps that allow one to examine what actually changes due to an intervention and what does not, and the extent to which the change influences not only the core target but also manages to reach to other levels (Church and Shouldice 2003: 26-27). Coates and David argue that assessments should be much more specific about what or who exactly a project wants to change, how this is considered to occur, what action is required by whom and what approach is needed, taking into account the a-linear nature of influencing policy processes, and context specific factors of both the CSO, the policy process and the political context (Coates and David 2002: 536). Women's peace organisations suggest to adapt assessment methods better to the context, by allowing for context- and organisational specific indicators to measure progress, and indicators that match the approach, values and objectives aimed for by that particular CSO and allow them to learn and improve their work, rather than approaches based on compliance with static and systematic donor procedures (El Bushra et al.: 38).

The criticism on both the nature of the supporting discourse for CSOs' participation in peace negotiations and regarding the lack of evidence showing what change is brought about by CSOs' interventions in negotiations evoke various responses. Some get defensive and continue to preach the positivist discourse, others respond cynically and dismiss the value of CSOs participation in peace negotiations entirely, while other think it is impossible to ever prove the impact of their work.

However, I would argue that being aware of the weaknesses of the current discourse and methods to assess impact offers CSOs and scholars alike great opportunities to enhance the critical reflections of this field and get inspired to find ways to overcome the challenges. Without honestly questioning your own assumptions and claims, and without daring to develop evaluation methods that can expose both the strengths and weaknesses of approaches and interventions, the field risks not only to lose its credibility, but moreover loses the opportunity to benefit from useful information, to enhance learning and improve their interventions in (formal) peace processes.

1.2 Research Questions, Selected Case-study & Methodology

1.2.1 Rationale behind the research questions

This research wants to respond to the charges that there is a lack of knowledge about how the interaction between the actors from different tracks takes shape, and the lack of effective impact assessment models to clarify the impact of the interventions and activities of CSOs that attempt to participate and influence formal peace processes. By thoroughly analysing a case study, it aspires to find out how women's NGOs work to get access to in formal negotiations, how they interact with track one actors and how the dynamics at work around formal peace process impact their opportunities and limitations to play a significant role. This research also aims to increase understanding on the extent to which it is possible to assess if they actually managed to influence the decisions made in negotiations between armed actors and the government, and how meaning is attributed to their activities, interventions and roles.

In Colombia, the women's peace movement makes an interesting case of CSOs that explicitly strived to also play a role in the formal peace processes between armed groups and the government. In the nineties, the women's movement fulfilled a key role in mobilising the public to protest against the civil war that had continued to rage through the country for years, and publicly called upon the government to give peace a chance through negotiations (Rojas et al. 2004: 10). Throughout following attempts of the government to broker peace with armed actors, women increasingly sought for ways to put women's needs and priorities on the political agenda and attempted to play a meaningful role in the process, using different strategies and activities. The most important recent peace talks occurred between president Pastrana and the FARC (a guerilla movement) in 1999-2002, and between president Uribe and the AUC (a paramilitary association) from 2002 and onwards. Research and best practices on women's contributions to formal peace processes refer to the participation of Colombia's women in those negotiations as an example of implementing Resolution 1325. However, most general reports on the negotiations present public participation as the weak link in the Pastrana negotiations, and as basically absent during Uribe's talks. Therefore, this is an excellent case to analyse the many questions that still abound regarding if, how and to what extent CSOs can meaningfully participate and influence peace negotiations, the role of discourse and the possibilities of linking CSOs participation to changes in negotiations.

Consequently, the overall question that drives this research is as follows:

"In which ways have women's peace organisations sought to participate in recent peace negotiations between the Colombian government and armed groups (the FARC and the AUC), and to what extent did they manage to meaningfully influence the process and outcomes of the negotiations?"

The following sub-questions will give further focus and direction to the analysis of the case study:

- Through what mechanisms and interventions did the women's peace organisations try to participate in the negotiations between the government and the FARC - AUC?
- What influence did Colombian women's organisations aim to have on the peace negotiations; did the interventions lead to this kind of influence?
- What internal and external factors facilitated or limited their opportunities to influence the negotiations?
- What impact was attributed to their interventions to participate and influence the negotiations?
- What are differences between influencing negotiations with guerrillas or paramilitary groups?

1.2.2 Operationalisation and Terminology

Women's peace organisations: from the myriad of women's peacebuilding organisations and initiatives present in Colombia, four large umbrella networks (NGOs) of women's organisations have been selected for this research. Though the member-organisations of these four networks are very diverse in terms of goals, constituency, activities and strategies, the four network NGOs have two crucial selection criteria in common. Firstly, all four NGOs plead for a negotiated solution to Colombia's armed conflict, and explicitly argue that women and women's rights should be taken into account in the formal peace negotiations and its outcomes. Secondly, the desire and the capacity of Colombian women to participate in formal peace negotiations has become visible via these organisations: they fulfilled a specific role in channelling the diversity of opinions, interests, suggestions and capacities of women into the formal peace process. It concerns the following four network organisations:

- Organización Femenina Popular [OFP]
- Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres [la Ruta]
- la Red Nacional de Mujeres [RNM]
- Iniciativa de Mujeres por la Paz [IMP]

Participation in peace negotiations: participation means to take part in the structure and the process of the peace negotiations between opposed armed groups. It requires a certain degree of access to the decision-making structures, mechanisms and actors that make up the formal peacemaking process, either institutionalised or not. Space to participate is contested, closely related to power relations between actors involved in the peace negotiations, seldom granted to CSOs and does not guarantee influence in the process. Various mechanisms can be used (consultative, representative or direct). Outsider participation can be complimentary, contributing, contractual, complicit or contesting in relation to the formal peace process.

Influencing peace negotiations: influence is a more difficult term to define. Showing influence is problematic in complex multi-actor and multileveled process like peace negotiations, due to the

attribution and intangibility problem. Influence suggests a direct and clearly visible cause and effect relation between participation of CSOs (and their interventions) and perceived changes in the structure, actors, process or outcomes of the negotiations. This does not match with the chaotic context of negotiations and of the a-linear process of influencing political decisions and policy processes. It is therefore suggested that influencing peace negotiations means playing a significant role in affecting policy related decisions and actions. Successful influence does not require desired policies of one group to be fully adopted, but that they shaped and contributed to the process (Fitzduff & Church eds. 2004: 15). Influence can be exercised during pre-negotiations, agenda-setting, policy formulation, decision-making, implementation or evaluation. Influence can be exercised various strategies and interventions: the insider approach enables CSOs to suggest agenda items, formulate recommendations regarding the topics that are discussed, feed experiences from local level into the discussions and come up with valuable context information so policies and agreements can respond to the reality of different levels in society, co-decide (if granted decision-making power) on the policies and agreements that are developed, be responsible for parts of implementation of policies and agreements or contribute to evaluations, liaise with strategic stakeholder to convince them of certain standpoints. The outsider approach entails strategies such as awareness-raising and constituency building, mobilising the public to put pressure decision-makers, use lobby & media strategically to foster increased understanding of particular concerns and convince citizen groups, set up discussion tables to gather information from the public and broaden public support for the peace process.

Peace negotiations between the Colombian government and armed groups: this thesis analyses the two most significant negotiation trajectories of the past decade. The first concerns negotiations between president Pastrana and the FARC. In 1999, Pastrana [1998-2002] launched a formal peace process with the guerrillas, and for the very first time civil society (among which women's organisations) was officially included in the formal peace process. After three years, these negotiations collapsed in February 2002. Not much later, Pastrana was replaced by president Uribe who favoured a hardliner and military approach towards armed groups, especially towards the FARC. During his first period in the office [2002-2006] he started negotiations with the paramilitary umbrella organisation AUC. This time, civil society was not formally engaged in the process but the women's movement continued their efforts to influence those negotiations as well, be it more from the outside, and adapted their strategies to make a difference to the new situation.

1.2.3 Relevance of Research

The outcomes of this research can be valuable to both the theory and practice of the participation of women's organisations in formal peace processes. On a theoretical level, it will provide additional insight into how this type of CSO interacts with track I actors within the context of the formal peace process, and what broadly supported participation actually looks like in practice. A critical analysis of the impacts and changes related to the participation and influence

of Colombia's women's movement on recent peace negotiations can shed new light over the claims that are made concerning the potential added value of women's participation in political peace-making. The research responds to the rightful allegations that there is a lack of empirical research which dares to critically assess the positive contributions that are often assigned to women's participation in formal peace-making mechanisms. Hopefully it will contribute to insight into how impact of advocacy and policy influencing work of a social movement in a peace process can be assessed more thoroughly.

As this research is limited to the Colombian case, and as many analysts and practitioners continue to search for improved impact assessments and evaluation models policy impact work, I do not assume to provide answers that can be applied to the entire field and in all contexts, nor develop a method which avoids all mentioned challenges and critical charges. However, I hope to extract essential findings from analysing the Colombian case, which can be fed into the more general discussions on participation of CSOs in peace negotiations, both regarding how interaction between the tracks occurs, as well as to their influence is assessed, claimed and sustained with empirical evidence or not. Hopefully, it will contribute to a shift from polarised discussions toward more nuanced research into CSO's participation in peace negotiations.

At a more practical level, the outcomes of the thesis could be relevant for women's organisations that struggle for access to formal peace processes. It could enhance critical thinking on their potential as well as their limitations to be an effective actor in formal peace negotiations. It could encourage them to reflect on the context related factors that shape space for meaningful participation in political decision-making processes and can help them to improve their strategies and interventions to contribute to the negotiations, as well as the evaluation of it. Knowing what kind of interventions and activities can help to gender sensitise peace negotiations, as well as understanding the factors that support or frustrate it can certainly enhance the quality of their work. And in case president Uribe manages to get the FARC or other armed groups to the negotiation table again, they could take the lessons learned into the next round of peace talks.

In addition, I hope this thesis encourages scholars and practitioners to discuss the issue of women's participation in formal peace processes in a more nuanced and constructive manner, as opposed to the current polarised, sceptical and assumptive debate. Neither scepticism nor unreliable claims about the value of their participation in political peace processes enables a deeper understanding of the theory and practise. Instead, constructive dialogue between practical and theoretical findings might help to bridge the gap and move the discussion forward.

1.2.4 Methodology: Assessing Participation & Influence

The research question is of a descriptive nature, and aims to understand and analyse in depth the ways in which Colombian women's organisations participated and influenced peace negotiations in Colombia since 1999. This is an attempt to shed light on interaction between actors of the different tracks, and to analyse what influence they aimed to have, claimed to have and how that

can better be understood and interpreted, since that is an identified weakness in the field of conflict resolution. As there are no well functioning models yet to clarify and assess the participation and influence of (women's) CSOs in peace negotiations, the theoretic framework will come in helpful with the case analysis. The analysis will follow the sub-questions, firstly those on participation and next those on influence, and so work towards an answer to the central question.

To shed light on how exactly interaction between actors from different tracks occurs when CSOs try to influence peace negotiations, the first part of the case-analysis in this research will look into the *how* of participation, and make use of the conceptualisation of participation and space for outsiders in the first parts of this chapter.

Firstly, the mechanisms (representative, consultative or direct) and strategies (insider or outsider approach) that the women's peace organisations used to participate in the negotiations will be looked at, and their interventions will be analysed. The second part will look at both the external context factors (political context, the specifics of the particular peace negotiations) and internal context factors (CSO ability) that influence the space and the opportunities of CSO's to influence peace negotiations meaning.

For the external factors, the key variables from the *political opportunity structure* will be used: openness of political system, the stability of political and elite alignments, the presence of allies among core decision makers and the capacity for repression. As the context of peace negotiations is rather unique and differs from influencing a political decision making processes in times of peace, the structure of the negotiations, the relation between the CSOs and the core actors, and the conflict dynamics will be taken into account in the analysis, as they will be addressed in chapter two.

Regarding the internal context factors the analysis will look CSO's capacity to be (maintain a specific identity, mission and values), to do (to achieve stakeholder satisfaction and perform well) and to relate (to collaborate effectively with other actors while remaining autonomous).

While participation centres around the 'how' and 'what' of the interaction between track one actors and CSOs, influence focuses on the 'where to'. Since participation is a means to influence a process and steer it into a certain direction, and since it should not be assumed that certain interventions automatically lead to meaningful influence on the negotiations, the second part of the case analysis evolves around influence. A specific and detailed analysis of what and who they aimed to change, what specific input they delivered to the negotiation table and consequently linking that to the claimed and documented changes in the negotiation process and its outcomes, will enable the assessment of the extent to which women's organisations managed to have a certain impact, or mostly claimed their influence on the process. Also, it will be analysed how the women's organisations attributed meaning to their interventions. This is relevant, as it appeared that playing a meaningful role in peace negotiations is rather subjective, being interpreted differently by various stakeholders in the peace process. Another reason to look at the attributed

meaning, is to not take these organisations claimed influence at face value, but take it a step further and look at how they attributed meaning to their interventions and the role they played, also to understand better what participating or trying to means for the women's peace organisations themselves.

One of the identified weaknesses of evaluating interventions by CSOs in peace processes is that often activities are being evaluated, not sufficiently taking into account the broader picture and longer term time frame of what they claim to do. As this research concerns both peace talks with a guerrilla movement (the FARC) and with paramilitaries (AUC) over a period of several years, the analysis allows for a comparison between how different socio-political contexts, different negotiation processes and actors influence the space women's organisations' have to participate and play a meaningful role in the peace negotiations, and how they adapt their interaction with track-one actors, changed their goals and related interventions to the changes in the context. It also allows an understanding of the timeframe needed to establish a certain impact or change, that can be attributed to earlier interventions. Therefore, both the analysis of participation and of influence will end with a small comparison between the two negotiation processes.

1.2.5 Research material and empirical evidence

Different types of data will be analysed to provide information on the participation and influence of Colombian women's NGOs in the peace negotiations with the FARC and the AUC. The armed conflict and the negotiations with the FARC are well documented in scholarly literature; information on negotiations with the AUC is slightly more difficult to find, as this process was less of a public process compared with the Pastrana-FARC dialogues. However, policy institutes and conflict analysts reported sufficiently on them. Information about women's network organisations and their role in the negotiations is rather scarce. Some scholarly research is conducted on Colombia's women's movement against war, as well as civil society's initiatives to contribute to peace in general. International organisations like UNIFEM and Women Waging Peace have produced specific reports in which they documented the activities of women's organisations during the last negotiations in 1999-2002 and the years after. Also, the government and national NGOs reported on their achievements regarding the implementation of resolution 1325. Additional data will be collected from the websites of the women's organisations, noting that more information is available on recent activities and projects, then about their interventions during the FARC negotiations. Also, I will use the official proposals, agendas and declarations developed by the women's peace organisations regarding the negotiation processes. To understand how women's organisations interventions were perceived and interpreted, additional material such as newspaper articles on the civil society consultations in El Caguán during the FARC negotiations will be used, as well as interviews that have been conducted with leaders of the women's peace movement and other prominent actors involved in the peace processes.

Especially the information from policy organisations and women's organisations themselves is obviously part of the supporting discourse. This should be taken into account in the analysis, since they might too easily attribute certain results to the participation of the women's movement without being clear about how particular results can be linked to their interventions. Concerning the information from the Colombian women's network organisations, it is important to understand that they are not a neutral CSO, but that they have a specific political agenda. Awareness of their agenda and goals is imperative when analysing the data about their role in the processes.

Understanding the Colombian Story:

Conflict, Negotiations and Civil Society

This chapter provides the context information that is necessary to understand and analyse the case-study thoroughly. It is essential, as negotiations and their outcomes, as well as the strategies used by the people trying to influence them, evolve in interaction with their context. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the dynamics that moulded and influenced the course and the outcomes of the peace negotiations. Firstly, an impression is given of the history Colombia's protracted armed conflict that continues until today. Consequently, the peace negotiations with the FARC and the AUC will be highlighted and lastly, an introduction to Colombian civil society and the women's movement will be given.

2.1 Setting the Stage: a History of Violence

2.1.1 Colombia in the 20th century

The civil war in Colombia has continued for several decades now, but politically motivated violence is certainly not an unfamiliar visitor in Colombian history. The historian Sánchez describes that Colombia has been in a state of 'permanent endemic warfare' ever since its independence from Spain in 1810, mentioning the numerous local and regional conflicts, rebellions to seize departmental government, intra-elite wars, land struggles and urban riots that continuously occurred throughout the nineteenth century (2001: 5-12).

Many scholars blame the extreme levels of political violence in the past and present on the closed nature of the political system and the vast socio-economic and cultural inequalities in society. Others stress that after colonial rule, Colombia lacked a 'leviathan': a forceful and central federal power. After Bolívar's struggle for independence, the prevailing factions of the Colombian political and economic elite decided they preferred to maintain control over fragmented portions of Colombia, rather than becoming a part of a large and centralised power arrangement (Rochlin 2003: 88-91). These regions did not coexist peacefully and were prone to violent confrontation, as each department had their own private militias and armies.

For almost 150 years two political sides - the Liberals and Conservatives - dominated Colombia's political system. The parties were divided on the issue of government policies and adhered to distinct concepts and ideas on private and public life, education and social values. Whereas the Liberal party was supportive of regional demands of politicians who requested more commercial openness, decentralisation and secular ideas in education, the conservatives promoted overall centralized power, order, tradition and Christian morality. The turn into the

twentieth century was a violent one for Colombia, as the 1000 Days War raged through the country from 1899-1902. It was the culmination of many low profile violent struggles since independence, in which the Liberals tried to topple the Conservative government who had control of the relatively weak federal army. The Liberals formed a number of guerrilla armies by fighters representing the poorest social sectors of Colombia. The war left 100,000 dead and much of the country's economic capacity demolished (Rochlin: 90-91).

After the 1000 Days War, Colombia experienced a period of economic growth during the beginning of the 20th century by the export of products such as tobacco, coffee and bananas, which spurred the industrialization process. However, the benefits of it were distributed unevenly and the ones in power did not seem willing to change that. In response, organised labour movements emerged, as did the Communist party, but the political system remained closed, even though attempts to modernise the centre of economic production in Colombia. Violence was most commonly used in the bipartisan competition for control over the distribution of the county's economic resources (Tuft 2001: 141).

Political parties operated mainly as catalysts for violence and hatred among groups, fed by their leaders to foster and maintain loyalty of the masses. The endless cycle of political conflicts and violence was occasionally resolved by elite pacts that had no constitutional base at all. In this same period, professional and relatively centralised Colombian armed forces were developed. Nevertheless, the class origin of most officers left them in close alignment with the traditional oligarchy, causing mistrust among them vis-à-vis the Liberal Party (Tuft 2001: 142).

By mid-century the growing hostilities among Liberals and Conservatives, the mounting inequity in society, the disillusionment of the poor masses with their traditional political parties all escalated in the period called 'La Violencia' (*the violence*) from 1946 – 1966. It was a time of intense combat, resulting in more than 200,000 casualties and an estimated two million displaced, mainly people from the rural areas. During this period, the nature of political conflict changed from strives that were fought along either conservative or liberal alignments to a conflict between actors who assumed an independent political identity outside the traditional political order, such as peasants, students and labourers (Hartlyn and Sánchez quoted in Tuft: 143-144). Forms of revolutionary violence emerged and traditional elites could no longer control the masses. In the global context of the Cold War and the upcoming guerrillas in Colombia and other Latin American countries, Colombian elites felt threatened by this new enemy. The Liberal and Conservative elites introduced the National Front: a power sharing construction that started in 1958 and lasted for 16 years. The National Front was basically a system in which the Liberals and Conservatives agreed to take turns in government, therewith excluding any other group or movement from meaningful participation in politics. Any kind of social protest was dealt with by the military and the police (Buitrago 2004: 87). Military policy was characterised by the following developments. Firstly, anti-communist thinking was spreading through the military and the concept of *national defence*, aimed at safeguarding the sovereignty of the state against neighbouring countries was slowly replaced by the national security concept, which presumed a threat from national and

international forces connected to communism. This concept meant that the military increasingly focused on the anti-communist struggle within its borders, targeting its own population. Another key characteristic was the ample use of 'the state of emergency' since the mid-1960s, an exceptional constitutional measure used to handle public disorder which basically allowed the state to abandon the rule of law. It was used to repress popular movements, rather than to combat armed violence. Thirdly, under the influence of North American security thinking and the Latin American doctrine of national security, the National Defence Statute was passed in 1965, granting civil defence organisations permission to bear arms for private use, laying a foundation for later self-defence groups of narco-traffickers (Buitrago 2004: 87-89).

In the following years, modern development took root in Colombia. However, Colombia distinguished itself because of the continued fragmentation and dispersion of power. A strong nation-state and mechanisms for conflict resolution remained illusive (Rochlin: 2003: 95). During the 1970s and 1980s, the problems faced by the political system became more evident. Traditional party mechanisms could not handle social tensions related to the limited agricultural reforms in rural communities anymore and a separation between the traditional parties and the trade unions took place. Social protest was criminalised, and the government used extraordinary laws to detain 'political activists'⁶, creating a breeding ground for leftist sympathy (Rochlin 2003:96).

2.1.2 Emerging armed actors: guerrilla movements and paramilitary forces

Against this backdrop, revolutionary guerrilla movements such as the FARC and ELN were born in the 1960's, due to both the persistence of the peasants' problems as well as the increasing radicalisation of university students and the urban middle classes. From this, the Cuban inspired National Liberation Army (ELN) was formed in 1964 by middle class students and intellectuals, trade unionists and former Liberal guerrilla members. The Maoist-influenced Popular Liberation Army (EPL) was created in 1967 as the armed wing of the Leninist Communist party. The self-defence groups in the rural areas that were influenced by the Communist Party transformed into the guerrilla group of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 1966, after the Colombian army started to attack them. Rural populations who became displaced created mobile guerrilla units who adopted the name FARC and continued to be led by Pedro Antonio Marin, alias Manuel Marulanda Velez. They would later become one of the strongest and most professionalized guerrilla groups on the continent, and until 1980, their main objective and rationale for their struggle would be agricultural reform and the redistribution of wealth. In 1972 the urban based 19 April Movement (M19) was formed in reaction to perceived electoral fraud in 1970 (González 2004: 13, Buitrago 2004: 88).

As guerrilla groups began to expand from the peripheral areas towards richer and economically more integrated regions, the type of prevalent violence in Colombian society changed, with the guerrillas increasingly using extortion and kidnapping to finance their struggle.

⁶ Between 1970 – 1979 there were 60,325 political prisoners, predominantly members and leaders from legal trade unions, opposition political parties, human rights organisations, social workers and peasant- and indigenous organisations (Tuft 2001: 147).

Inspired by the national security doctrine, the military responded with counter-insurgency tactics, weakening the support base of the insurgent groups (removing the water from the fish) by attacking civilians in rural areas where guerrillas operated (Rochlin 2003: 98).

Since the end of the 1970, drug trafficking activities increased. Crops such as coca were increasingly cultivated in peripheral areas with little to no state presence, and involvement with narco-trafficking provided the FARC with sufficient economic and military means to operate independently, explaining their survival way into the nineties and until today. Along with the growing offensive and recruiting capacity of the FARC, the military dimension of the conflict became more prominent. It also changed their support base from a constituency based on ideology, into peasants that cultivate coca in the south of the country. Moreover, involvement in narco-trafficking blurred the distinction between war and crime, and their power became basically rooted in their participation in the profitable and capitalist enterprise of drug trafficking (Rochlin 2003: 99-100).

Huge profits earned with narco-trafficking led to more landowners, which led to the emergence of paramilitary groups in the 1980s, as they started to defend themselves and their economic interests against the guerrillas. In 1983, landowners, politicians, military personnel, ranchers and businessmen and a large oil-company formed the group Death to Kidnappers (MAS), in response to the many kidnappings by the guerrillas. The phenomenon began to extend across the country, and other groups emerged, such as the Campesino Self Defence groups of Cordoba (ACCU), founded by the renowned Castaño brothers, former members of MAS. In 1997 the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) were formed as an umbrella group for paramilitaries from across the entire country in an attempt to improve the organisations and coordination among the many paramilitary groups (González 2004: 13). These paramilitary groups defended the economic interests of Colombia's large and powerful landowners and narco-traffickers. They had their powerbase particularly in the northern regions of the country and in Magdalena Medio, where agricultural land was among the most concentrated in the country (González 2004: 15, Rochlin 2003: 106-107). The paramilitaries have always been fiercely anti-communist, as the guerrilla agenda of land reform threatened their economic interests. As such, periods of growth of the paramilitary organisations often go hand in hand with periods in which guerrillas were negotiating with the government (ICG 2003: 7-8). Paramilitaries' became renowned for their excessive use of violence, launched upon guerrilla groups, such as wiping out the Union Patriótica (the political party created by the FARC) but also upon the civilian population living in rural areas, by means of massacres, forced disappearances and killings. The side effect of people, fleeing the violence and abandoning their land has proven successful in expanding the large estates of landowners and narco-traffickers (ICG 2003: 11-12)⁷.

⁷ As landholding is considered the best instrument for laundering and saving money, the most efficient way to build a concentration of wealth is to force people to leave their land. By 1997, an estimated 70% of Colombia's IDP had rural links, and 42% were proprietors, tenants or settlers: 94% of them admitted to have abandoned their land due to the violence, while only 6% had sold it (ISG 2003: 12).

In the 1980s powerful drug cartels emerged, especially in Medellín and Cali, launching a war against the state. These were eventually defeated in the mid-1990s by the Colombian government with military help of the USA. The penetration of drug trafficking in Colombian society strongly damaged the legitimacy of political elites and caused widespread corruption. Boundaries between political violence and criminal activities became blurred, illustrated in 1994, when former President Ernesto Samper was accused of receiving money from the Cali cartel during his election campaign. This deepened the mistrust regarding the political class and furthered the fragmentation and privatization of state power. The impact of the drug trafficking business also increased the complexity of the conflict as it added social and economic dimensions to it, that interrelate with political dimensions (González 2004: 13-14).

A key characteristic of the paramilitary groups is their relation with the government and the military. First of all, they have a shared enemy, being the guerrillas. Many members of the political elite, especially the right-wing factions, have close ties to powerful economic elites, that in turn are often directly or indirectly linked to paramilitary groupings and people involved in narco-trafficking. Another link is that paramilitary groups or right wing militias have occasionally solved 'problems' of the military, leaving governments free to claim they had no knowledge nor involvement in such brutal attacks (Rochlin 2003: 108-109). In addition, many NGOs have reported on joint operations by the military and paramilitary groups, resulting in threats, disappearances, killings and forced displacement (ICG 2003: 15). The recent mild approach of president Uribe toward the paramilitary groupings he negotiates with also hints at the linkages and common interests among paramilitary groups and the support base of right-wing political leadership in Colombia.

2.1.3 US Involvement: War on Drugs and the War on Terror

Though Colombian presidents have always been reluctant inviting the international community to support the search for political solutions to the conflict, the US has played an important role, in particular related to combating narco-trafficking. After supporting the Colombian government with overthrowing the Cali and Medellín drug cartels in the nineties, the US further intensified their focus on Colombia and the War against Drugs during the Clinton administration with the implementation of Plan Colombia, starting in 1999. Tate, an American policy analyst argues that US support for peace and development in Colombia has always been ambivalent and subject to the pressures of their official policy priorities, first the War on Drugs in the 1990s and then the War on Terror after 9/11 (2004: 70).

US support for peace negotiations with the guerrillas has always been overshadowed by their primary concern to counter-narcotic action, rather than a well reasoned response to the Colombian conflict. President Reagan set the stage for the international War on Drugs, by declaring drug trafficking a threat to national security and by making the Pentagon the lead agency for international counter-narcotics policy. Hence, their support with overthrowing the cartels in the mid-nineties. Clinton continued the US War on Drugs in Colombia with 'Plan Colombia' based on two major pillars: extensive herbicide spraying in illicit crop growing areas,

accompanied my millions of dollars in military hardware and training for Colombian security forces involved in counter-narcotics operations (Tate 2004: 71).

The discourse of the War on Drugs was replaced by the War on Terror following the events of 9/11, making the US less willing to support peace talks with the FARC and the ELN, as those groups were on the US State Department List of Terrorist Organisations. Becoming part of the War on Terror led to increased military aid. The amounts spent on Colombia are impressive; the US expanded their military operations in 2002 by the Pipeline protection programme, entailing a total of US \$146 million over a total period of 3 years, to protect the Canon-Limon pipeline (of which 50% is owned by US based Occidental Petroleum) from guerrilla attacks. Another US\$ 104 million was added by Bush, allocated for counter-terrorism operations against the FARC, ELN and AUC. In 2004 an estimated US\$ 731 million was destined for the Andean Counter-drug Initiative in Colombia and six surrounding countries (Richani 2005: 20).

In many ways, US policy has been an obstacle to peace efforts. Firstly, widespread US suspicion of the Colombian guerrillas and leftist movements still prevails, which hampers successful negotiations. The guerrilla movements are narrowly portrayed as 'narcoguerrillas' and drug-trafficking bandits. Also, extensive fumigation primarily in coca fields in southern Colombia has an impact on large-scale coca growers and peasant farmers alike, destroying food crops and alternative development projects at the same time, having major environmental and economic impact for the rural population and eroding the confidence in the government. The US' extensive military support endorses a 'military solution' to the conflict, diminishing the space for dialogue and negotiations between the government and the armed groups. The imposing of US policies on the Colombian governments also shows that the Colombian government is unable to set their own agenda in this particular issue, as Colombia is still largely dependent on the US for trade and economic assistance and unwilling to challenge US policy standpoints, in fear of consequences. (Tate 2004: 72-73)

2.2 Negotiating Peace in the Midst of Violence

2.2.1 Past attempts at negotiating peace

Efforts to find a negotiated solution to Colombia's protracted conflict span across a period of over 25 years, ranging from negotiations with a broad agenda (social and political reforms) like president Betancur (1982-1986), or a narrow agenda, merely focused to resolve issues related to ceasefire and demobilisation like president Barco (1986-1990). Some of these efforts led to partial peace agreements, but none of them managed to address the underlying social, political and economic factors that were fuelling the armed conflict.

Betancur launched talks with the guerrilla's based on a broad agenda, but without a framework that was sufficiently institutionalised or supported by society. Betancur announced a widespread amnesty and assistance for former guerrillas, political reforms that would provide

openings for political inclusion and a national rehabilitation plan for affected regions. The talks resulted in the Uribe Accord that was signed on 28 March 1984, including initial agreements for addressing the socio-economic issues brought in by the FARC and the establishment of a bilateral ceasefire (González Posso 2004: 46-47, Chernick 1999: 175-177). However, Betancur failed to secure support for the peace process among the Congress, his own party, the economic elite and the military. Though the FARC launched the Union Patriótica (UP), their political wing and a new agreement with the FARC in March 1986 confirmed the continuity of the Uribe Accord and the ceasefire, the Barco government did not advance the process, communication deteriorated and the ceasefire was violated by both parties. Moreover, some 3,000 members of the UP became the victim of a systematic elimination campaign by the paramilitaries, who had no interest in agricultural reforms and changes in the balance of power. This caused the FARC to doubt negotiations as a viable way out and they responded with further military development (González Posso 2004: 48, Chernick 1999: 178-179).

Barco on the other hand entered into dialogue with the guerrillas based on a very limited agenda, centred on demobilisation in exchange for the creation of a legal political party, a clearly institutionalised peace policy directed by the government. He managed to get M-19 disarmed and on its way to be integrated into the political structure, but failed to make progress with other armed groups (García-Durán 2004: 6).

When Gaviria took office in 1990, he chose to negotiate the demobilisation of the smaller guerrilla groups, following a narrow agenda. They were offered political participation in the context of the establishment of the National Constituent Assembly, which worked for some of the smaller 2nd generation guerrilla groups. Later, Gaviria expanded the model in his attempts to negotiate with the Simón Bolívar Guerrilla Coordination Body, hoping that military pressure in combination with partial democratisation would bring them to the table. The FARC however unleashed a heavy offensive during the National Constituent Assembly, moving away from negotiations as an option (González Posso 2004: 48, Chernick 1999: 180).

President Samper (1994-1998) instead worked with the 'Betancur model' and granted civil society a broad role in the processes. However, without success since he got into a legitimacy crisis due to his relations with the Cali drug cartel. During his years in the office, fragmentations within society deepened. The guerrillas unleashed a heavy offensive and expanded their sphere of influence. With the expansion of paramilitary groups in the same period, the public order situation worsened, as the government did not seem able to secure its own crisis. The lack of credibility of the government within the military, also left ample space for the armed actors to step up their activities and influence (Buitrago 2004: 96).

As will be elaborated below, Pastrana again followed a broad negotiation agenda and created spaces for greater public and international participation, whereas Uribe in turn returned to a limited negotiation agenda, even more restricted than the original Barco model, focused on the demobilisation and reintegration of combatants, in particular paramilitaries.

All previous attempts to negotiate peace provide valuable lessons learned, and scholars have drawn various conclusions for future processes. Any negotiations process should not just allow core parties to contribute, but also those accompanying the process such as third parties and (inter)national facilitators; real spaces for civic participation should be created, building on the various initiatives already present within Colombia but not adequately used yet; the central facilitating role of actors such as the Catholic Church have played and can continue to play a key role, especially also regarding reconciliation; the international community should be allowed a broader role in future negotiation processes (García-Durán 2004: 8-9). Chernick concludes that a military solution will never be sufficient, but a broad negotiation agenda is needed to address structural issues such as agrarian reform, incorporating armed groups into political structures, reorienting the mission and focus of the armed forces and the police, the dismantling of paramilitary organisations and their linkages with the illegal drug trade, and ensuring that the government reasserts control over national resources (1999: 187).

2.2.2 Negotiating with Guerrillas: Pastrana and the FARC

The Pastrana administration's peace policy developed amid the expansion and degradation of the war in the 1990s. These conditions resulted in popular mobilizations, culminating in 10 million votes for the Mandate of Peace in October 1997. A 'war weary' public pressured the presidential candidate for 1998 elections to enter into peace negotiations with FARC and ELN, though Pastrana especially focused on the FARC. Even though the public support base for negotiations was strong, Chernick noted that it seemed that the ability of government to negotiate with armed actors was rather limited: guerrillas had become increasingly entrenched on local level and levels of violence were very high, there was a loss of state cohesion and multiple strong armed actors were competing for political control over strategic local territories. Though the government was eager to quickly and easily secure peace, the difficult economic situation, the rise in violence and the quick stagnation of the process provided some ugly surprises (1999: 161, Buitrago 2004: 99). The FARC entered the dialogues, hungry for political recognition after a period of military victories (Isacson 2003: 3).

The talks of the Pastrana administration with the FARC differed from previous negotiation models. Some called it an 'agreement on reforms for a new state', allowing for progress "towards a new Colombia, through political, economic and social change that would create a consensus for the construction of a new state founded on social justice, conserving national unity".⁸ Though from hindsight it was not considered very wise, both parties accepted that dialogue and negotiation should continue, even in the midst of military confrontation, with the exception of a large demilitarized zone (about the size of Switzerland), used for meetings. New were the 'audiencias públicas' (public hearings) that were organised and also transmitted by television, in which over 25,000 delegates participated and in which proposals from the different groups and social sectors

⁸ For the full text version of the agreement, please refer to Annex IV

were presented. The negotiation model had included the participation of civil society in a Thematic Committee, created by the parties to contribute ideas to the negotiating table. It also featured the signing of an agreement supporting the process by the political parties and representatives of economic associations. Finally, it included the participation of European and American government representatives as observers or facilitators, as well as representatives of the UN Secretary General and various UN agencies (González Posso 2004: 49).



Figure 2. Model of the Pastrana-FARC dialogues.

The negotiation agenda as it was defined in May 1999 incorporated 12 issues and 48 sub-issues. These included human rights, agrarian policy (the distribution of lands bought with drug money and the substitution of illicit crops), natural resources, the revision of the economic and social development model, reform of the Justice system and the state, accords on International Humanitarian Law (IHL), the redefinition of the peace-time role of the armed forces, and international agreements and the democratic mechanisms legitimizing these.

Positive dynamics that helped the process and built trust among the FARC and government representatives included the FARC ceasefire during Christmas and New Year in 1999/2000, and a visit to Europe to learn from other experiences and secure support for the peace process. Dynamics that weakened the process included the limited participation of civil society, demonstrated in the delays in launching the public hearings, the dense format used in addition to the absence of government officials during the forums and the late revitalisation of the National Peace Council by the government (González Posso 2004: 49, Rojas et al. 2004: 21).

Some argue that President Andrés Pastrana himself played a central role in the process, not only in his pre-election contacts that generated dialogues and negotiations, but also how he handled moments of crisis. Especially in early May 1999 when he travelled to the demilitarized zone to meet with Manuel Marulanda and develop with him the start of formal negotiations on the basis of a common agenda. Similarly on 8–9 February 2001 he met again with Marulanda to attempt to unfreeze the talks. On this occasion the Los Pozos Accord was signed, where they established agreements on how to proceed, in particular through the creation of a commission of distinguished citizens (Comisión de Personalidades) to provide the negotiation table with recommendations, agreement on a humanitarian accord, and the promotion of greater

participation by the international community. On the 2nd of June, a humanitarian accord was signed, formalizing the exchange of 42 military personnel with health problems for 15 imprisoned guerrillas also with health problems. Afterwards the FARC unilaterally released 242 soldiers and policemen (Rudas et al. 2003: 16, Isacson 2003: 6-7).

However, emerging tensions revealed Pastrana's difficulty of maintaining the support of the large business groups and traditional power holders, who did not feel for a negotiation model that proposed commitments on drastic social and political changes. Especially not when the question of demobilization and disarmament had not been dealt with yet (Isacson 2003: 8).

In addition, many questioned the large demilitarized zone, which had turned into a very strategic territory for the FARC. But what played the biggest part in the reducing support for the peace negotiations was the perception of a continued peace talks in the middle of war, without any obvious results. There was increasing pressure for advances on humanitarian accords and an end to hostilities (Rudas et al. 2003: 17). The Pastrana government lost support and the process credibility with the population as military actions and violence continued against the civilian population (González Posso 2004: 49).

In this context, a rapid change in military relations occurred. While the guerrillas continued a slow numerical growth, the paramilitaries multiplied and achieved supremacy in important agricultural, coca and oil areas and in strategic corridors for drugs and arms trafficking, including some urban centres. At the same time, government security forces increased the number of soldiers and was re-equipped with modern technology through Plan Colombia. From the side of the FARC, Plan Colombia and the increased military capacity of the armed forces were considered as a declaration of war (Richani 2005: 20) which was obviously not conducive to the mutual relations and fed the growing use of violence.

Within the government and the armed forces, the influence of those sectors opposed to a negotiated solution increased, and they demanded military offensives and the political isolation of the guerrillas. Meanwhile, the FARC lost momentum on the battlefield during the talks; while the armed forces grew skilful at repelling its larger attacks and the brutal paramilitary groups, their membership tripling over 12,000 members, expanded into many guerrilla-controlled regions (Isacson 2003: 3).

It was at this point that the Comisión de Personalidades presented its recommendations on how to continue the negotiations on 19 September. The parties signed the San Francisco de la Sombra Accord on 5 October 2001, based on these recommendations. The pre-agreement constituted the most advanced progress in twenty years of searching for a peace accord with the FARC, establishing the basis for redesigning the agenda for a political solution to the conflict. Yet at the same time, the negotiations had reached the lowest point in terms of political support and mutual

trust (Isacson 2003: 8). The dialogues rapidly moved towards a breakdown, with the demilitarized zone being the central focus of tension. The murder of the former minister Consuelo Araujo Noguera seriously increased the tension between the parties, which was added to by pressure from the United States to extradite some of the FARC leaders for drug trafficking (González Posso 2004: 50).

Despite the international efforts, in particular by the special representative to Colombia of the United Nations Secretary General (Jan Egeland until 13 November 2001 and later James Lemoyne) the parties did not succeed in getting closer together. The decisive date emerged as 8 January 2002, which marked the end of the extension of the demilitarized zone. Pastrana prepared to give the order for the military to enter the zone. Later interventions by James Lemoyne, representatives of the Church and the international community managed to keep the negotiations barely alive as the FARC declared that there existed guarantees to continue with the negotiations but then the FARC's hijacking of a plane with Senator Jorge Gechem Turbay onboard led the government to break off the negotiations and begin the military reoccupation of the demilitarized zone (Isacson 2003: 9, González Posso 2004: 50-51).

Several parties were happy with the collapse of the negotiations. The agro-business elite was happy to see their economic power, interests and privileges still intact. Paramilitary groups were relieved as they had not only been able to strengthen their power base over the past few years, but were also glad that the government had renounced the allocation of the demilitarized zone to the FARC. In addition, Pastrana had lost support from the military, who believed that the US Plan Colombian would enable them to resolve the conflict with the FARC in a military way, in stead of having to give in during negotiations (Richani 2005: 21-22). Among civil society groups, there were mixed feelings. At the one hand people were waiting for a strong response to the unacceptable high levels of violence committed and Uribe's leadership said to provide just that, but at the other hand many were left disillusioned by the collapse of the talks, of which many had high hopes from the start (Bouvier 2005:14).

2.2.3 Negotiating with paramilitaries: Uribe and the AUC

After the escalating violence and the collapse of the Pastrana dialogues, president Uribe took office in 2002. During the Pastrana administration, Uribe had already built a support base among the most conservative elements of the dominant economic classes and among those from the middle class that were unhappy with the slow pace of the peace process, the economic crisis and the continuing violence (Richani 2005: 21). Uribe reintroduced the old schema of only offering to agree demobilization and reintegration based on military weakening of the insurgency, and he declared the guerrillas to be terrorists and drug-traffickers. The promise made by President Uribe to defeat the guerrillas and drug trafficking by 2005 on the one hand, and the demands by the FARC for two demilitarized departments as a condition for returning to the negotiation table on the

other, illustrate how polarized the situation has become and highlight the difficulties involved in establishing a new round of dialogues with the FARC in the future (González Posso 2004: 50).

Uribe's had several reasons to engage in negotiations with the AUC. The paramilitaries had grown under Pastrana, and it was untenable to have an irregular armed group accumulating political and military power and resources under the pretext of defending and assisting the state, since his electoral campaign emphasized the need to strengthen the state and the rule of law. As he was elected with strong support from regional constituencies with ties to the AUC, such as cattle ranchers and agribusiness elites, the negotiations with the paramilitaries were a response to their requests to provide a suitable exit for AUC leaders, powerful regional landlords, business men and military entrepreneurs (Romero 2004: 58).

Uribe was clear from the start that he would adopt a hardliner and military approach towards the armed actors, as was shown by the Democratic Security Policy, *la Seguridad Democrática*, which basically allowed the same kind of state repression carried out under previous presidencies in the decades before. Only now, the discourse of the War on Terror was used, obliging Uribe to combat the 'terrorist groups' in Colombia at all costs and with all necessary means, even when they undermine democratic principles. This has led a continuation of a campaign against opposition journalists, political activists, union leaders and human rights activists (Richani 2005: 22). Consequently, space for civil society's voice in the political peace process has diminished considerably with Uribe's coming to office.

As Uribe had already announced his intention to engage in dialogue with the paramilitaries, he began immediately with preparing the grounds for formal negotiations with any armed group, willing to meet his conditions. He laid out a negotiation framework with three key conditions: groups would have to agree to enter into a ceasefire, stop killing and abducting Colombians and end all linkages with drug trafficking. He also obtained the parliament's approval of a law allowing the government to negotiate with parties without any political status (ICG 2003: 1).

Starting in December 2002, the Catholic Church, who had taken up the initiative to explore the possibility of peace negotiations between the government and the paramilitaries, facilitated seven months of confidential discussions and pre-negotiations between the government and the AUC. Uribe appointed a six-member exploratory commission, headed by Restrepo, the High Commissioner for Peace, and commissioned them to establish contacts with the paramilitaries and build trust between the parties to prepare for formal dialogue. The commission only includes one government representative (Carlos Franco, a former guerrilla) and five private citizens, whom critics claim were appointed because they hold the same political views as Uribe (Romero 2004: 59). A precondition of the government was a ceasefire and the severing of all links to drug trafficking. Carlos Castaño, leader of the AUC, announced a unilateral ceasefire on December 1st 2002, and he launched a public campaign to condemn drug trafficking, requesting the various AUC fronts to cut links with the illegal trade, which caused upheaval within the AUC (ICG 2003: 1).

In the months that followed, the exploratory commission, congressional representatives and members of the Catholic Church met with paramilitary leaders. Though not much information was made public at the time, it was being said that the main objective of an eventual negotiation would be the demobilisation of the paramilitaries to reduce the high levels of violence, and that the negotiations would not lead to the legalisation of the paramilitaries, though a certain amount of 'generosity' would be part of it (ICG 2003: 21).

In March, the AUC and the government issued a first joint communiqué, expressing their intention to continue with the exploratory talks, to improve the AUC's compliance to the ceasefire and inviting the international community and Colombian society to support the peace efforts and come up with their recommendations (AUC 2003).

Late May 2003, Uribe announced publicly that he was ready to grant pardons or probation to paramilitaries and insurgents who voluntarily surrendered to the authorities,⁹ therewith not only encouraging the desertion of insurgents, but also intending to conduct formal negotiations with the AUC. On June 25th, the exploratory commission submitted a list of then recommendations to the government. These included the suggestion to move from explorations to peace talks at a unified and national negotiation table. AUC compliance with the ceasefire should be improved and monitored, and the paramilitaries should end their involvement in drug trafficking, gasoline theft, extortion and kidnapping. For monitoring purposes, AUC should concentrate its forces in specific locations. The peace negotiations should focus on defining and specifying judicial alternatives to make a peace agreement possible and the Catholic Church and the International Community should accompany them (Comisión Exploratoria 2003).

During the weeks that followed, Restrepo and the AUC leadership discussed these recommendations. Three weeks later on July 15th in 2003, the government, the AUC and Church representatives signed the 'Accord of Santa Fe de Ralito to Contribute to Peace in Colombia',¹⁰ stipulating the end of the pre-negotiations and the beginning of negotiations regarding demobilisation and reintegration of the AUC. The AUC agreed to be fully demobilised by the end of December 2005, it pledged to comply fully with the ceasefire, and to concentrate its forces in due course in specified locations where the government armed and police forces would be present. They also expressed agreement with the government's anti-narcotics policy. The government pledged in very vague terms to 'elaborate and implement measures aimed at reinserting the paramilitaries into civilian life'. Finally, both parties requested the permanent presence of the Catholic Church in the further process and asked Colombians and the international community to support the demobilisation and reintegration process for AUC members. On that note, US officials had offered to provide incentives in the form of training, education, land and other initiatives worth up to \$ 5 million to those paramilitaries who agreed to demobilise (Bouvier 2004: 15).

⁹ El Tiempo, 29 May 2003, p 1-2

¹⁰ For the full text, please refer to Annex VI

The OAS was to fulfil an observatory role to ensure compliance of both parties with the agreement, financially supported by the European Union, the Netherlands and several other European countries.

In the past years, many have expressed their concerns about the negotiations and the demobilisation of the paramilitaries. The primary concern is the unacceptability level of impunity. A certain degree of impunity can be justified when a peace process includes all parties, and the likelihood of ending the confrontation is high. However, that is not exactly the case with the paramilitaries, who have the most renowned track record of human rights violations in Colombia. Human rights organisations claim that any concession to the AUC should be the outcome of a process in which the victims' rights have been addressed (Romero 2004: 59). The negotiations between Uribe and the AUC, and the extent of the judicial benefits submitted for congress approval in 2003, have alarmed opposition parties, human rights organisations, sectors of the Catholic Church and even members of Uribe's coalition. Regarding the extent of the juridical benefits, also Michel Fruhling, director of the Colombia office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, placed a warning in august 2003, and called for adherence to the norms of international law (ICG 2003: 25, Romero 2004: 59).

There are also concerns that negotiations could help drug traffickers within the AUC to white wash their police records and legalize their properties without punishment (Bouvier 2005:15, Romero 2004: 59). The government failed to demonstrate and verify that paramilitaries severed the linkages with narco-trafficking, and AUC leaders still have to show their seriousness about the process by informing the government of drug operations and handing over drug profits. In addition, many question the state's capacity to respond adequately to the information posited to them regarding the drug trade is also questioned (ICG 2003: 28).

Also, questions about the process still remain: firstly, an estimated 50% of the paramilitaries refuse to participate in the talks. There is dissent among the AUC, which is a federation of at least seven groups, sometimes with different agenda's and interests. Also, some have withdrawn from the talks or and paramilitary abuses continue to occur. Then, some sectors that finance the paramilitaries – including small mining companies, merchants and ranchers - oppose the demobilization as long as the guerrillas remain active. Some AUC leaders argue that demobilisation of their force is inappropriate unless an end to the war is concurrently being negotiated. There remain also high level military officers continue to oppose severing ties with the paramilitaries, whom they still considers to be allies in the counter-insurgency war. Also, mechanism for international verification and the questions of clarification and punishment for paramilitary crimes have yet to be worked out (Bouvier 2005: 16).

2.3 Civil Society and the Women's Movement

2.3.1 Civil Society and the Armed Conflict

In Latin America, civil society has always been shaped by extensive negotiations between the social and political domain. In many countries, civil society has acted as a counterforce to the populist and militarist state structures that dominated social life. When economic development set in on the continent, the call for political inclusion from various civil society groups became stronger and especially left-wing movements aimed at dismantling the state monopoly on power and economic resources. Until the end of the Cold War, most of these forms of social organisation were highly politicised. In the years that followed, new social movements and organisations based on participatory decision-making, autonomy and democracy were created. Slowly, debates on civil society were taken up in national dialogues and avenues for collaboration were being explored (Douma & Klem 2004: 12).

In Colombia, historically seen civil society has been excluded from official peace processes. Some even argue that Colombian civil society hardly existed, apart from those civil organisations that were the fronts of armed interest groups. In the 1970s and 1980s, most popular movements and human rights organisations were crushed (Cockburn 2005: 4). As the conflict escalated in the 1980s and 1990s, civilians became the main targets and victims of the war. Though the new constitution from 1991 does guarantee broad political participation, high levels of violence severely limit anyone outside the two traditional parties to participate in the political process. Despite the various peace negotiations with armed groups since the early 1990s, the lives of Colombian citizens have become even less secure, in particular for two groups: members of social and political organisations that operate outside the framework of the Conservative and Liberal parties and affiliated organisations, and population of rural areas that have become conflict zones, dominated by either paramilitary groups, the military or the guerrillas (Tuft 2001: 148). The huge number of internally displaced people (2.5 million), massacres, the kidnapping industry, forced disappearances and rape are among the many human rights violations inflicted upon the Colombian population (Rojas et al. 2004: 9).

In Colombia, gender-based differences in both the type of human rights violations as well as the impact resulting from them shows how men and women are affected differently. In general, men are the principal victims of civil and political human rights violations associated with armed conflict, including violations of the right to life, to not be subjected to torture, the right to freedom of speech, organisation and movement (Tuft 2001: 151). Flowing from existing gender relations within society, more men than women assume visible leadership roles in communities and social or political organisations. As such, men have been the principle targets of political oppression. However, since recently a growing number of women have taken up social and political leadership roles in society, an increase in cases civil and political rights violations of women can be noted (Amnesty International 1995: 1).

The violations experienced by women occur often in the realm of economic, social, cultural and sexual rights. This is mostly visible among the internally displaced population, of which women constitute the majority, many being single heads of households as their men are killed in the conflict. Displacement as a direct consequence of armed conflict brings forth economic hardship, ruins social and economic safety networks and makes women responsible to also take up typically male roles such as providing economically for their families (Ardila and Tuft in Tuft 2001: 151). Meertens however observed that among IDPs, women adapt themselves faster to changed circumstances than men do, and appear to be more inventive in surviving and rebuilding their lives (2001: 141-145). Sexual violence against women is also endemic and used by both the military, paramilitary and guerrilla forces to punish women for associating with 'the wrong side' or to punish enemy men. Women are also often kidnapped into sexual servitude and forced to do domestic labour for guerrillas or paramilitaries (IMP 2004).

2.3.2 Civil Mobilisation for Peace

In spite of the heavy toll of the conflict upon the Colombian population, or perhaps because of it, Colombia currently possesses a vibrant civil society, working for peace and resisting war. Students, labourers, religious groups, peasants, women, children, indigenous groups, Afro-Colombians, and mothers and relatives of soldiers and the disappeared are involved in all kind of civil society activism. Their activism is not only broad and inclusive of people from all social strata, but is also visible at local, regional and national levels. Numerous entities and initiatives are supported by the church, there are externally NGOs and think tanks, as well as local associations of communities that with little resources (Rojas et al. 2004: 10).

This shift came about around the beginning of the nineties, when the human rights movement had a moment of success in 1991 under a relatively liberal regime, in obtaining a revision of the national Constitution (Cockburn 2005: 4). Around that time, social mobilisation for peace started to take off, first in war torn areas such as Urabá and Magdalena-Medio and then spreading to other departments. The period 1993-99 on the one hand saw the 'dirty war' where paramilitaries harassed the trade union movement and wiped out the leftwing Union Patriótica,¹¹ but at the other hand it was a period of rapid expansion of both organisations and initiatives to mobilise people for peace. A Committee for the Search of Peace was formed to bring together social organisations and NGOs, and the Catholic Church set up a National Conciliation Commission to help bring parties in conflict together by providing good offices (Delgado 2004: 24). Another key initiative in that period was the forming of Redepaz, in 1993, a National Network of Initiatives for Peace and against War, which currently has about 120 regional tables, in which social leaders, local authorities, NGOs and individuals come together to discuss and solve local problems. Their most impressive action was to organise in 1997 a national referendum which generated over 10 million votes for peace, more than the combined votes for all candidates in the previous presidential election, which was later followed by a Children's referendum, raising another 2.7

¹¹ The Unión Patriótica is the political party that was created out of the demobilised guerrilla movement M19.

million votes (Cockburn 2005: 5). Many consider the popular will for peace, revealed by these referenda as the thing that pushed the Pastrana government into peace negotiations with the FARC the following year. A permanent Civil Society Assembly for Peace was formed in 1999, and in 1999 mass demonstrations around the country brought out an estimated 8 million people under the slogan 'No Más', to protest against the surge of kidnappings that provided many illegal armed groups with extra financial income (Cockburn 2005: 5).

This period of rapid expansion resulted in a very diverse landscape of CSOs engaged in peace and conflict issues. The organisations vary in activities and ideologies. Some specialise in mobilising mass support for demonstrations and public protests. Many run workshops and training programs for local communities or target populations such as women, youth or indigenous people to build awareness regarding human rights, conflict resolution and peace. There are advocacy and research organisations, working for those who have been kidnapped or forcibly displaced by armed actors. The organisations' demands range from pressing all armed actors to abide by international human rights laws to calling for inclusion of civil society in the social, economic and political decisions of the country. The creation of umbrella organisations or networks for peace is a rather new phenomenon, particularly visible in the women's peace movement, most likely born out of the need to organise and somehow streamline the efforts of the many organisations and initiatives at work (Rojas et al. 2004: 10-11).

When the dialogues between Pastrana and the FARC started, the dynamics of that process had a significant impact on the dynamics of the peace organisations at a national level, as these all focused their attention on the negotiations (Fernández et al. 2004: 20-21). Therefore, the end of the peace process in 2002 left a large part of civil society demoralised and in crisis. As the Uribe administration adopted a military approach to deal with the armed groups, space for civil activism and participation further diminished. CSOs themselves were also found reluctant to engage with the negotiations between the government and paramilitaries due to concerns about issues regarding impunity and justice (McCartney 2006b: 14). However, at regional level civil activism around issues of peace, development, and resistance of violence stayed comparatively dynamic, such as the peace communities that were formed in Urabá, the explicit neutral position adopted by indigenous communities, the constituents assembly processes at municipal and departmental level (Fernández et al. 2004: 21). So, in spite of the crisis of civil participation and activism at national level, grass-roots initiatives grew stronger throughout this period. This points at the importance of looking at the level of civil society activity, as apparently there can be different dynamics, trends and challenges at work on a local, regional or national level. It can be stated that national level peace initiatives are especially attempting to link peace mobilisation activities to decision-making processes at national level. This often occurs through forums for mobilisation and articulation of popular demands regarding peace, such as the Committee for the Search for Peace, REDEPAZ and la Ruta Pacifica. At regional level, initiatives seek to develop processes that bring together initiatives of various municipalities, such as peace and development programmes

and autonomy and resistance initiatives pursued by indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities or the indigenous resistance communities in Cauca (Fernández et al.: 22).

2.3.3. The Women's Movement

In Latin America the women's movement emerged in the late seventies, along with other social movements, such as labourers and students, to obtain a political voice and greater economic equality and justice. Women joined the other social movements in their protest against the dirty wars, launched upon the civilian population by authoritarian military regimes that dominated politics in many Latin American countries throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The regimes did not fight external enemies or neighbouring countries, but adopted military means to fight 'internal' enemies of the regime among the civilian population. They operated through harsh and repressive tactics, including imprisonment, exile, assassination and forced disappearances of victims, therewith creating and maintaining a culture of fear (Valenzuela 1999: 157-158).

Against that background, the women's movement became politicised and organised itself around various issues, the main ones being human rights issues, economic survival and feminism (Jaquette 1994: 185). Women's mobilisation around human rights occurred mostly around the issue of disappearances, as those organisations were particularly composed of mothers and grandmothers of the disappeared and politically repressed, who had little previous political experience. They publicly denounced military violence and the invasion of the private sphere (traditionally the space allocated to women) by the armed forces. Worsening economics due to neo-conservative policy and structural adjustment programmes in the region, caused many poor urban women to organise themselves for the survival of their families, leading to subsistence income generating activities, soup kitchens and other new and creative economic organisations and women's enterprises. In the midst of the 1970, also contemporary feminism came up, born as an oppositional movement, challenging patriarchy but also its paradigm of male domination: the militaristic state. A particular characteristic of Latin American feminism is the struggle against gender oppression and other more local forms of social, political and economic oppression and domination, shaped particularly by class warfare and state repression. Despite their different origins and goals, the three strands (human rights organisations, economic organisations and feminist organisations) came together in their struggle against military rule (Valenzuela 1999: 159, Jaquette 1994: 186-188).

When in most of Latin America transitions to democracy took place, social movements had to work through political parties to turn their demands into legislation. In spite of the new democratic governments, the ways of doing politics hardly changed. Hierarchical patterns (re)emerged, personalism and 'patron-client' ties still played an important role, as did politics of exclusion and the oppression of marginalised groups, including women. The women's movement had to adjust their strategies in order to avoid marginalisation (Jaquette 1994: 206). They have achieved various successes, including changed laws, the creation of new institutions inside and outside the government that promote and safeguard women's interests and linkages have been

created between governments and women's organisations. Public attitudes changed and the portrayal of women in the media has improved. Regarding women's political participation, some gains have been made, partly due to the adoption of women-friendly legislation, affirmative action measures and international commitment toward fostering women's political participation: an increase in high-level administrative appointments can be noted, as well as a surge in the number of women appointed or elected to public office (Buvinic and Roza 2004: 1-2).

If these trends will continue and will truly lead to the benefits generally associated with more women in power, will depend on the capacity of the women's movement to deal with some current challenges. These include overcoming fault-lines between urban and rural, progressive and conservative, educated and uneducated groups of women within the women's movement, building their fragile political capacity and ensuring that achievements also count for marginalised groups among them, such as the poor, the rural afro-descendent and indigenous population (Buvinic and Roza 2004: 13-14, Jaquette 1994: 206-207).

In Colombia, women lacked an independent legal status and the means for collective organization throughout the 19th century. As the public sphere was the domain of men, the private sphere constituting of the family and the home was allocated to women. However, they participated in the post-independence wars in various ways, depending on their class and social background. Women from poor rural communities marched with men to the battlefield as nurses, cooks, carriers of weaponry and ammunition, whereas elitist women set up improvised hospitals in their homes to aid the wounded. As the violence decreased, women generally withdrew to the private spheres again.

Throughout the 20th century, the Catholic Church had a strong influence on women's activities and beliefs. As a result, many women's organisations were affiliated with Catholic charities. Women's civil and political rights expanded and by the 1940s, women were active in the defence of labour laws and allied with the Communist and Social Democrat parties (Red Nacional de Mujeres 2003: 30). In the second half of the same century, women's rights movements and Western ideas of feminism landed in Colombia. With the support of the Catholic Church and the Conservative party, women gained the right to vote in 1954, which they could first exercise after the dictatorship of General Pinilla in 1957. As before, class and social background continued to determine a woman's situation. Though there was little space for women's mobilisation and organisation in the 1970s and 1980s, the increase pursuit of women for better education led to changes in their traditional roles. They increasingly participated in political, labour and cultural movements, and slowly groups and organisations were created that allowed women to become active and participate in public spaces (Rojas et al. 2004: 6).

Women's organising and mobilising work for peace really took off in the 1990s, along with the increased civil mobilisation for peace in general. From that period, Colombia's women's peace movement evolved into a myriad of organisations, groups and networks that operate at local, regional and national level. Diversity seems to be the key characteristic, which is an

indication of the multiplicity of identities found among Colombia's women, as both indigenous, Afro-Colombian, rural and urban women are creating private and collective spaces for action (Gruner 2003: 21-22). A recent mapping exercise of Colombia's peace movement distinguished over a hundred different formal civil peace organisations and initiatives that make up the women's movement for peace (Sandoval 2004 a: 98-111). The many initiatives and organisations range from formalised NGOs to informal CBOs or grass-roots initiatives, from rural to urban movements, focussing on issues ranging from violence against women, humanitarian outreach to displaced people, food security initiatives, to empowering women to participate in local and national politics and building capacity for women's social and political leadership. Some focus on generating mass support for peace, others work to promote dialogue and reconciliation in local communities. There is also great diversity in discourse: some organisations have a clearly formulated opinion on the causes of Colombia's conflict and the way it should be resolved. Others have a less pronounced opinion on those matters, but focus on peace and non violence. Some organisations work from a feminist and anti-militarist discourse and work with and for women only, others are more moderate and are mixed organisations (Rojas et al. 2004: 9). What most organisations and initiatives have in common is that many are part of overarching national network organisations, a phenomenon particularly visible in the women's movement in Colombia. There are at least four major networks, each encompassing hundreds of women's associations across the nation. Such networks are also prevalent in the mainstream peace movement, though on a smaller scale (Rojas et al. 2004: 10).

Speaking out publicly against the conflict and for social justice in Colombia is not without a risk. In the past decade, both members of women's organisations and female political and social leaders have increasingly become targets of armed groups, experiencing threats, harassment and occasional assassination of leaders (Amnesty International 1995: 1). This has forced many women's leaders to flee their communities and sometimes even their countries. Indirectly, the high levels of forced displacement in rural conflict zones also affected women's organisations and leaders, often leading to the break-up of local communities and the closure of organisations. This is worsened by mistrust and fear, installed upon the civilian population by the high levels of armed violence. This so called 'erosion of social capital among women and in women's organisations form a threat to the progress that women leaders in particular and the women's movement in general have made for themselves, their families and their communities (ANMUCIC 2003: 29, Moser and Clark 2000: 24).

It is also an effective tactic by the armed actors to install a culture of fear, in order to undermine and weaken women's leadership, as well as intimidating them to submit to the orders and requirements of armed groups and silence those voices that challenge the political status quo (Moser and Clark 2000: 23). Many women's organisations also argue that the US' involvement in the country under the banner of the War on Terror and the military approach of Uribe's administration, has significantly diminished space for women's organisations to participate in conflict resolution through negotiations has diminished significantly, as the chances for negotiations to occur have become so much smaller (Gruner 2003: 21-22).

From the Margins to the Centre?

Women's Participation in Colombia's Peace Negotiations

This chapter presents Colombia's women's activism for peace throughout two central negotiation processes. First, the four women's network organisations for peace that took the lead in women's efforts to participate in the political peace negotiations between the Colombian government and armed actors will be presented. Consequently, an analysis will follow of interventions and activities by these selected organisations, specifically aimed at playing a meaningful role in the negotiations between president Pastrana and the FARC, as well as in the negotiations between the Uribe administration and the AUC. How did they strategise in order to get access to peace negotiations at political level, how did they interact with stakeholders operating on track-one, what interventions and activities did they develop with the intention to influence the negotiations? In the last section, their interventions will be analysed to understand how the interaction with actors from track one occurred, linking their strategies and interventions to the context related dynamics of the peace negotiations.

3.1 Women's Peace Organisations

Four large women's network-organisations for peace have been selected for analysis in this case study, as these ones explicitly aimed to channel the perspectives, priorities and demands of Colombian women into the various peace negotiations between the Colombian government and both the FARC and the AUC. Below, their background, objectives, constituency, core activities and partnerships are highlighted.

La Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres por la Negociación Política de los Conflictos

La Ruta is a large umbrella organisation, founded in 1996 in response to the visible and invisible violence women experienced in rural and urban conflict areas in Colombia. La Ruta constitutes of around 315 smaller local, regional and national organisations, and represented in eight Colombian regions, of which many are heavily affected by the armed conflict. Its central office is in Medellin and La Ruta operates through regional coordinators. Its constituency is diverse and consists of a variety of organisations of women from different age, ethnicity, class and background: indigenous, Afro-Colombian, urban and rural, peasants and displaced women. Many member-organisations are active in the following areas: training and equipping women to counteract the effects of violence in various spheres of society, empowerment of women to participate in political life at local, community and national level, supporting women who experience domestic violence, raising awareness of women's rights.

Ideologically, they are both feminist and pacifist, and explicitly condemn violence against women, whether domestic or military. Their activities are often large-scale, public events and they make considerable use of symbols and language in their campaigns and interventions, partly to 'deconstruct' the logic of war. Symbolism is also thought to bring women from different backgrounds together, creating solidarity and dignity. They distinguish themselves by their impressive mobilisation capacity, in which they organise women to travel in large numbers from all over the country to bring solidarity to women in a particular conflict area. Their first mobilisation in 1996 was to transport over 2000 women to Urabá in solidarity with women who lost their loved ones in the massacres. It marked the first time in Colombian history that women made such a political and public statement independently from men.

La Ruta in Colombia is embedded in the international network of 'Pacifist Routes', which allows them to link with women in other conflict areas and increase their chances on international support. As such, la Ruta has been able to draw the eyes of the world on Colombia by sharing information and experiences. At a national level, la Ruta cooperates with other national women's alliances and bodies for peace, such as the OFP, IMP, la Mesa Nacional de Concertación de Mujeres, la Mesa Mujer y Conflicto and Comisión Colombiana de Juristas.¹²

They receive financial support from both their members and from external international donors such as the European Commission, SUIPPCOL (Swiss Programme for the Promotion of Peace in Colombia) and CooperACCIO and Intermón Oxfam, both Spanish development NGOs (El Bushra et al. 2005: 13, Cockburn 2007: 21-22 and 2005: 7-8).

Organización Femenina Popular

OFP is a women's organisation, headquartered in Barrancabermeja, in the highly conflicted area in Magdalena Medio, both the cradle of ELN and the centre of ECOPETROL, Colombia's major oil refinery. The organisation was established in 1972, rooted in the labour movement's struggle to defend the nationalisation of the petrol industry. In the nineties, its presence became stronger in the Magdalena region, as a movement with a critical position towards the Government and the paramilitary groups that operated ruthlessly in the region, which explains why in recent years, many members of OFP have become targets of paramilitaries (Rojas et al. 2004:11).

OFP works in municipalities throughout Colombia and is a women's grassroots organisation. Its members include workers, community leaders, small entrepreneurs, youth and female heads of households. Their overall goal is to defend women's human rights and dignity, and empower women to actively participate in society and contribute to the reconstruction of social fabric, destroyed by armed conflict and violence. Specifically, this occurs by building women's leadership capacity, not only for political participation and leadership, but also in other areas of life.

¹² From: www.rutapacifica.org.co, consulted 12 March 2007

Additional activities focus on providing health and social services to victims of violence and IDPs, micro-finance projects and awareness raising programs denouncing military violence and promoting human rights.¹³

Together with la Ruta, OFP set up the Colombian branch of 'Women in Black' (Mujeres de Negro), which is also present in several other (former) conflict areas around the world. Women in Black got to mobilise women in various departmental capitals in Colombia, where they dressed in black (sometimes with a yellow flower to represent hope) organised vigils, in which they silently denounced any form of violence, militarism and war (Cockburn 2007: 22).

Red Nacional de Mujeres

The national women's network was formed in 1992, after having actively participated in the process of the National Constituent Assembly in 1991. At the time, it worked to include articles in the new constitution that would guarantee the effective realisation of women's rights. The Network was formed by several independent feminists and various women's organisations, with the following objectives: to promote legislation favourable to women, strengthen the capacity of regional and local women's organisations, promote women's active participation in political institutions and decision-making structures for instance by building women's capacity and by social mobilisation with the purpose of making visible the impact of the conflict in women's lives. RNM demands specifically space for women at the negotiating table. RNM has published extensively on women's rights, women's political history and the women's agenda for peace, addressing legal issues and the importance of a gender perspective in humanitarian law (Rojas et al. 2004: 11).

They have networks in 17 regions, and RNM fulfils a connecting role, linking the regional women's initiatives to national processes, and acts as a capacity builder and facilitator. Around 80 regional and local organisations participate in the network. Though RNM works from an explicit feminist rationale, their members are not exclusively feminist organisations. Its constituency is diverse and exists of women's and mixed organisations that work either for women, on gender issues, or to accomplish and promote women's full citizenship (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 159).

During the Pastrana-FARC process, RNM was the leading group behind the preparation and implementation of the women's public forum, where women were given a space to articulate their concerns about conflict and their visions of peace. In addition, Magdala Velázquez of RNM was nominated to represent the women's movement on the National Peace Council. More recently, they have been extensively involved in the Justice and Peace Law and the lobby process around it to gender sensitise it, pleading for a reparation and reconciliation commission that also focuses on cases of violence against women during the armed conflict.¹⁴

¹³ From: www.ofp.org.co, consulted 15 March 2007

¹⁴ From: www.rednacionaldemujeres.org consulted at March 9 2007

Iniciativa de Mujeres Colombianas por la Paz

IMP was created in 2001, during the Pastrana-FARC dialogues in the light of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. The alliance has its origins in the Conference of Colombian Women for Peace, held in Stockholm in Sweden, financially and logistically facilitated by SIDA (Swedish International Development cooperation Agency), the University of Uppsala, the Swedish Embassy in Colombia and various Swedish and Colombian Trade Unions. IMP distinguishes itself by its roots in trade union activism, which becomes visible in their tendency towards engagement with power and in their liberal feminist agenda that is focused on the reform of structures to accommodate women.¹⁵

IMP's objectives are to realise the participation of women's organisations and their interests in negotiations and dialogues related to the armed conflict in Colombia, and to contribute to the construction of national reconciliation processes. In addition, they aim to reduce the impact of the armed conflict on women by means of establishing a women's agenda for peace and work for its ratification at municipal, departmental and national level. The core of their work is to coordinate and facilitate the process in which the multiplicity of women's organisations in Colombia articulate their wishes and demands regarding resolution of the armed conflict and peace, and feed that into the political negotiations and dialogues with armed groups (Cockburn 2005: 15).

Its political demands include specifically the participation of women in all processes of negotiation and dialogue. IMP also advocates for the incorporation of women's interests and needs into the agenda of negotiations, including reparations for victims of violence and the attention for the reintegration of women ex-combatants in particular.

IMP is an alliance of 22 national women's organisations and 246 regional initiatives and organisations, working in seven sectors: indigenous, peasant, trade unionists, youth, academics & feminists, peace and culture and afro-descendant. Financially they are supported by SIDA, UNIFEM and ST, a Swedish civil servants union (Rojas et al. 2004: 11).

Several organisations and spaces for women's mobilisation are not part of the four organisations above and will not thoroughly be analysed. However, they do play a role in the process of further developing the political message of the women's peace movement. I will mention the most important ones shortly to avoid creating the image that the four network organisations are the only channels for women's participation, articulation of political priorities and lobby & advocacy work.

REDEPAZ is a civil society network of all kinds of peace organisations, but has been alert to the potential of women to contribute to peace and continue to promote women's participation and activism through their organisation. They took the lead in the Mandate for Life and Peace campaign in the nineties, and especially one of the directors, Ana Teresa Bernal, is a key figure in the women's movement for peace.¹⁶

¹⁵ From: www.mujeresporlapaz.org consulted at 9 March 2007

¹⁶ From: www.redepaz.org.co consulted at 10 May 2007

Also, the *Confluencia Nacional de Redes*, established in 1998 is an initiative in which many women's groups and organisations have come together to strategise to influence the politics in favour of women's rights. Though not specifically focused on the peace negotiations, they lobbied to influence the National Development Plans that were being elaborated to incorporate laws to provide for quotas of women in public administration and posts and positions of political parties (Sandoval 2004b: 146).

The *Comisión Colombiana de Juristas* is an NGO that plays a role in promoting and ensuring women's rights. They conduct research and provide publications on women's rights violations and providing input for the women's network organisations when it comes to the work of formulating proposals that have to do with legal provisions for women, for instance throughout the lobby work to ensure that in the demobilisation process with the AUC a specific space would be created where women whose rights had been violated could be heard.¹⁷

Lastly the *Mesa de Trabajo Mujer y Conflicto*, which exists since 2000, and was partly established by OFF. They document the realities of women and girls affected by violence in the Colombian conflict, hoping to be able to contribute to establishing truth if there will ever be a Truth and Reconciliation commission in the future (Cockburn 2005: 20). The Mesa produces regular informational updates on the state of affairs regarding the impact of violence on the lives of women and girls.¹⁸

3.2 Women's Participation in Negotiations with the FARC & AUC

Colombia's women's peace organisations were closely involved in the civil society movement that mobilised the Colombian people and Pastrana to engage in negotiations with the FARC. As Pastrana embarked on the negotiation process with the FARC, women's peace organisations embarked on the challenge to participate effectively in that process, not only motivated by their own quest for peace but also encouraged by the global momentum for women's participation in formal peace processes. Though there was much momentum and motivation, as a movement they did not have much experience yet in how to ensure access, participate effectively and make specific contributions to peace negotiations. In addition, the movement itself was still rather fragmented and as mentioned in the previous chapter: differences abounded and certain groups of women still moved in the margins of the women's movement itself, such as indigenous and afro-descendent organisations. For many of the organisations it was a new thing to organise themselves in order to influence peace negotiations with messages from their constituency, and they were learning along the way.

Below follows an overview of their interventions and activities that were specifically targeted to shape the formal peace processes, specifically the negotiations between the government and the

¹⁷ From: www.coljuristas.org, consulted 23 March 2008

¹⁸ From: www.ofp.org.co, consulted 25 May 2008

FARC, and later the AUC. Consequently, based on the conceptualisation of participation in chapter one, an analysis will be given of how they participated, how they interacted with track one actors and how they dealt with internal and external challenges that arose from the context and shaped their opportunities to participate meaningfully or not. This section describes and analyses each intervention separately, rather than categorising the interventions per case organisation, since in many of the initiatives, multiple network organisations were involved, either by taking the lead or by providing support to the intervention.

3.2.1 Interventions throughout negotiations with the FARC

Through the following interventions the women's network organisations sought to participate in the peace negotiations between the government and the FARC. Though the four organisations all continued with their regular work and activities in the public arena, like organising vigils and public marches, the following three interventions were specifically focused on getting access to the negotiations, participate as a women's movement and make contributions to the negotiations.

- **Women's Participation in Formal Negotiation Structures**

the initiative

One of the most obvious way in which women claimed to engage in the negotiations between Pastrana and the FARC, was through the active participation of several women's leaders from the women's peace movement, who fulfilled positions in bodies that were part of the formal negotiation structure.¹⁹ Several publications underline this strategy as a way in which women at the time were part of the peace talks (Rojas et al. 2004: 18, UNIFEM 2007).

Ana Teresa Bernal, one of the directors of REDEPAZ (a civil society peace network that in its work for peace also strives to enhance women's participation), was elected to represent civil society as a member of the National Peace Council in the Thematic Commission (TC). The TC was set up as a bridge between the negotiation table and civil society. Its main objective was to call for public forums to gather and channel civil society groups' demands and priorities around a theme that was already identified by the negotiators. Then they would channel the outcomes and recommendations back to the negotiation table again (García-Duran 2004: 89).

Bernal used her position in the TC strategically to give an impulse to including input from women's organisations in the peace negotiation. She proposed to the negotiators to have a woman's public forum, established relationships with Mariana Páez from the FARC who also participated in the TC as the FARC representative, and they started organising the public forum.

Besides Ana Teresa, publications also point out Mariana Páez as a women's representative during the negotiations. However, others argue that she first and foremost participated as a representative of the FARC in the TC, and not as a representative of women's interests or standpoints. She was the only woman who represented the FARC in the formal negotiation bodies, and was said to never move away not even a bit from FARC discourse (Rojas et al. 2004: 16, 18).

¹⁹ For an overview of the leading figures in Colombia's women's movement for peace, please consult Annex II.

María Emma Mejía is also often mentioned in this respect, as she was as a former minister the only female member of the first negotiation team of Pastrana. She participated only for a short period, for personal reasons as well as because Pastrana changed the composition of his negotiation team rather soon after the start of the negotiations (González Posso 2004: 49). In some documentation she is presented as one of the women through which the women's movement articulated their demands into the negotiations, but little information can be found that she herself considered her a representative of Colombian women and felt like she represented their interests when negotiating with the FARC (Rojas et al. 2004: 16). There is also no information that suggests active lobby by women's leaders focused on getting her on board of the women's movement or liaison to convince her to take in certain positions in the negotiations. Thus, what or rather who this strategic participation in the structures of the formal peace negotiations eventually came down to, was Ana Teresa Bernal, who managed to build good relations with Mariana Páez.

the analysis

As participation is only useful when you have a goal to achieve, bringing up all female participants to show that women really played a role presents a wrong image of what women's participation entails and strives for in negotiations, especially regarding the fact that not all women manage or aim to promote women's interests in the first place. When looking critically at the opportunities women had to participate via their representatives that had access to the formal negotiations – the insider-approach - it appears to come down to one person eventually, who was not only there to represent Colombian women but civil society in general as well.

The TC itself could only provide recommendations to the negotiators and served as initiator of platforms where civil society sectors could express their needs, priorities and opinions regarding the conflict and its resolution. Consequently, they would channel civil society's input to the negotiation teams. As such, the TC was a consultative participation mechanism specifically meant to facilitate civil society's contribution to the negotiations. In reality it appeared that there was not much interaction between the negotiators and the TC, let alone the negotiators and the civil society forums (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 163). It was mostly one-way traffic from the TC to the negotiation teams. After the TC had done their work and provided their recommendations on a certain issue the negotiators had identified, it often remained quiet. Later on, there was seldom communication about the follow-up or results of their recommendations for the negotiations (Bernal in Rojas et al. 2004: 18). Their lack of decision making power limited the opportunities of the TC to ensure that civil society's input would really be taken into account into the agenda's that were set and the agreements discussed at the negotiation table.

- **Women's Public Forum – Preparations**

the initiative

Already mentioned here above, the key event around which a broad participation of women in the Pastrana-FARC dialogues could be organised, was the Women's Public Forum, held in El

Caguán on June 25, 2000. This moment was the first time ever that women attempted to formulate a common women's agenda for peace, which was given a place in the official process. Ana Teresa Bernal from REDEPAZ, had suggested the forum at the Thematic Commission, and together with Mariana Páez from the FARC they took the lead in organising the forum. RNM supported them in the preparatory process. The overall theme was economy and employment, as was decided by the negotiators (Rojas et al. 2004: 19). The other network organisations (OFF and la Ruta) were involved by mobilising their members to engage with the preparatory process.

The preparatory process was meant to strengthen the participation of women in conflict transformation.²⁰ It spanned across a period of about six months and entailed discussion groups per sector in various regions, working tables on various topics where women clearly stated disagreement and agreement among themselves, and the opportunity was given to groups to prepare papers that would be presented at the forum and then submitted to the TC. In the preparations, about 85 organisations and smaller networks participated, under the coordination of RNM, who also facilitated the creation of the consensus document, signed by the 85 participating organisations. This consensus document was created over a period of three months, and evolved around the issues of employment, the economic model, plan Colombia and the employment situation specifically for women in Colombia. All the regional and sectoral working groups were given the opportunity to provide input, but they were also requested to prepare creative and symbolic contributions for the forum, resulting in the participation of a group of artists and community workers (Rodríguez Lozada & Cruz 2005: 162-166).

In the preparatory process, participants agreed to deliver 6 different presentations to the forum on the following issues: on rural reconstruction as a way to rebuild the country; on the consensus document; one on the jointly delivered Central Consensus Paper, emphasizing the importance of sustained dialogues, women's approaches to peace and women's vision for Colombia. Then a series of papers was prepared of individual issues by the different sectors such as the peasant women's working group, presenting their statements. A creative and cultural presentation was prepared and lastly the Thematic Commission members Ana Teresa Bernal and Mariana Páez prepared a presentation on the motivation for the forum (Rojas et al. 2004: 20). In addition, RNM mobilised resources to transport a considerable amount of women (about 150) from other departments to El Caguán for the forum (Rodríguez Lozada & Cruz 2005: 164).

the analysis

Even though this was the first time that the women's movement was given such a political platform to gather and present their case to the Thematic Commission and therewith indirectly to the negotiation table, the preparations were rather thorough and well organised by RNM. What is striking about the process is that the women's network organisations, especially RNM provided so many organisations with the opportunity to facilitate discussions in their own regions and sectors, in order to allow women to phrase their concerns, engage into dialogue and really gather input from

²⁰ From: www.rednacionaldemujeres.org, consulted at 7th of August 2007

their constituencies. In that sense, the approach itself was rather participatory, though it is difficult to find to what extent the final proposals and presentations really represented the input from the different working groups.

The preparatory process also shows the role that the network peace organisations fulfilled, being the linking regional and local processes and viewpoints to national level processes concerning the negotiations. This was the first time ever that regional agenda's for peace from women came to the fore. The various networks succeeded in collaborating in such a way that the multiple constituencies could be mobilised and engaged in the process.

A remarkable thing in the way of working of the women's movement and the approach of the facilitating network organisations is the space for creativity and symbols, expressed in the request to also come to El Caguán with a creative contribution.

- **Women's Public Forum – the Event**

the initiative

At June 25, 2000, around 700 women from different regions, backgrounds and educational levels participated attended the forum and travelled to El Caguán in the demilitarised zone (Rodríguez Lozada & Cruz 2005: 164). The forum was well covered in the national media, and as such, it put a human and a female face to the conflict and its impact. Women showed their determination to play a role in the further dialogues, and offered specifically to play a role in facilitating better communications. Also, a general call was done upon the parties at the negotiation table, not to lose hope times of impasse, which was not very unlikely to happen, due to the many times the negotiations were put on hold due to excessive use of violence by either one of the parties (UNIFEM 2007).

In contrast to the FARC, senior government officials were absent from this and other public forums²¹, signalling the government's lack of motivation to listen to participants' proposals, and giving the impression that civic participation was more of a lip service to the wishes of the TC, than something the negotiators considered important. This shows the ambivalence of the government regarding civil society inclusion. As it was mostly the people's demand that finally peace negotiations would take of with Pastrana, he promised to allow them space in the process. However, space to participate can only be used well, if the other actors engage as well, which was obviously not the case.

At the forum there were plenty of FARC representatives present, which for the first time allowed women to encounter and interact one-on one with guerrilla leaders. Though that evoked mixed reactions, women communicated some key messages to the FARC leadership: there was criticism posed against the machismo within FARC, regarding to the fact that women do not participate in the process. Mariana Páez nomination for the Thematic Commission was a consequence of the pressure applied by women's organisations. Moreover, the FARC was challenged to think about women, gender issues and their relevance in the conflict. Magdala

²¹ From: www.redepaz.org.co, consulted 6th June 2007.

Velázquez of RNM describes how this was achieved after she had delivered a letter to FARC's leadership, denouncing cases of women being raped by FARC members in Southern Colombia, which appeared to have stirred up some anger, calls to order and trouble inside FARC because of the letter (Rojas et al. 2005: 21-22). For RNM this showed that highlighting gender issues and challenging the conduct of armed groups was truly possible, and that first steps were made towards change.

Throughout the day, presentations, mentioned under the description of the preparatory process were held for all participants, added to with creative contributions such as dance, painting and cultural rituals to express conflict related issues (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 166).

the analysis

The forum had a consultative status, and allowed for the presentation of the papers on the topics mentioned here above. As such, the women's forum could be considered a consultative participation mechanism, with the TC as the link to the negotiation table. However, the question can and should be asked to what extent such a forum really entails participation in the process, when government officials are absent and when the link between the TC and the negotiation table is rather weak already. In addition, several accounts highlighted that there were far too many papers presented to for consideration by the Thematic Commission. As a consequence, the TC could not communicate a clear message back to the negotiation table, and as such, the concrete output of the forum and result of women's participation could not be fed effectively into the negotiation process (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 166, Rojas et al. 2005: 21).

Rojas quotes Mauricio Uribe as he explains that civil society basically played a role designed and limited by the government. This is one of the reasons why the forum as such did not change in any way the way the conflict affects women, nor the negotiation process itself, as Magdala Velázquez concluded (Rojas et al. 2004: 20). It was an invited space, as the negotiation table installed the TC in the first place and gave them the task to host the public forums; it was at the same time a closed space, due to the lack of involvement from governmental actors.

However, lip service and hollow mechanism or not, women's participation in the various forum combined with the thorough preparations for it did mean a lot for the women's peace movement and the participating organisations. It was one step ahead on making the women's movement more cohesive and brought vastly different groups of women together for the first time to enter into a consensus-building process. Sandoval argues that it helped articulate women's contributions to peace, which were perspectives that otherwise never, reached anyone in formal negotiation structures (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 165).

Despite their cooperation before and in the forum, competition remained among the participating organisations, and several women's groups did find themselves operating in the margins, such as peasants, Afro-Colombian or indigenous women. However, the forum did not only bring that to light, but the broader women's movement also acknowledges this. Since the public forum, most of their outputs such as joint declarations, agenda's for peace and so forth, have

started to specifically underline the importance of ensuring not only women's rights and full participation, but points out that especially indigenous, afro-descendant, poor and other marginalised groups should be heard in any participatory process and being given the space and the right to contribute.

In between the public forum in 2000 and the moment of collapsed negotiations in 2002, the women's network organisations did not participate in the peace negotiations through other targeted interventions. This might partly be due to the deterioration in the relations between the government and the FARC at that time, the many pauses and stops in the peace talks and the increasing levels of violence, of which paramilitary groups increasingly targeted. Also, apart from the public forums, the nature of the negotiations with the FARC was rather bilateral and there was little political will to push through regarding civil society participation (Isacson 2003: 4, 15).

However, what probably played a bigger role in this limited activity targeted towards the negotiations was that the network organisations were following-up on various lessons learned that were identified after their first attempts to influencing the formal peace process in 1999-2000. This involved the following issues (UNIFEM 2007, Rojas 2004: 21):

- processes of consensus building and creating a common agenda for peace should be improved and refined, based on these first experiences around gathering opinions around the issue of employment and development
- ties between the different sectors and groups within the women's movement should be strengthened and the movement as such should become more inclusive itself for marginalised groups
- **Developing a Women's Agenda for Peace**

In the time span between the Women's Forum and the first half year of Uribe in office, the women's network organisations embarked on the challenge to develop a 'Women's Agenda for Peace.'²² The process had the objective of building consensus among the different factions of the women's movement, and developing a joint vision and opinion on the conflict and women's priorities regarding its resolution (UNIFEM 2004: 33). RNM was the organisation that organised consultative processes in seven regions, while OFP and La Ruta played big role as well in mobilising their constituencies to participate in the process. The consultative tables were organised with the following objectives: to reflect over the conflict, and identify strategies to ensure that women's ideas were integrated in agenda's for peace negotiations, to find mechanisms that could improve collaboration and exchange between different strands of the women's movement and to develop joint agenda's among the women's movement to strengthen their chances to influence the formal peace process (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 157-158). There were both regional and sectoral meetings, attended by 198 delegates not only coming from women's organisations but

²² For a summary of the agenda, please refer to Annex III.

also representative of governmental authorities, political bodies and other social organisations (UNIFEM 2004: 34).

In the process of developing this agenda, outside expertise was brought in, in particular from Caroline Moser, scholar and policy advisor on Latin America and Gender issues for the Worldbank and more recently for DFID. Financial support was provided by SDA, the Swiss Development Agency (for the working group who drove the process forward), and through OFF's connections with the Swedish Trade Union, they found additional financial and logistical support for this process (Cockburn 2005: 15-16). Moser guided the women's networks into formulating and developing a joint vision and standpoint on the current situation in Colombia and the way forward. Through an extensive process of consultation and negotiation of the different expressions of the women's movement in all its diversity and plurality, joint proposals were formulated, and joint activities were established. Burítica explained how guided by Moser, over an eight-month period, they moved from a 600 point document, to 150 points, grouped under the heading of exclusion, as that had been found to be the common denominator. Consequently, these 150 points were categorized in five different kinds of exclusion through discussion with a women's delegation of 300 people. In the end, the Agenda was brought down to 12 agreements grouped under five forms of exclusion: legal exclusion, economic exclusion, socio-cultural exclusion, territorial, rural and environmental exclusion and public-political exclusion (Burítica in Rojas et al. 2004: 28). The agenda was adopted during a four-day *Asamblea Constituyente Emancipatoria de Mujeres*, involving 230 women chosen by direct voting from 7 thematic sectors and 7 regions (IMP 2002). In the process of developing this agenda, IMP was established out of the core group of women who worked on the process, 10 days after the collapse of the FARC-Pastrana dialogues.

the analysis

The process that led to the Women's Agenda for Peace was rather unique. It was not an intervention directed toward the negotiations directly, but established from a longer term perspective and the realisation that in order to participate in name of such a broad and wide constituency, some coherence and agreement is needed in what messages you can convey on behalf of your constituency. In addition, this process allowed for the specification of their vision and their priorities, which was needed given the multiplicity of papers, ideas and suggestions presented at the Women's Forum in 2000. Indirectly, the intervention was meant to enable and facilitate focused input from women to peace negotiation in the long run.

What seemed unique is that the women's network organisations went beyond consulting their own constituency only, and also liaised with governmental, political and other social representatives. The advantage is that within society there will be a broader support base for the agenda (and possibly also a broader group of people using the agenda in their work to enhance women's participation in peace and conflict related work). However, the question remains if their engagement meant that local women had a smaller voice in the process and all these

governmental and political representatives were suddenly part of the game as well. The reports on this process are not clear in this area.

3.2.2 Interventions throughout negotiations with the AUC

After the collapse of the FARC-Pastrana dialogues in February, civil society in general was left disillusioned and a growing public demanded that the growing levels of violence should stop, even if it meant the use of violence. Public support went out to the more militarist approach of the newly elected president Uribe. Gloria Tobón describes civil society as “arms-crossed, frightened, worried and in crisis about the ruptured dialogues.” What was remarkable is that the women’s movement succeeded not to let themselves be too discouraged and become passive after the collapse of the negotiations, but instead continued to unite and mobilise their constituency for peace once again, despite the ideological differences that abounded among the various organisations. Though the space for civil society to engage with Uribe’s policy decisions regarding peace and the armed actors was limited, and the majority of civil society did not have much hope left for a negotiated settlement for (part of) the conflict, the women’s movement took the lead among the other civil society groups to continue their public demand for peace, to further build their joint vision regarding the conflict and the need for a negotiated settlement, and mobilise people to protest against the demilitarization of civil life that has set in with Uribe.

As the negotiations between Uribe and the AUC started in secret and the public had no formal access to these peace negotiations in any way, shape or form, the women’s movement was left with the outsider-strategy as the only option to try to influence the political peace negotiations between the government and the AUC.

- **National Women’s Peace March**

the intervention

The first public activity initiated by the women’s peace movement in Colombia after the collapse of the Pastrana-FARC dialogues was a mass mobilisation against the war. At July 25th 2002, around 40,000 women and men gathered in Bogotá and publicly protested against the war and the militarization of civil life, and the 5 organising organisations issued a public declaration.

The initiators were OFP and la Ruta Pacífica, who invited three other umbrella organisations to mobilise their networks of women’s organisations for the rally: IMP, RNM and the Women’s National Consensus Table under the common belief that attention for gender issues and inclusion of women and women’s organisations and other marginalised groups in national processes for peace are essential, at least more important than their respective ideological differences.²³ Patricia Burítica describes that the main objective was to show that women are against the war, support a political negotiated settlement for women’s rights and support the autonomous participation of women in the peace process and the demilitarization of civilian life. The organisation of the march was a four-month process to mobilise women from all regions and to produce a basic joint document in

²³ From: www.ofp.org.co and www.rutapacifico.org.co, consulted at 20 March 2007

which the hundreds of local, regional and national women's groups who participated could include their proposals. This resulted in a declaration, signed by the five major national women's networks that organised the mass rally, to call upon all Colombians to use all their capacity and creativity to build a pluralist, democratic and autonomous country.

The march itself was well covered by national and international media (Rojas et al. 2004: 24) and an invitation to all men and women to demilitarize their lives and to:

- oppose recruitment for the armed struggle
- choose not to dress children in military attire
- support young people who refused to enlist for military service
- oppose war tax and demand that taxes are spent on social welfare & poverty reduction

the analysis

When comparing the initial objective of the march (stimulating women's participation in a negotiated settlement), with the key campaign messages regarding the demilitarisation of civilian life in which certain actions were asked from the people, the political demands of women regarding a negotiated solution to the armed conflict seem to have become less visible and explicit in the 'end product', the march. However, in NGO reports on women's contributions, this march is very much considered a political action and statement of women to show their demand for playing a role in a negotiated settlement (Rojas 2004: 24-25, UNIFEM 2007) pointing at a certain mismatch between initial goals, activities, presentation and interpretation.

The mobilisation was an indirect way to communicate to the government and leaders of armed groups that even though the dialogues with the FARC had collapsed, women remained persistent in urging their country's leadership to continue searching for negotiated ways out of conflict. In that sense, this intervention was not one of direct or even indirect participation, but still conveyed a strong message due to large scale of the event. It was a rather 'successful' intervention when looking at the options they had at that time, using the outsider approach, as there was no formal process to influence or to gain access to.

- **Activities flowing from the mass mobilisation**

With the peace march, the women's peace movement managed to maintain momentum after the collapse of the negotiations with the FARC. Many consider the march as an incentive that spur women into action all over the country, as in the years that followed, a great variety of new organisations and women's initiatives were formed "*from various perspectives of the women's world*" (Peña in Rojas 2005: 25). Within the women's peace movement, a loose national coalition was formed, called the Women's Movement Against War that aimed to facilitate the collaboration of different organisations for the purpose of peace despite their ideological differences.

There were follow-up marches in several war affected regions, specifically to show support for women suffering the effects of violence for instance in Putomayo at November 25th in 2003, where about 3,000 mobilised women came together. Also, plans were made to organise an

international protest march of women against war on July 25 in 2004, as a part of their campaign for demilitarisation and the recovery of civilian life (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: : 25).

The mass mobilisation in Colombia's capital also encouraged women's organisations into a localized response to violence and peacebuilding efforts. Flowing from vigils for kidnapped and disappeared family members held by mothers and relatives, women increasingly played a role in mediating the release of kidnapped soldiers. Also, women took the initiative to engage with their regional and local authorities regarding local peacebuilding efforts. An example is the region of Cali, where women together formed the Working Group on Women, Peace and Reconciliation, and invited not only civil society leaders but also public officials to participate, including the mayor of Cali, the current peace commissioner and the presidential councillor for women's equality (UNIFEM 2004: 25). Another example of localised responses to violence and conflict resolution is women's lead in humanitarian response, as claimed by Magdala Velázquez, and reaffirmed by the 2003 Human Development report, pointing at the leadership role of women in the mitigation of violence, reaching out to basic human needs in conflict affected areas, in particular of internally displaced people (UNDP 2003: 215-220).

There might be a reason why mobilisation led to the increase of local resistance efforts of women. One of the gender dimensions of conflict is that in conflict prone areas, most men have either left to fight or have been killed or had to flee, and that women then step up and fulfil local leadership roles, to keep life in the communities going. This raises opportunities for women to take the initiative in their own communities to make a change and step into social leadership roles.

- **Impunity and Justice: Mesa de Observación**

the intervention

When the Uribe administration announced its plans to engage in peace negotiations with the AUC, which led to the *Mesa Unida de Negociaciones* in Santa Fe de Ralito on July 1st 2004, this came rather unexpectedly for many CSOs (ICG 2003: 3). However, IMP had already deliberated what to do when such talks occurred, and had to move fast. In response to the announcement the eight-women political committee decided to write the national government with their concern about the impunity these peace negotiations could result in, and an interest in achieving some mechanisms of intervention to prevent this from happening.²⁴ This resulted in a meeting with the government in June 2004, in which they confirmed their wish for a *Mesa de Observación* (observation table) at the talks. The government in turn asked for a written and precise proposal. Consequently, the women asked to speak first to the representative of the OAS that were to be the verifiers of any ceasefire or demobilisation accord that might come out of the talks. Recognizing the gender-specific impacts of the war in Colombia, the OAS encouraged IMP to participate, and advised the government to accept them (Cockburn 2005: 18). Five women were consequently invited to the meeting on July 1st when the Mesa was established. It was then agreed that a

²⁴ From: www.mujerersporlapaz.org, consulted 30 March 2006

meeting of the three parties would be held in the north of Colombia, in paramilitary territory, and the talks were to begin in August.

IMP entered the negotiations with the following demands / expectations:²⁵

- representation of victims of paramilitaries' crimes in the negotiations
- civil society would have adequate space to participate (not further specified)
- establishment of a Truth Commission put on the agenda of the negotiations
- in case of a Truth Commission, 50% of the seats should be allocated to women and women's human rights issues should be put on the agenda.

the analysis

The work of IMP and RNM in this intervention was conducted via the outsider strategy, trying to get access to the process by offering to fulfil an observatory role. This role has the least possible amount of power to decide anything in the process, and as such is not threatening to the negotiating parties. However, it appeared a wise move to secure access and create a platform from where to communicate their demands and priorities when it came to impunity and justice for crimes committed against civilians and in particular women. They were able to respond quickly to the government's announcement and also managed to get the table established by engaging with the OAS (who had a verification role in the negotiations) for extra endorsement of their case, which proved to be a strategic move.

During the negotiations between Uribe and the AUC, the women's movement was united under the common opinion that no impunity should be offered to armed actors as a bargain in the negotiations (UNIFEM 2004: 41), it proved difficult to mobilise all network organisations to endorse the initiative for the observatory role. Impunity appears to be a rather inflammatory word in the context of (pre)negotiations in Colombia, in particular regarding negotiations with the paramilitary groups. The AUC entered into the negotiations with the expectation that a certain amount of impunity would be part of the deal. However, being one of the groups charged with the heaviest track records for committing of human rights violations, impunity is for many unacceptable. Other network organisations found that the negotiations carried along too high a level of impunity to engage with the process (Cockburn 2005: 20). As such, IMPs engagement was considered controversial by other women's organisations, for instance by *la Ruta*, even though the second point in their own manifest states 'the active participation of women in peace negotiations.'²⁶ IMP allied with Redepaz and other civil society organisations in this initiative, and did hope that their choice to engage would prove to be wise and right, that their '*Observation Table for Life with a perspective of Truth Justice and Reparation from a Gender perspective*' would find itself truly contributing, not to a deceitful pacification manoeuvre, but to a genuine search for peace (Cockburn 2005: 19).

²⁵ From: www.mujeresportlapaz.org, consulted 15 May 2007

²⁶ From: www.rutapacifica.org.co, consulted at 10 May 2007.

- **Impunity and Justice: Ley de Justicia y Paz**

Throughout 2004 and 2005, IMP and RNM undertook another advocacy campaign with support from UNIFEM to ensure that the new Justice and Peace legislation would reflect and protect women's rights and include justice for sexual and gender-based violence that had been committed.²⁷ The women's networks drafted a series of recommendations for incorporation in the draft law. Three of the women's recommendations were approved by Parliament in April, in articles 39, 42 and 52. A second round of recommendations was presented in an open letter from the women's networks to Parliament on 12 May 2005.²⁸ Through lobby they managed to urge civil society to take up the women's call for the law to better address sexual and gender based violence among its own recommendations to legislators (UNIFEM 2007: 2). As such, this intervention is one of the few that led to direct and tangible outcomes.

3.3 Participating in a Dynamic Context

In the first chapter, it was established that participation is not a purpose in itself but always targeted at changing or contributing to change in a certain process. In addition, participation is not a matter of finding the right mechanism to have influence. Rather, multiple internal and external dynamics were named that play a role in the opportunities to participate effectively.

responding to external dynamics

When assessing the participation of women in the negotiations with the FARC and the AUC, several things can be concluded by looking at the external and internal variables that were at play during that period. Looking at the three variables from the political opportunity structure, the following external issues come up.

Regarding the openness or closedness of the peace negotiations, the negotiation process started with great expectations and momentum when Pastrana took office. When the negotiation model was introduced and civil society even had access into the structure through the Thematic Commission, as well as via various representatives in the National Peace Council, it was considered exceptional and civil society was eager to start organising themselves in order to provide input. For the women's movement it meant starting with the preparations for the Women's Forum and designing processes to get women involved in speaking out on issues related to the conflict, development, employment and their economic position.

However, after a while it started to dawn on civil society and the women's network organisations, that there was little political will to really engage with civil society throughout the negotiations and along with that the negotiation process itself started to lose its credibility. Partly because at a given moment, the talks froze so often and according to some took place without a very clear strategy from both parties, but also because of the fact that the talks were held against the backdrop of

²⁷ From: www.rednacionaldemujeres.org, consulted at 10 May 2007

²⁸ From: www.mujeresporlapaz.org, consulted at 10 May 2007

continued violence both by the military as well as by the FARC, and later increasingly by the paramilitary forces as well, which became partly targeted towards social organisations and leaders (Isacson 2003: 4, 7-10, 15).

This resulted in a reality check for the women's network organisations, something that was reinforced by the experiences and challenges they encountered throughout the preparations and the outcomes of the Women's Forum. It caused them to look more critically at how they could strategise better and get their message clear and more to the point, rather than throwing themselves into the participation challenge head over heels, expecting that space to participate and a forum as a platform would automatically be effective. Developing the Women's Agenda for Peace has therefore been very instrumental and built capacity of the women's movement in general and of women's organisations, as they had a joint framework through which they could address their needs and priorities in any future peace process.

During the Uribe administration, the women's organisations were hardly offered any space to participate via special mechanisms, so the space to participate closed. This caused them to be more reactive than proactive, as they had no knowledge about the decision-making processes that took place between the government and the paramilitaries. At the same time it meant that they had to be more alert and able to respond quickly once the government issued information about decisions that had been made or processes that were to be set in motion, which they did rather effectively and creatively.

In terms of allies among political decision makers, little information can be found about whether or not women's network organisations managed to find strategic allies in their attempts to get their demands on the negotiation table, except for the first analysis that many women engaged in the formal peace negotiations are always listed in the policy reports on their 'contributions', but that there is little evidence of the impact those people had resulting from them being women and them being ~ prepared to defend women's priorities in the peace talks. This variable was more conducive during the Pastrana process than during the negotiations with the paramilitaries, as during the first negotiations Mariana Páez of the FARC got more and more involved in the women's lobby work, and sat at the negotiation table at the same time.

The issue of repression was already mentioned, as that became more of a factor towards the end of the peace talks for women's organisations (ANMUCIC 2003: 29, Amnesty International 1995: 1). However, the women's organisations do not seem to have made many concessions, even though the growing number of violations and escalating violence in general. Rather, it seems that mobilising people in support rallies, like la Ruta does, became a powerful way of communicating a message of solidarity and courage, rather than of fear and disillusionment with the failing course the negotiations were taking. With Uribe coming to office, space for civil society diminished, partly because of Uribe's military approach, and because in the rationale for of the war on terror, social organisations were tend to be seen as supporting insurgents and illegal armed groups, rather than agents for peace and development. As during the negotiations with the paramilitaries many

women's groups spoke out against impunity and amnesty, they remained a welcome target of harassment, threats and attacks by armed actors (Gruner 2003: 20).

responding to internal factors

Then there are of course also internal factors that have impacted the opportunities women's network organisations had to participate in the Pastrana-FARC process. The first chapter identified organisations' ability to be, to do and to relate. This part is more difficult to analyse, as in the rather positive and assumptive reports from policy institutes on the contributions and roles of Colombian women in the peace process, one finds seldom information on factors that might have hampered the ability of the case organisations.

Regarding the capacity to be, it does not seem that throughout their first steps in the process of finding ways to participate and shape the negotiations, the women's organisations' identity, values and mission were not weakened or challenged. This is for instance notable in the fact that the Women's Forum was not just a functional space to present opinions and standpoint that could be fed into the negotiations, but also provided space for creative and cultural expressions of how women experienced conflict. However, this issue of maintaining your identity in the light of the activities you carry out and standpoints one's taking, it became more difficult during the negotiations with the AUC. Some organisations felt that engaging with a negotiation process that allows for such high levels of impunity would mean that they would sell out on their core values and principles and therefore chose not to engage. This shows that participation is not an easy and neutral thing to do, which is always desired after by NGOs and never granted by key decision makers. Obviously, participation is not always the highest good.

Regarding the ability to do, there are more things to remark. One of the aspects of this ability includes the capacity to develop a coherent strategy. During the Pastrana dialogues, it was the first time that women's organisations at such a large scale were mobilising and organising to affect the political peace process. Their capacity to develop a coherent strategy was something that still had to grow which that took time. This is visible in the period after the Women's Forum, where a lot of time was invested in setting up structures and organisations (IMP) in support of their goal to truly communicate the voice of women from different sectors and regions into the national level political peace process and the negotiations between the government and the FARC. The pity is that by the time they had built their capacity, it was too late to specifically employ it for participating interventions in the talks with the FARC. However, it provided the organisations with a basis that to continue their lobby and advocacy work throughout the Uribe administration. Though there were fewer opportunities to participate in the negotiations via direct, representative or consultative mechanisms, they managed to respond rather quickly to governmental moves and decision the process, especially IMP and RNM.

Looking at smaller elements of the ability to do, one can see that in terms of seizing momentum, being well informed, making good use of the power of the media, there was still a lot to learn throughout the FARC dialogues (Rojas et al. 2005: 22). Their response to changes in the

peace negotiations came usually rather late, and though the media covered the women's forum widely, the organisations failed to employ an effective media strategy and therewith ensure that their message was taken up and communicated to many more. During the negotiations with the AUC, organisations appeared to be a lot sharper and quicker in their responses, keeping an eye on the media and at the same time responding rather quickly to political events or decisions regarding the negotiations by means of press releases and public statements.

Then there is the ability to relate, which refers to cooperating effectively with other organisations. The structure of the women's peace movement in Colombia is quite well designed and adapted to the context. As it concerns such a large geographical area, in which localised conflict dynamics result in different experiences and challenges for Colombian women, the structure in which local organisations are grouped in regional networks, part of national network organisations, has proved to allow for both mass mobilisation as well as for engaging local and regional women's organisations in the process of defining their needs, priorities and standpoints through for instance the preparatory processes towards the Women's Forum. The network organisations managed to cooperate together on many occasions, as far as one can conclude from the reports of the activities, and were able to build upon each other's constituencies and strong points. However, the Women's Forum did indicate that there was still work to do within the women's peace movement itself, in terms of strengthening inclusiveness, mutual relations and building consensus. It seemed that the consensus building process they engaged in after the forum did change this, shown by the Women's Agenda for Peace and the reports on increased joint activities that were developed after the process. Within the collaboration there remained space to choose not to collaborate when there was no mutual vision, as was the case with the Observation Table for the negotiations with the AUC.

It was difficult though to find more information about the ways in which the different organisations cooperated and who had a bigger voice in decisions compared to others. What can be concluded is that the leadership of the network organisations remained rather stable, and that it was a small but committed group of engaged women that kept developing new initiatives and thinking of how to improve and enlarge their influence on the political decisions, made regarding resolving (parts of) the conflict.²⁹

²⁹ For an overview of the key figures in Colombia's women's peace movement, please consult Annex II.

Claimed or Sustained?

Women's Influence on Colombia's Peace Negotiations

As participation is not a means in itself, but a way to exert a certain kind of influence on a process or the outcomes of the process, analysing participation alone is not sufficient. Often, the claims made in discourses that sustain increased women's participation in peace negotiations are not sustained with reliable evidence and clear outlining of how participation led to certain influence in the negotiations. Therefore, merely analysing participation as has been done in the previous chapter, is not sufficient. What is also needed is an analysis of how participation via certain strategies and interventions is argued to have led to a certain influence in either the process or the outcomes of the negotiations. This chapter zooms in on how the interventions and participative activities of the case organisations have been interpreted: what meaning has been attributed to their attempts to participate? And is that supported mostly by claims or sustained with clear interpretations and evidence of how participation led to a certain influence?

4.1 Analysing Influence during negotiations with the FARC

- *Influence of Participation through Women's Representatives in Formal Structures*

During the negotiations with the FARC, one way in which women claimed to participate in and influence the negotiations was by having women's leaders from the peace movement being seated in the formal structures of the peace negotiations: both in the negotiation teams and in the Thematic Commission. As such, various organisations like UNIFEM and Women Waging Peace provided overviews with the names of women who fulfilled official positions within the FARC-Pastrana commissions and bodies throughout the peace process. Besides the small number of women, out of the four that were most mentioned, only one is really known to have brought in a gendered perspective, and actively worked to increase opportunities for women's organisations to participate and make their contributions. The other names and positions are highlighted all the time, but there is little evidence that provides information on what difference it made that they were 'women' who fulfilled a certain position.

This way of presenting 'evidence' for women's influence in the peace process gives the false impression that there were many fore fighters working from within the official structures to get women's priorities at the negotiation table. However, if those women were absolutely not aware of gender dimensions of the conflict and the negotiations, or if they did not have the intention to promote women's voices into the process, it should not be presented this way. Just like that, no

reference is ever made of men who did support a gender perspective within negotiations or created space to take women's concerns on board. It seems that the pro-women's participation networks such as UNIFEM are still not completely embracing a gender perspective in their way of looking at women's participation. Rather than expecting women to be the only ones suited to bring gender awareness to the negotiation table, it would be recommendable that they themselves adopt a gender perspective in the way they present their case information and arguments.

- ***Influence of participation through the women's public forum***

It was the first public women's political event of its kind, which resulted in the visibility of women's organisations among the general public, also due to its coverage in the national media. Women were argued to have consolidated their position as a political force and voice in Colombia through this forum, even though that voice was not yet very loud nor clear and unified. The production of a consensus document by women's organisations from all over the country, one of the outputs of the forum, has been the first step to strengthening ties between the various women's organisations and the different factions within the women's movement, such as labourers, afro-descendent women, the feminist urban elite, IDPs and so forth (UNIFEM 2007).

What is mentioned by many as a successful element of the forum is the integration of artistic working forms with more traditional forms of dialogue. This symbolic way of communicating and addressing issues relating to the conflict showed the broader approach and way of working of women's organisations for peace, which for instance is one of the trademarks and values of the work of La Ruta (Cockburn 2007: 22, Rojas et al. 2004: 19). El Bushra mentions this characteristic in her review of impact assessment of women's peacebuilding work, and pleads for models that take this into account and recognize it as an essential part of the approach of women's organisations' work in conflict contexts. How to do that specifically, she does not tell, nor does she elaborate on the added value or impact it has. Considering the vast diversity within the women's movement, using the symbols can understandably serve as a powerful way to bind women together through symbols they all recognize and can relate to (Cockburn 2007: 24-25, El Bushra et al. 2005: 15-16). Regarding influence, the value of symbols is mostly interpreted as valuable for the participating women and organisations at the forum itself, rather than of relevance for peace negotiations between armed actors.

At the forum, papers were presented to the TC for the negotiation table with the standpoints and perspectives of the various sectoral working groups. However, reports of the forum argue that far too many papers were presented to consider by the Thematic Commission (34 papers and 20 proposals!). As a consequence, the TC could not communicate a clear message back to the negotiation table, and as such, the output of the forum could not be fed into the negotiation process as effective and meaningful as could have been (Rodríguez Losada & Cruz 2005: 166, Rojas et al. 2005: 21, 34).

This is not surprising for a first attempt to bring together the opinions of so many women's groups and sectors together. The positive thing is that the women's movement acknowledged it and picked this up in the follow up of the forum. Afterwards, several regional concertation tables were established (as well as the organisation IMP itself) with the purpose to improve and facilitate a representative process in which the different needs, opinions and priorities of women could be captured and summarized in a more effective manner, with the end goal in mind that with a clear message, women could better influence the negotiations. However, these processes came not into full operation before the collapse of the negotiations in February 2002, and therefore they did not enable women to get a clear message or specific proposals at the negotiation table of the government and the FARC before the collapse of the negotiations

The Women Waging Peace report of Rojas et al. centres especially on the mostly on the value of the preparatory process towards the forum. Martha Lucía Vasquez stressed that the preparation was so crucial and special, even more than the forum itself as the participating women and organisations learnt how to discuss their joint objectives but also the differences, and still continue to work together towards the forum (2004: 20). This points at an issue that the objectives and goals of interventions such as the women's forum are initially designed and meant to influence the issues on the agenda of the negotiating parties. However, reports on these activities have a tendency to focus on what the event or intervention meant for the participating organisations and stakeholders themselves, rather than assessing what it eventually brought about. This does correspond with the charge of 'critics' that many civil society participation evaluations are not specific about how certain changes are brought about, assuming that their intervention or activity itself and the intention is sufficient enough for a positive final judgement.

Reports also claim that the general public opinion in Colombia was impacted by the women's forum. It revealed women's political demands on a national level, and made women visible as political actors with specific demands. El Tiempo and El Espectador, the main newspapers in Colombia reported on the forum and highlighted the demands and statements. The articles underlined that women with the forum had managed to give the conflict a human face, a female face. By overcoming their ethnic, class, regional and political backgrounds to join together at the forum, women claimed clearly that peace is also a women's project and that they want to contribute to finding solutions that could contribute to the resolution of conflict (Florence & Castrillana in Rojas 2004: 20-21).

As was demonstrated in the analysis of participation in the previous chapter, there were few signs of interest from governmental representatives of the negotiation table to engage with the women's forum and engage with their perspectives and proposals. This underlines that even when a civil society movement space is created within the structures of the negotiations, and when a platform is given to speak out and formulate proposals, it still does not guarantee anything

regarding the influence of these interventions. When the key decision-makers decide not to engage, and take up the issues raised by the one providing input, the influence is neglectible. Perhaps that explains why the reports point at so many successes and positive influence of the interventions for the women's movement and the participants themselves, rather than stating honestly that though the forum itself was a great experience, the extent to which it changed what was discussed between Pastrana and the FARC was practically not existent.

- *influence through developing the Women's Agenda for Peace*

In between the two negotiation processes, the women's network organisations embarked on the process to develop a joint Women's Agenda for Peace. Many see this as being one of the most significant efforts in Colombia to produce a collective agenda for peace from a women's perspective (UNIFEM 2004: 31-32). It was a long-term process, supported by many different (international) outsiders financially, logistically and process-wise. A unique characteristic that shows the success of the process itself is that women from many different sectors and regions engaged and participated during the two-year process itself. This corresponds with one of the original goals of the process, being to create a sense of local ownership among the different women. This has been achieved, as later reports state that many women took the agenda with them to their own village, municipality or department and use it as a framework to make proposals for local decisions regarding how to deal and respond to the conflict and its impact (UNIFEM 2004: 34-35).

One of the impacts of the agenda is also argued to be consolidating the women's political position, also for future negotiations, as they have established a women's perspective and a framework through which they will provide feedback and input on future negotiation processes. This consolidation process occurred through presenting the agenda to the Capitol, to the Colombian government via the vice-president and also to the President of the Colombian Congress. Besides that it was submitted to the Colombian ombudsman and the international community via media coverage (Burrítica in Rojas et al. 2004: 28, UNIFEM 2004: 35-36).

Another claimed impact of the women's agenda for peace is that it inspired the organisation of regional constitutional assemblies. They occur where regional government authorities together with leaders of NGOs and social movement produce regional agenda's for peace. The methodologies originally designed to create the women's agenda for peace were being transferred to democratic processes at the national and regional levels, in the departments of Antioquia, Narino, Cauca and Huila. Moreover, several women who participated in the whole process of developing the agenda and setting up the constitutional assemblies were later elected as regional constitutional participants. This result of developing the women's agenda for peace shows that indeed the activities of women to influence national level peace negotiations have the potential to increase space for political participation in general (Bouta et al. 2005: 52-53). However, again this intervention did not directly influence the national peace negotiations.

4.2 Analysing Influence - Negotiations with the AUC

- *Influence of the women's mass mobilisation for peace 25 July 2002*

What is mentioned most often is the impact on broader civil society: the march signalled a new and leading role for the women's peace movement within the broader movement for peace in Colombia; some women's peace activists considered the lead taken by the women's movement for peace as "*the salvation of Colombian civil society' after collapse of the FARC-Pastrana dialogues*" (Gloria Tobón in Rojas et al. 2004: 24)

Reports generally present the mobilisation march as a political action of women's peace organisations (UNIFEM 2007, Rodríguez Losado & Cruz 2005: 182), even though the political messages of the women were not very explicitly visible in the key messages of the march, nor in the declaration issued by five of the lead organisations.

The impulse given to local responses and activities of women for peace in their own communities and regions illustrates that network organisations don't only connect the local to the national, but that it seems that their specific niche is also in mobilising smaller regional and local women's peace organisations, inspiring them, providing a joint vision with which they can engage, and which spurs them into action in their own environment. This is not only shown by the increase in activities developed afterwards by women all throughout the country, but also by the fact that for instance the Women's Agenda for Peace has been used by many women to influence at a local level decision-making processes regarding dealing with the conflict and its impact. Some argue that the work of the network organisations for peace also influenced women at an individual level: women often define activism and resistance of violence as intrinsically connected to physical recovery and the drawing of inner strength from using their human agency to construct and build society (Velázquez in Rojas et al. 2005: 27). This sounds logical, but specific evidence of that is not found back in the documents and material analysed in this research. And again, this claimed influence concerns impact on women and the movement itself, rather than on the negotiation process and outcomes.

- *influence of the observation table & lobby for justice and peace law*

Once the government started to release information on the negotiations with the AUC the women's network organisations responded swiftly and have tried to organise themselves to provide input and feedback on the process, especially regarding issues related to impunity and justice. As the accounts of participation showed, this time not all network organisations were always on the same page, in terms of agreeing that they should engage and participate. This means that the influence exercised is slightly easier to link to a certain organisation, instead of to an entire movement.

A success in itself is the swift acceptance by the government and the endorsement of the OAS to establish an observatory table by the women's organisations to comment on the

negotiations with the AUC. It seemed that the process of increasing their access to the formal structures went rather smoothly.

However, there was no decision-making power linked to the table, so basically it was a mechanism that did allow them to formulate their opinions on the decisions made by both the Uribe administration and the AUC but without any further procedures that would support the follow-up on their contributions. Hence, there are no indications that any of their concerns and issues brought up have been dealt with very efficiently by the negotiating parties.

As the lobby for explicit inclusion of sexual and gender based human rights violations in the justice and peace law was also part of IMPs and RNMs lobby towards the Uribe-AUC negotiations, there were some successes in that area, as their input has been taken up in several articles of the law. This could easily lead to the conclusion that their work has been influential and successful, as it can be proved by a tangible outcome, being the inclusion of their proposals in several of the articles. The bottleneck here however, is that the implementation of the law faces a lot of challenges, goes incredibly slow and in the end meant that there are still hardly any cases of prosecuted paramilitaries for gender based and sexual violations of women's rights. This does show that influence requires really a support base, not only among the decision-makers which is hard enough to achieve already, but also among the people and institutions involved in the implementation and enforcement of the decisions, laws and policies formulated.

This limited success has partly resulted in the initiative of IMP and RNM in collaboration with all other network peace organisations to set up the initiative for special women's courts (RNM 2003). They have an informal character and are especially meant to create space for women whose rights have been violated by the paramilitaries, but who cannot achieve justice through the regular legal system, to tell their stories, to be heard and to not let impunity take the upper hand in the demobilisation process with the AUC (Rojas et al 2004: 30, UNIFEM 2004: 42). Though this indicates a creative and innovative response of the women's organisations themselves, it is once again a claimed success that has more to do with the persistence and hard work of the network organisations, rather than an outcome of meaningful participation and interaction with core actors of the negotiations.

4.3 Claimed Successes and Influence

The theoretic framework in the first chapter sketched some of the challenges related to the claimed successes of civil society's participation in negotiations: it is difficult to establish the link between an intervention and a change in the negotiations; it is contested to claim a certain change to the particular actions of an organisation or a coalition of organisations due to the dynamic context and the involvement of many other actors in the process; evaluations of women's participation in peace negotiations show the tendency to value the influence of their work mostly positive, and fail to underline the weaknesses, limitations or failures of their work. This

was suggested to be partly related to the fear of disappointing donors, leading to insufficient funding for their work and a lack of credibility of outsiders in their work and efforts to impact negotiation processes from a gender perspective.

Looking at the claimed and achieved successes and influence of the interventions of the four Colombian women's peace networks, the following trends and issues stand out. The case analysis showed several claims made of effective interventions to exert influence on the peace negotiations that were obviously unsustainable or illogical. In particular the line of reasoning that argues that in the occasions of women, fulfilling positions within the formal bodies and structures of peace negotiations, it is a sign that women and their concerns are actually participating and influencing the peace negotiations. Another example of a mismatch between the goal of an intervention and the reported successes, was the mobilisation march in 2002, which intended to show women's demand for peace negotiations in which they were to be included, while issuing completely different kinds of campaigning messages, that evolved more around the demilitarisation of daily life.

The analysis also showed that one can participate, but in order to be able to argue if that leads to influence or not, a clear message with clear demands or goals should be formulated first. This was shown by the realisation of the network organisations that the women's movement was still very fragmented and divided and lacked a joint vision and framework to be able to formulate concrete and specific demands or priorities that should be taken into account in the negotiation process. If there is a clear message, interventions can be evaluated by looking at the extent to which that priority was included in the process or outcomes of the negotiations.

The most remarkable conclusion that flows from the assessment of attributed meaning and claimed influence of the women's interventions is the observation that most justifications and claims of the added value refer to what it meant for the women, their organisations and initiatives themselves. This is remarkable, especially because the justification of why their needs, opinions and perspective regarding the conflict should be heard in the peace negotiations focuses on its beneficial value for the negotiations and the outcomes of it. However, it seems that the added value assigned to their participation has to do a lot more with what it means for their own process and development as a women's movement that aims to influence peace negotiations, than their success or failure in contributing to the negotiations themselves or not.

This in itself is not strange, given the fact that these peace negotiations are the first in which women collectively aimed to participate and have tried to play a meaningful role and ensure that women's concerns will also be put on the agenda. Reflection on the process, on its meaning and on the influence it had at all levels is partly useful for learning. However, completely not reporting on the fact that their interventions had a very small impact on the actual negotiations and analysing why that would be the case is something that should be part of the same learning and reflection process.

It could also partly be explained, or at least understood better, by noting that most of their interventions did not affect the negotiation table and what happened there. It might be a matter of self-defence to then sum up all the other gains, made by the interventions, in order not to have to admit that in a certain way, they failed to do what they hoped. As the work of CSOs and in this case of the women's peace movement depends in part on your constituency and the faith they have in whether or not you are achieving successes, it is understandable that when certain objectives are not reached, one continues to search for other maybe unexpected changes that were positive, even though they were not intend.

In my opinion, this is symptomatic for many NGOs and other international development agencies in their reports on the impact of their lobby and advocacy work. As it is a field that is quite easily under attack of criticism from outsiders, and as organisations are often dependent on donations and funding from external actors, it seems that NGOs often prefer to pretend success above publicly acknowledging that social change in processes that occur on levels and by actors that are more powerful is just incredibly complex and success is simply not guaranteed, even though investments have been high. And in addition, if interventions bring along influence or success that was unforeseen or unexpected, or not specifically what was intended or 'promised to donors' to happen, it does not mean that it is not valuable. Indeed, it might have been more effective than the expected or intended influence the intervention was supposed to have. A good example is the reinforcing and strengthening impact of national participation processes on the local activities of women's organisations. Especially in a country where there are great differences in how the conflict plays out in the various reasons, and where in the end the quality of life of men and women is perhaps even more influenced by regional processes and decisions than by national peace processes, this is certainly not a type of impact that should be disregarded. It suggests that a resolution 1325, which is often interpreted and used as a mechanism to lobby for women's participation and inclusion especially in national level peace processes, should certainly also be used to look at local level inclusion and participation. It could be just as important to equip women and women's organisations to engage in peace negotiations and decision-making processes within their own villages, communities and municipalities. It is interesting to see that the women's network organisations have been able to fulfil the function of linking the local to the national, by their participatory processes, something that is hardly mentioned in the reports but an interesting and relevant role they have played.

What also becomes clear from looking at influence connected to the women's interventions, is that very often intentions and new initiatives are broadly reported on by the organisations themselves and by the policy institutes that produce case studies and reports on the outcomes, but that there are very few sources where organisations give account of what specifically happened or did not happen as a result or an outcome of their work. Especially only little information could be found on what happened due to women's organisations' efforts to lobby against impunity throughout the AUC negotiations. This not only makes it difficult to sketch a more

complete image of what did or did not happen, but also hampers the extent to which organisations can be held accountable for their work. In order to really establish that, simply analysing organisations' own reports, websites and accounts is not sufficient. More in depth research through personal interviews should be conducted in order to better establish the particular influence that is attributed to a certain intervention and by whom.

Another issue that comes up is the need for a nuanced understanding of the different actors and steps that are involved in truly influencing decisions and processes during negotiations: a mechanism, allies, or even proposals that have been adopted are not sufficient and do not represent the whole story. During the FARC dialogues there were participatory mechanisms but insufficient engagement and will of the core actors to make use of the women's input and contributions. During the negotiations with the AUC, there was no form of proactive engagement with civil society in any way shape or form, excepts for an observatory table later in the process, without any decision-making power attached to it. However, the organisations knew a lot better what they wanted to achieve, and were at least able based on that capacity to get access to some of the processes, and provide input. But even when input is taken into account by the ones in decision-making processes, such as in the case of the Justice and Peace legislation, than still in order to be influential, it is needed to keep working and lobbying for effective implementation and enforcement of the law. Otherwise yes, you have been influential but nothing changed.

This indicates that it is crucial to communicate very clearly about what you want to achieve as an organisation and really think through what is needed to achieve it and what process should be followed in order to achieve your goals. What steps should be taken, at what levels action should be undertaken, who should be influenced and if we succeed, what is the next step to ensure that the influence leads to sustainable change? If the process of influencing negotiations is being thought through in great detail, and also presented as a multi-step process it will also be easier to be specific and honest about what you can and cannot influence including the reasons for it, because you have insight in the bottlenecks that prevented you from achieving what you intended.

Conclusions

This thesis started with an elaboration of trends in civil society regarding the demand to open up formal peace negotiations to the public, and in particular the recent momentum for women's participation in formal peace processes. After an exploration of the discourse that is used to justify their wishes to participate and contribute to peace negotiations, the reluctant response from both scholars and core actors in negotiations was analysed, leading to two significant questions that remain concerning civil participation in peace negotiations. Firstly, it was established that there is still little known about how exactly participation occurs: how do the processes of CSOs that aim to participate in high level peace talks occur? How do they interact with track-one actors? How do they get access and use the space assigned to them? Secondly, questions remain concerning how the influence of participating CSOs in peace negotiations is and should be assessed. Scholars argued that most CSOs claim influence but do not mention to sustain it with evidence that is honest, specific and objective. Rather, the non-state sector supports these claims by best practices and case studies that highlight the positive dimensions to their participation, and continues to stress that it is really important for the peace negotiations, but fail to come with convincing evidence, due to their own bias.

Flowing from the exploration of these two major issues regarding civil participation in peace negotiations, research questions were formulated around a case study that could help in understanding better the issue of participation and the issue of influence of CSOs in peace negotiations. The Colombian case was selected, and the context elaborated upon in the second chapter. The two negotiation processes selected were the negotiations between the administration of Pastrana with the FARC, a guerilla movement, and of president Uribe and the AUC, a paramilitary association. Both negotiation processes were very different. During the Pastrana dialogues, there were participatory mechanisms set up to facilitate the interaction between civil society organizations and the negotiation tables, which provided women's organizations with the opportunity to exert influence through both insider and outsider strategies. Whereas during the negotiations between the Uribe administration and the AUC, civil society was left out of the loop and could only take on a reactive and outsiders approach.

The key questions of the research focused on understanding how women's organizations both participated in the negotiation processes in order to be able to understand the interaction between the track better, and on how their participation was assessed in terms of the influence and meaning attributed to their activities and interventions to participate in the negotiations.

Regarding participation, the following conclusions deserve to be highlighted. When analyzing and presenting cases in which CSOs or women participate in political peace negotiations, or attempt to get access and play a role, it is tempting to focus on the participative mechanisms and work hard to establish them and then make use of them. However, the case of Colombian women's peace organizations show that even with promising mechanisms, participation does not mean interaction with either the actors or the structure you are then connected with via the mechanism. Though mechanisms for participation create the impression of a claimed or invited space to participate and play a role in the process, in the case of the Colombian women's organizations it seemed like it were illusive spaces. Even the best mechanism still need political will and engagement of all actors and parties involved in the negotiation and decision-making processes, which was not the case in Colombia's peace negotiations. Besides political will, the case analysis showed that participation requires a clear message. This is something that the women's peace organizations worked on really hard and with success. However, it came not in time for the Pastrana-FARC negotiations, and during the Uribe-AUC negotiations they had less opportunities to convey their message and get access to the negotiation process itself.

Surprisingly, the analysis of participation actually does not provide as much information as expected on the interaction between the tracks. Participation obviously does not equal interaction, even though the term 'participation' implies that. In both negotiation processes, it seems that participation still came down to the women's organizations frantically working to develop a vision and an agenda, publicly stating their demands and highlighting their priorities, lobbying for inclusion of these in legislation and negotiations, while the track one parties condoned and accepted it, without engaging with them or their issues. This became rather clear in noting that accounts of the negotiation processes that were not drawn up by the women's movement or their supporting agencies (like UNIFEM and Women Waging Peace) basically made no notification at all of civil society's demands and wishes, let alone those of the women's peace movement. This suggests that actually the 'participative' process was rather removed from the actual peace negotiations, because of a lack of efficient linkages (both in mechanisms and in allies and engaged persons from within). This suggests that for more thorough research, it would be appropriate to conduct for instance interviews with the various stakeholders that were involved in the negotiations and participatory mechanisms at the time: both the representatives of women's organizations as well as the other stakeholders from the negotiating bodies and structures, in order to get a better picture of how (and if) the interaction occurred between track one actors and the women's organizations.

The stark contrast between women's organizations constantly reporting on their role in the process and the absolute lack of notification on it by the core actors in the negotiations gives the impression that participation is easily romanticized, as a key to inclusive decision-making. 'Once

we can participate, our needs will be taken into account' is what many women's NGOs seem to believe and still hope for. However, a protracted armed conflict is essentially a power struggle fought out by means of armed violence. When opposed parties decide to sit at the table, the power struggle doesn't stop. Power is needed to have a say in the process and the outcomes, and extra parties at the negotiation table mean extra parties to satisfy and render a certain amount of power to. Civil society groups that aim to participate basically aim for more power in the process or at least a shift in power relations, in favour of the civil society group they represent. However, this is not often openly admitted or mentioned in their calls for participation and the justification. Some NGOs even avoid using the word, as it is not about power but about inclusion, equality, rights etc. It might be helpful for CSOs that aim to influence negotiations to assess what changes are needed in the power structures at play. As well, power relations should be taken into account in developing strategies influence peace negotiations. Gaventa's power cube analysis might be a useful and strategic tool for that.

Regarding the influence that was attributed to the attempts to participate in the negotiations by women's network organisations, the following matters deserve to be highlighted.

A great part of the case analysis confirmed the charges posed by the critics of civil society participation, that CSOs especially evaluate their own role and contributions positively, and hardly highlight their failures. It was difficult to find occasions where report of their activities provided a clear overview of the original intentions they had and whether or not their efforts to achieve those goals were achieved or not. Especially intentions, initiatives and activities were presented with great enthusiasm, but it remained difficult to find information on the outcomes and the due process. This could lead to the conclusion that indeed, influencing peace negotiations as women's network organizations is difficult and that they have failed to achieve clear results with it, even though they managed to participate both via outsider and insider strategies in various creative and innovative ways.

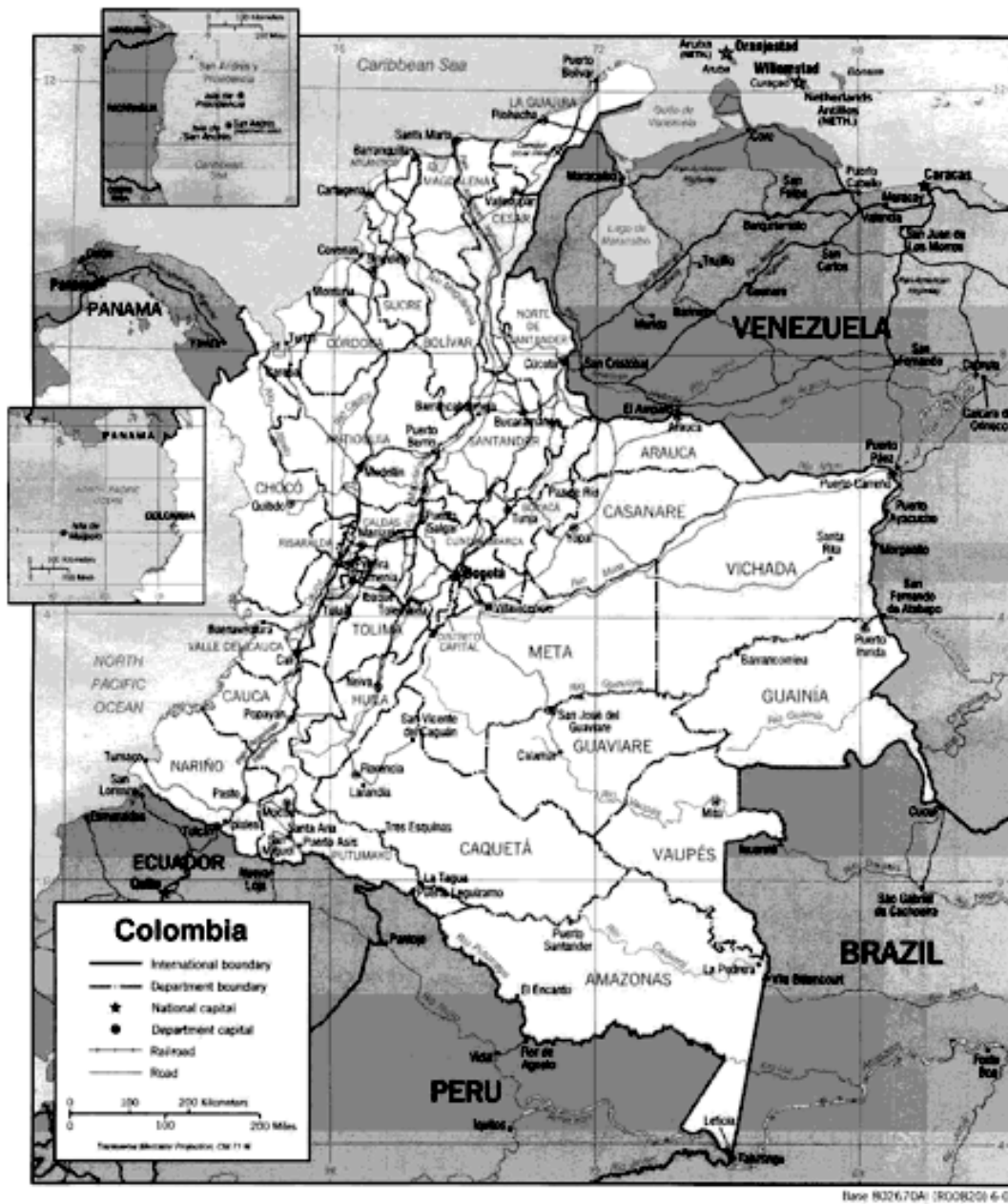
However, looking into the details and the information presented in reports about their interventions, it stood out that much of the meaning and influence, attributed to their interventions reveal that their efforts, referred to their own organizations. Though originally intended and claimed to gender sensitise the process and outcomes of the negotiations, much of their work led to significant and valuable changes within their own organizations, the local and regional member organisations and their work as a women's movement in general. Their work at national level spurred a lot of local activities, empowered women and built their capacity to engage in influencing local level negotiations and decision-making processes, and in some occasions created more space for women to be heard and participate in political decision-making processes and mechanisms in general.

This kind of influence might not support the claims that their work during the negotiation processes made a significant impact on the negotiations and outcomes, but has been very

valuable for the role and capacity of women's peace organizations in Colombia. The analysis of their participation and influence showed how they as a movement for peace have grown, developed a clear agenda and message, created spaces for women's voices and opinions and also empowered and stirred up local political participation of women. This in itself is an encouraging and valuable outcome, which will remain to be useful for their current and future work. What would be recommended though is that CSOs mention this possible added value for themselves in the discourse that explains their call for participation in peace negotiations. Because it shows that participation itself can contribute to an empowered civil society, which provides a conducive environment for implementing eventual outcomes of negotiations.

Nevertheless, looking at the actual goal of influencing the process and outcomes of the negotiation between the government and armed actors, the analysis showed that this process is a lot more complex than often pretended or presented. The rationale of many CSOs is that once they can participate, they can shape the outcomes of the negotiations. The Colombian case shows that such processes are much more complex, and actually require organisations to really think through what is actually needed to happen in order to exert influence. It means a lot of work at a lot of levels targeted at a lot of different actors: your own constituency, the decision-makers in the negotiations, but also the actors responsible for the implementation and law-enforcement entities that are responsible for following-up on the decisions made throughout peace negotiations. Which will always remain a challenge, since CSOs will remain relatively powerless actors in the bigger scheme of armed actors and core decision makers in political peace negotiations to resolve armed conflicts.

ANNEX I Map of Colombia



Source: University of Texas. 1 February 2004 <www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/colombia.html>.

Annex II Key Figures in Colombia's Women's Movement for Peace

Ana Teresa Bernal

Ana Teresa Bernal was involved as a member of the Thematic Commission during the FARC-Pastrana dialogues, representing the National Peace Council. She is perceived as a pioneer in the civil society movement for peace in Colombia and was one of the campaign leaders of the Mandate for Peace, Life and Freedom in 1996 whereby ten million Colombians voted for a negotiated solution to the conflict. Through her work for the Thematic Commission she established good relations with Mariana Páez, the FARC representative in the Commission, which has been useful for the initiating of the women's public forum.

Mariana Páez

Mariana Páez was the FARC representative at the Thematic Commission, and the only official female representative of the guerrilla movement for the entire process. She officially coordinated the women's forum as part of an effort to engage different sectors of the public.

Ana Mercedes Gómez

Ana Mercedes Gómez was one of four members of the Notables Commission, whose main task was to draft recommendations for a ceasefire endorsed by both the government and the FARC. She directs *El Colombiano*, the main newspaper of Antioquia and one of the principal national daily papers. She has been an active member of civil society, supporting a peaceful resolution of the conflict. For personal and political reasons that remained unclarified publicly, she resigned from the Commission before the consensus document was completed.

Magdala Velázquez

As a leading feminist scholar and peace activist she was active as a member of the National Peace Council, where she represented the women's movement. As such, she traveled several times with other civil society representatives to El Caguán, the demilitarized zone, and met with FARC members to discuss gender issues. She was also one of the main organizers of the women's public forum.

Patricia Burítica

Patricia Burítica is the director of IMP. With a history of civil society activism within the trade union, she fulfilled various leadership roles within the women's peace movement in the last decade. She has been one of the leading figures in the 2002 Women's March Against the War, and participates on behalf of civil society in the National Commission on Reparación and Reconciliation.

Piedad Córdoba

Córdoba was the first woman and Afro-Colombian to enter the Senate. Chair of the Senate Human Rights Committee and member of the Congressional Peace Commission and the National Council for Peace, she has firmly placed herself in the line of fire through her human rights activism, resulting in being kidnapped by the AUC for 16 days in 1999.

Gloria Cuartas

Gloria Cuartas was the former mayor of Apartadó, a conflict-ridden area. She was among the first women to address peace and security issues publicly, bringing to light the trauma experienced by victims of violence. She played a visible role among her constituency in assisting them.

Leonora Castaño

Leonora Castaño is president of ANMUCIC (National Association of Peasant, Black and Indigenous Women of Colombia). As a result of her peace and human rights activism specifically for rural women, she has faced several death threats, and was forced to leave the country in 2003.

Martha Lucía Vasquez

Martha Lucía Vasquez is the Presidential Councillor for Women's Equality. She became involved in organising the women's public forum, seeking funding from the private sector for the event, due to her roots as a business woman.

Source: Rojas et al. (2004)

Summary: The WEC Twelve-Point Agenda for Peace

Economy

1. Formulate fiscal policy geared toward an income distribution with gender equality.
2. Create policies that will defend Colombia's strategic interests against multinational corporations.
3. Create a new developmental model of social and gender equality.

Justice and Security

4. Ensure that all actors involved in the armed conflict abide by the norms of international humanitarian law, respecting women of all ages, religions, sexual orientations, political ideologies, and socio-political and economic levels.
5. Investigate and place sanctions on all actors responsible for violating international humanitarian laws against women.

Politics and Public Life

6. Protect the democratic mechanisms of the 1991 constitution that allow for the full exercise of the fundamental rights of women and all Colombians.
7. Ensure the direct participation of women's organizations in the various national and local dialogue processes and political negotiations of the social and armed conflict.
8. Ensure the full participation of women's organizations in social, political, and economic spaces with quotas that will guarantee the inclusion of peasants and all ethnic groups.

Society and Culture

9. Establish effective public policies on women's rights that promote a nonviolent culture and respect for ethnic and cultural diversity.
10. Formulate cultural policies with gender, age, and ethnic perspectives.

Land, Territory, and the Environment

11. Institute democratic agrarian reform with an ethnic and gender perspective geared toward social justice; include women's organizations in decision-making positions to formulate, implement, and monitor the process.
12. Implement the Organic Territorial Law with a gender, ethnic, cultural, regional, urban, and rural perspective with the active participation of women in decision-making positions to formulate, implement, and monitor the process.

ANNEX IV Common Agenda for the Path to a New Colombia – May 6th 1999

1. A Negotiated Political Solution A political solution to the serious social and armed conflict is being sought, one which will bring a new Colombia through political, economic, and social change, creating consensus to build a new state, founded on social justice and conserving national unity.

Acts of peace will occur as the negotiations advance. This means that all Colombians must commit to the construction of peace without regard to economic, social or religious interests, or political parties.

2. Protection of Human Rights as a responsibility of the State

2.1 Fundamental rights

2.2 Economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights

2.3 International human rights treaties

3. An Integrated Agrarian Policy

3.1 The democratization of credit, technical assistance, and market access

3.2 Redistribution of unproductive land

3.3 Recuperation and distribution of land acquired through drug-trafficking and illegal enrichment

3.4 Stimulating production

3.5 Integral ordering of territory

3.6 Illicit crop substitution and alternative development

4. Exploitation and Conservation of Natural Resources

4.1 Natural resources and their distribution

4.2 International treaties

4.3 Protection of the environment based on sustainable development

5. Economic and Social Structure

5.1 Revision of the economic development model

5.2 Income redistribution policies

5.3 Expansion of internal and external markets

5.4 Stimulating production through small, medium and large-scale private enterprise

5.5 Cooperative support for the economy

5.6 Stimulation of foreign investment that benefits the nation

5.7 Social participation in economic planning

5.8 Investment in social welfare, education and scientific research

6. Justice reform, fighting corruption and drug trafficking

6.1 The judicial system

6.2 Control institutions

6.3 Mechanisms to fight corruption

6.4 Drug trafficking

7. Political reform to broaden democracy

7.1 Reform of political parties and movements

7.2 Electoral reforms

7.3 Equal opportunity for the opposition

7.4 Equal opportunity for minorities

7.5 Mechanisms for citizen participation

8. State reform

8.1 Congressional reform

8.2 Administrative reform to improve the efficiency of public administration

8.3 Decentralization and strengthening of local power

8.4 Public services

8.5 Strategic sectors

9. Agreements about International Humanitarian Law

9.1 No child involvement in the conflict

9.2 Land mines

9.3 Respect for the civil population

9.4 Respect for international agreements

10. Armed forces

- 10.1 Defence of sovereignty
- 10.2 Protection of human rights
- 10.3 Combating self-defence groups
- 10.4 International treaties
- 11. International relations
 - 11.1 Respect for non-intervention and free self determination
 - 11.2 Latin American regional integration
 - 11.3 Foreign debt
 - 11.4 Treaties and international state agreements
- 12. Formalizing the agreements
 - 12.1 Democratic instruments to legitimize the agreements

Signed:

For the government:

Víctor G. Ricardo Fabio Valencia Cossio Maria Emma Mejía Vélez Nicanor Restrepo Santamaría
Rodolfo Espinosa Meola

For the FARC-EP:

Raúl Reyes Joaquín Gómez Fabián Ramírez

ANNEX V Government-FARC Humanitarian Exchange Accord

The parties to this Accord, represented as follows: for the Government, Camilo Gómez Alzate, and for FARC-EP Jorge Briceño; and Joaquín Gómez as a representative member of FARC-EP,

CONSIDERING

That Article 22 of the Colombian Constitution conceives peace as a mandatory duty and right;

That under Law 434/98, the peace policy is a State policy, and it is permanent and participatory. All organs of the State and all forms of organization, action and expression of civil society must cooperate in structuring it in a coordinated and harmonious manner, transcending the period of office of one or another government, and expressing the complexities of the situation of this country;

That the Colombian State has legal instruments to seek coexistence as a means of promoting reconciliation among Colombians, securing peaceful coexistence and peace;

That through these instruments the Government of Colombia may undertake any act designed to establish conversations or dialogue with the armed organization FARC-EP, acting outside the law, which the Government has recognized to have a political character;

That Article 8 of Law 418/97, renewed by Law 548/99, expressly gives the Government the permanent power, to be exercised by the Government alone, to sign agreements with the representatives of armed organizations which act outside the law which have been recognized to have a political character, designed to obtain solutions to armed conflict, the effective application of international humanitarian law, respect for human rights, the cessation or reduction of the intensity of hostilities, the reincorporation of the members of such organizations into civil life and the creation of conditions which favour a just political, social and economic order;

That Law 418/97, renewed by Law 548/99 provides that the State will encourage the establishment of a just social order which will secure peaceful coexistence, the protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual; and will adopt measures in favour of groups affected by marginalization or discrimination in order to achieve conditions of real equality and to provide all with the same opportunities for appropriate development of the individual, the family and the social group;

That the Government has decided to proceed with dialogue and negotiation with FARC-EP and to sign agreements with its representatives in accordance with the progress made at the negotiating tables, in order to create conditions for the reincorporation into civil life of the members of that organization, in order to favour a just political, social and economic order; That FARC-EP have on many occasions stated that the signature of this Agreement would represent a substantial step forward in the peace process;

That as part of the peace process in train between the Government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, the Government and FARC-EP have stated their interest in seeking, at this point, a solution of the situation of the soldiers and policemen held by the FARC-EP;

That the sick and wounded are persons protected by international humanitarian law;

Have agreed to make this ACCORD, on the terms given below:

GENERAL This Agreement is signed for humanitarian reasons and therefore its scope is restricted to its specific content; and None of the terms of this Agreement reduce the minimum obligations of common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their supplementary Protocol II, and the terms of this Agreement have no effect on the juridical status of the signatories in the light of the content of common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions.

INSTRUMENTS The Government of Colombia has verified the place of confinement and the judicial status of members of the FARC-EP, legally deprived of their freedom, who are sick, according to a list supplied by the FARC-EP;

The FARC-EP have delivered to the Government the list of sick soldiers and policemen in their power, and undertake to place them in places which will permit their easy and immediate verification by the International Red Cross Committee; and these places will be determined by the Government and FARC-EP;

In order to give effect to the measures referred to in this Agreement, the express permission of each of the persons deprived of their freedom who may be subject to such measures, must be obtained;

The Government has performed the appropriate medical examination through a group of doctors recommended by the International Red Cross Committee or an entity named by the Government, for the members of the FARC-EP referred to in this Agreement;

Having completed this process, the Government has delivered a list of 15 individuals who are members of that organization who, in its opinion, are subject to this Agreement; and it undertakes to follow all procedures required to secure a suspension of the detention order or sentence;

The FARC-EP ratify that the list of 42 sick soldiers and policemen delivered to the Government corresponds to the individuals to be released under this Agreement; and this number may be increased;

Once this Agreement is signed FARC-EP undertake to release Col. Alvaro Leon-Acosta immediately, given his state of health;

With regard to the sick soldiers and policemen in the power of the FARC-EP, once their state of health has been established the International Red Cross Committee will receive them at the place agreed by the parties, on the same day that the members of the FARC-EP are released.

The sick members of the FARC-EP to whom the Government has determined that this Agreement may apply, will be released to the International Red Cross Committee at their place of confinement, once the detention order or sentence has been effectively suspended;

The International Red Cross Committee will deliver them at the place and time agreed by the Parties;

FARC-EP undertake to release unilaterally at least 100 soldiers and policemen who are in their power and are not sick, within 15 days of delivery of the sick soldiers and policemen;

Given that they are sick, the members of the FARC-EP covered by this Agreement will not take part in future hostilities;

The Government and FARC-EP agree that the United Nations organization and the Office of the People's Defender will be invited to attend on the day of the release of the sick;

Also, for the purposes of performance of this Agreement, there will be an international presence, and the ten Friends of the Peace Process countries and the United Kingdom are designated for this.

Given in San Vicente del Caguán, 2 June 2001

For the Government
Camilo Gómez Alzate
High Commissioner for Peace

FOR FARC-EP
Joaquín Gómez Jorge Briceño

ANNEX VI Santa Fé de Ralito Accord to contribute to peace in Colombia

The national government and the United Self-Defence groups of Colombia (AUC), as the result of the preceding Exploratory Phase conducted between the parties since December 2002,

AGREE TO:

1. Define as the objective of this process the establishment of national peace through the strengthening of democratic governance and the re-establishment of the monopoly of force in the hands of the State. The AUC reiterate that its greatest service to the country in this historic moment is to advance its reincorporation into civilian life and to contribute to the strengthening to the rule of law. The parties commit themselves to this process conscious that their actions are an effective step towards the construction of a genuine peace that the Colombian people deserve and desire.

2. To achieve this proposition the AUC commits itself to the total demobilization of its members through a gradual process that will begin with the first demobilisations before the end of the year and that should be completed no later than the 31 December 2005. The government commits itself to pursue the necessary actions to reincorporate the AUC's members into civilian life.

3. The AUC values very positively the final recommendations made by the Exploratory Commission and recognizes that these constitute the basis for a peace process between the national government and the AUC.

4. The parties agree that with the recommendations made in the final report of the Exploratory Commission the exploratory phase of the peace process has been concluded, giving way to the start of the negotiation stage.

5. Create the conditions so that within a reasonable time period – with the necessary security guarantees – members of the AUC will congregate in previously agreed upon locations. The congregation of the AUC's members will include all levels of command, with the necessary security guarantees as agreed between the parties. These zones will have a permanent public security force presence.

6. The AUC ratifies its commitment to the end of hostilities, as a good will gesture, and will continue with its efforts to ensure that this is completely effective.

7. The AUC shares the government's goal of a Colombia without narco-trafficking and supports the actions of the Colombian State against this phenomenon that destroys democracy, peaceful coexistence, the economy and the environment.

8. Thank the Catholic Church for its permanent presence throughout this peace process and invite it to continue this as a guarantee of the processes' transparency and parties' commitment to peace in Colombia.

9. Call for national solidarity and commitment in order to strengthen the State and to create the conditions that will make possible the demobilization and reincorporation of the members of the AUC into civilian life. The parties ask that the different national sectors and local communities support the efforts of the State institutions in consolidating security, peaceful coexistence and development.

10. Call on the international community to support the efforts to defend and strengthen the Colombian democracy and to give their support to deactivating the causes of violence that affects Colombia.

With this accord the government and the AUC are responding to the national wish for a peaceful Colombia with opportunities and guarantees for everyone.

On behalf of the National Government:

LUIS CARLOS RESTREPO
High Commissioner for Peace

On behalf of the AUC:

HERNAN HERNÁNDEZ
RAMIRO VANOY
LUIS CIFUENTES
FRANCISCO TABARES
ADOLFO PAZ
JORGE PIRATA
VICENTE CASTAÑO
CARLOS CASTAÑO
SALVATORE MANCUSO

Witnesses:

Members of the Exploratory Commission for Peace
Carlos Franco
Jorge Ignacio Castaño
Eduardo Espinosa
Gilberto Alzate Ronga
Ricardo Avellaneda
Juan B. Pérez Rubiano

Facilitators of the process from the Catholic Church
Monseñor Germán García
Monseñor Julio Cesar Vidal
Padre Leonidas Moreno

Santa Fé de Ralito, 15 July 2003

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www.mujeresporlapaz.org
- **Red Nacional de Mujeres**
www.rednacionaldemujeres.org
- **OFP – Organización Femenina Popular**
www.ofp.org.co
- La Ruta Pacífica de Mujeres por la Paz**
www.rutapacifico.org.co
- **Alto Comisionado para la Paz**
www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co