Confianza and trust building in protracted social conflict as essential parts of peacebuilding:

The case of Estados Unidos, Colombia

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Wekema, K. 2019: The sign of Estados Unidos in the foothills of the corregimiento. A recent storm caused the 's' to blow over [photograph] (Estados Unidos, Becerril, Cesar)

Abstract

This research focuses on trust in the context of protracted social conflict. Trust is known to facilitate cooperation on multiple societal levels. This is why it is argued that trust building should be seen as an integral part of peacebuilding. Violence and conflict are known to have severe impacts on the mental health of human beings, however, and post-conflict contexts often show social debilitation. This arguably feeds into the spiral of mistrust and societal fragmentation and impedes cooperation. The research questions whether it is possible to reconstruct trust in societies that have been exposed to extreme violence and conflict. It attempts to provide an answer to this question by observing the levels of trust in the extremely hard-hit community of Estados Unidos, Cesar, Colombia. By mapping the different stages of trust over the phases of the protracted social conflict, the research shows that it is possible to reconstruct trust after armed conflict and that it has a positive effect on peacebuilding. In the context of Colombia, *confianza* is seen as important with regards to trust building practices. The research indicates that both spontaneous as conscious community efforts are needed to do so. This gives hope for the future, as trust networks are often brought in contact with the successful democratization of countries.

Preface

The empirical starting points for this thesis were the observations I made whilst living in Mexico and Colombia. At times when I would come to my local friends' houses after walking through supposedly insecure areas, my friends would ask me whether I hadn't been scared. I, sincerely, had not. Other times I would find myself confused over the seemingly pessimistic view my Colombian friends seemed to have about other people: *'no dar papaya'* [to not give papaya] is an often heard proverb in Colombia and indicates the assumption that people will betray you if they get the chance. I thought that this was rather exaggerated - people are not that bad, *right?* But was I being naïve or were my friends overly anxious?

This made me reflect on the manner in which the impression we have yet acquired of the social world, through all of our conscious and unconscious experiences, influences the manner in which we perceive the world around us. As a girl growing up in a remarkably safe village in the north of the Netherlands, I never had to deal with any real security issues. Of course, there were the occasional worries, but I had a roof above my head, there was always enough food and money to get by, and, most importantly, physical danger was something I never feared. It was something I would only hear about on the news. And although the image of conflict and violence did make a great impression on me - I wanted to understand it and, if possible, help stopping it - it remained something abstract, something far away, something I knew I did not have to worry about in my direct life. And, perhaps even more importantly, I could not even imagine what it was like to do so.

This changed when I lived in Mexico. Several Mexican girls had disappeared over just a short period of time in the city that I lived in. They were supposedly kidnapped on the road I walked next to on a daily basis. Girls were advised not to walk there by themselves anymore. I told my Mexican friends that I found the situation worrisome. They would express their concern, but also say that ''that's the way things go in Mexico, nothing you can do about it''. It was confronting to realize that some of the people I felt genuinely connected to were actually faced with such kinds of security threats on a daily basis. They would still find it horrible, but were so much more used to being exposed to threat, that they simply tried to find a way to deal with it. They would, for example, be more aware of 'potentially dangerous people' and tried to avoid them. Realizing that there existed such a difference in the perception of security situations between myself and some people I genuinely loved - and that his difference was only caused by our previous experiences with the social world - made it all much less abstract.

How, then, I asked myself, could people who have really seen the worst of human kind - violence, war and conflict - ever trust anyone again? That was something I wanted to find out.

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Introduction

''After all we've been through, the things we've seen other people do - people who did so much damage to us - it's hard to trust. I don't have a lot of friends and I don't talk to people easily. It's just, you never really know someone... People can damage you; perhaps not by taking something from you materially, but by hurting you somewhere inside, emotionally. So you protect yourself by putting up a shell. You don't open up to other people. Because if they won't betray you in one way, they'll do it in another...''

(....)

''We trust each other here in the community because we've been through the same thing. The conflict has allowed us to unite''

These two widely different views on trust both exist in the community of Estados Unidos, Colombia - a community that has seen a lot of violence and conflict over the course of the past years. This thesis will attempt to clarify at least partly where these differences may come from.

This research focuses on trust in the context of protracted social conflict. It argues why trust building should be seen as an integral part of peacebuilding and looks at the possibilities to reconstruct it in communities that have been exposed to violence and conflict.

Trust will be defined *''a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon the belief of positive and non-harmful intentions of* [the other/others] *in a situation in which the actions of [the other/others] are outside of one's control''* (Rousseau et al..1998; Kappmeier, 2016).

The reason of studying trust in the context of protracted social conflict and peacebuilding is the effect that trust is argued to have on communal processes. Uslaner (2003) says that trust is the promoter and facilitator of peaceful cooperation and interaction in the social sphere. Contrastingly, mistrust is said to fragment the social fabric (Azar, 1990) and to be detrimental for cooperation (Pavićević, 2013). Robbins (2016) even poses that social conflict is probable to arise without trust. Nevertheless, trust seems to be a fragile good and hard to retain once broken. Societies that find themselves caught up in protracted social conflict are often highly fragmented and portray low levels of trust. Especially after armed conflict and violence *''a pervasive mistrust in one's fellow human being''* (Dickson-Gómez, 2002 : 418) is described as a result.

Peacebuilding in this thesis will be defined as an inclusive term entailing the different methods necessary to *''reduce the risk of resumption of conflict and contribute to the creation of conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery'' (*Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 2011 : 236). As trust enhances the cooperation between civilians and mistrust fragments society, possibly leading to relapse into armed conflict, trust building should arguably be seen as an integral part of peacebuilding.

Protracted armed conflict and trust in the case of Colombia

The relation between armed conflict, trust and communal processes have been researched to some extent in Colombia. Colombia makes an interesting case to do so, as this geographically and socially diverse country has found itself in a situation of protracted and armed social conflict for an extended period of time. Since its independence from Spain in 1810, the Colombian state has been weak, thoroughly corrupt and elitist (Escobar, 2002). Disputes in this Latin American country mainly formed around the unequal access to land and wealth distribution, extreme inequality in political representation and lacking or poor social services such as education and health care. Especially the rural areas have been neglected (Colombia's bloody history, 2016).

The armed conflict has been of particularly high intensity in the past 50 years, something which is reflected in the statistics of (civilian) victims. Confrontations between left-wing armed guerrilla groups such as the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - Ejército del Pueblo* (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia: FARC-EP, after this: FARC), 'self-defense' paramilitary actors and the Colombian state have demanded the lives of an estimated 218,094 people in the years between 1958 and 2012. 81% of them were civilians (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2016). Even more shocking are the numbers of displacement: 7.5 million people are said to have been violently forced to leave their territories (RUV, 2019).

Ever since the 1980s, there have been attempts to build peace in Colombia. Despite the fact that peace agreements were reached occasionally, groups often kept returning to the armed struggle. This was usually due to a lack of security for demobilized combatants, the breaking of ceasefires, a failure of the government to comply with parts of the agreement and the danger for social leaders to try and put effort in the implementation of accords (Pares, 2016).

The most ample peace accord in Colombian history was signed on the 24th of November 2016 between the Colombian government under the lead of President Juan Manuel Santos and the FARC. After more than 10 years of negotiating, a 310-page counting peace accord was signed, promising to bring several big and small changes for Colombia (see more in historical context) (Acuerdo Final, 2016).

The new accord allowed for a reserved wave of hope for a peaceful future amongst the Colombian population (PAX, 2017). Nevertheless, also today multiple issues have arisen, possibly obstructing the successful attainment of a sustainable peace. The Colombian government is accused of corrupting the peace funds acquired by international donors (Puerta, 2018) and effective implementation of the peace accord stays out (ABC Colombia, 2019). The most pressing, though, is the fact that 702 social leaders together with an estimated 138 ex-combatants of the FARC have already been killed ever since November 2016 (Indepaz, 2019; Justice for Colombia, 2019). There are even rumors that roughly 3000 demobilized FARC soldiers have picked up their weapons again (NY Times, 2019).

When keeping in mind the effect conflict can have on trust, it is not surprising that trust levels seem to be low in Colombia. A recent study showed that only 27% of Colombians trusts their neighbors and a meager 16% stated that it has trust in the Colombian state institutions (Confio, 2019). In contrast, 62,2% of the Dutch population expressed its trust for fellow citizens, and 70% had trust in the state institutions in 2017 (Vertrouwen op de Kaart, 2018). Amidst this context, it is interesting to shed light on the practical implications of trust and what the possibilities are - if any - to reconstruct it after violent conflict.

Analytic frame

Conceptualizing trust

Although intuitively most people have an idea of what *trust* entails, conceptualizations of it differ largely over a range of disciplines. A literature review has helped to compile a definition of trust that serves best in the context of conflict.

Rousseau et al. (1998 : 395) posed the definition of trust as *''a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability, based upon positive expectations of the intentions or the behavior of others''*. 'Psychological state' is defined as *a relatively constant mental or emotional condition, arising in the mind of an individual* (Thesaurus, 2019). 'Vulnerability' is the '*quality or state of being exposed to the possibility of being attacked or harmed, physically or emotionally*' (Morese, 2019). This definition of trust is adequate until a certain extent. When understanding trust in the context of conflict, having 'positive expectations' of the other insufficiently captures the importance of the necessity to be convinced that the other does not have *negative* intentions. Placing trust in the wrong person can result in grave harm or even death in these contexts. A willingness to accept vulnerability then, initially, comes forth out of the belief that the other will *not do harm* (Kelman, 2005 in Kappmeier, 2016; Yeo, & Green, 2017). Harm is defined as *physical or emotional damage* (Merriam-Webster, 2019). This is why beliefs about the absence of harm should be taken up in the definition as well. Lastly, not having (complete) control over a situation is inherent to the definition of trust. Trust should not be seen as a control mechanism, but rather as a substitute of control (Rousseau et al., 1998; Kappmeier, 2016; Ross & LaCroix, 1996). In uncontrollable situations, trust allows for a sense of security to arise (Bar-Tal, 2016).

Integrating the previously discussed literature into one definition, trust will be understood in this thesis as ''*a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon the belief of positive and non-harmful intentions of* [the other/others] *in a situation in which the actions of* [the other/others] *are outside of one's control*'' (Rousseau et al., 1998; Kappmeier, 2016).

The emergence of trust and its societal effects

A distinction between generalized and particularized trust is often made: particularized trust is characterized by the amount of trust one feels towards particular individuals; whereas generalized trust is seen as the believe that people in general are trustworthy (Robbins, 2016). A third type of trust, community trust, was presented in academic literature relatively recently. It is characterized as the trust one feels within a relatively demarcated space and founded on actual experiences with - but also perceptions of - the community that exists in this space and one feels a part of (Wollebæk et al., 2013).

Establishing trust involves automatic and deliberative cognitive processes that are both impulsive and reflective (Fiske and Taylor 2013; Kunda 1999; Moskowitz 2005; Murray et al., 2011 in Robbins, 2016). These processes are shaped by perceptions of, prior experiences with, and knowledge about the social world (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). They appear to start as early as in the first phases of life, when the fundamental feeling of safety and confidence in existence, also known as basic trust, is said to be acquired (Stroeken, 2013). This makes trust a highly subjective construct, in which particularized and generalized trust are interacting with each other (Fiske and Taylor 2013; Kunda 1999; Moskowitz 2005; Murray et al. 2011; Vaisey 2009 in Robbins 2016; Uslaner, 2003; Wollebæk et al., 2013) and largely influence the automatic decision-making process around who to (dis)trust (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017; Robinson, & Tajfel, 1996). Trust is dynamic - it can increase or decrease. Furthermore, relationships often contain elements of both trust and distrust (Lewicki, & Wiethoff, 2000), proving that they are not two ends of the same continuum but rather distinct constructs that can exist alongside each other (Walle & Six, 2014).

Kappmeier (2016) highlights the important role that having a sense of security plays in the possibility of trust for the other to emergence. Sense of security refers to both physical and psychological security; the perception that one is not the possible target of violence and harm and not having the fear that one's identity or emotional well-being is under threat (Kappmeier, 2016). When these conditions are not met, actions will be mostly guided by fear and based upon the avoidance of harm (Pavićević, 2013), impeding the development of interpersonal trust (Kappmeier, 2016). Although experiencing the emotion of fear can be beneficial as a survival mechanism in potentially harmful situations, it can also lead to profound forms of alienation and disconnection from others (Ross & Jang, 2000; Mirowsky & Ross, 1989), impede long-term, strategic thinking, and may result in hopelessness out of a perceived lack of control and subsequently have negative consequences for the well-being of individuals (Buttrick, Heintzelman & Oishi, 2017; Kushitor, Peterson, Asante et al., 2018).

Trust does not only work on the psychological and inter-individual level, it plays a key role in broader societal processes as well. Uslaner (2003) argues that trust is the promoter and facilitator of peaceful cooperation and interaction in the social sphere. Instead of looking at attitudes or beliefs that

comprise interpersonal trust relationships, sociologists such as Tilly (2005) choose to approach trust as a *type* of relationship. The unit of analysis in his work are trust networks as entities on themselves, rather than the individuals comprising them. The concept is scrutinized through looking at the overall organization of these networks, although the conceptualization of trust in his work is greatly similar to the one used here. He argues that over the course of history, the integration of trust networks into public politics is what has eventually played a role in the successful democratization of societies. Furthermore, trust is widely perceived as being a key-factor for the functioning of institutions (Tilly, 2005; Uslaner, 2003; Evensky, 2011), which in turn is found to facilitate trust in fellow citizens as well (Uslaner, 2017).

(Mis)trust in the context of conflict

Conversely, mistrust fragments the social fabric (Azar, 1990) and can be detrimental for cooperation (Pavićević, 2013). Robbins (2016) states that while social order is possible with trust, social conflict is probable without trust. Although conflict – defined as mutually incompatible goals between two or more parties (Azar, 1990 : 5) – is an inescapable part of social life, a lack of coordinating or mediating strategies can result in protracted social conflict. Protracted social conflict, as termed by Azar, refers to complex and often prolonged and violent conflict, usually over the access to basic needs such as acceptance-, access- and security needs. Corresponding with the findings of Kappmeier (2016), who states that a sense of security is crucial for the emergence of trust, Azar (1990) describes how in the face of fear and insecurity, closed-mindedness and psychological ossification[1] may obstruct or limit successful cooperation within societies even more, feeding into a negative spiral of further polarization and fragmentation of society. Creating a more peaceful society, then, becomes extremely difficult.

Even more, protracted social conflicts usually do not have clear termination points (Azar, 1990). Even if official attempts to reach peace have been made, the situation for civilians does not change overnight. Additionally, even *if* violence has stopped, it is not easily forgotten. Whilst violent conflict might have initially been sparked by deeply rooted social problems, fighting and hostilities create new issues and effects that cannot be ignored in the peacebuilding process either. Some of the major deficits in war-torn countries as described by Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse (2011) are social debilitation and psychological/social trauma. Mental effects caused by the exposure to violence continue to exist for many years after the violence has stopped (Siobhan M O'Neill, 2019). In studies conducted by Dickson-Gómez (2004; 2005), focusing more specifically on the socio-psychological aftermath of the conflict and violence

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[1] Psychological ossification refers to the process in which cognitions, perceptions and attitudes become hardened and difficult to change. Also known as 'social ossification' (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2019).

in El Salvador, participants told her how the profound pain experienced in the conflict has removed the illusion of the world's benevolence. As witnessing or even being harmed by violence, it gets expected. A sense of insecurity is pretty much constant, resulting in *''a pervasive mistrust in one's fellow human being''* (Dickson-Gómez, 2002 : 418). It proves difficult to obtain solid statistics on the effects of the conflict in Colombia on mental health. Nevertheless, the prevalence of depression, suicide, anxiety and trauma are high, especially in the regions that have been most affected by the armed conflict. This leads experts to express their great concern for the significant mental health challenges Colombia is facing - both now and potentially in future generations (Tamayo-Agudelo & Bell, 2019). As it is known that mental effects of exposure to violence can be passed on transgenerationally, this might impede the emergence of trust and thus be an explanation of ongoing violence and insecurity (Parkin-Daniels, 2018; Dickson-Gomez, 2002).

Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding, then, should address both the problems that gave rise to the conflict in the first place and deal with the new issues created by it. It can be defined an inclusive term entailing the different methods *''necessary to reduce the risk of resumption of conflict and contribute to the creation of conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery''* (Miall, Ramsbotham & Woodhouse, 2011 : 236). Given the fact that higher levels of trust within societies enhance the cooperation between civilians, it is not surprising that trust building is often acknowledged as being an essential part of peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the previously discussed findings on trust paint a very bleak picture about the possibility for it to emergence in socially debilitated societies. Is it possible for trust to emerge in societies that find themselves amidst ongoing (armed) conflict or the absence of functioning state institutions? Or are communities that have faced violence and conflict trapped in an ever-lasting spiral of mistrust? And, more importantly, *if* trust building is possible, then *how* to accomplish this?

Even more, while the peacebuilding literature acknowledges the importance of trust, it tends to focus mainly on the construct as one of the factors necessary for the reconciliation between warring groups (Bar-Tal, 2016; Stovel, 2006), the enhancement of local conflict resolution processes (Buitrago, 2009), the possibilities of restoring political trust (Gilligan, Pasquale & Samii 2014), or attempts to map the impact that mistrust has on post-conflict societies, even years after violence took place (Kijewski & Freitag, 2018). Similarly, while all of this research is undeniably important to show the effects of trust on (post-conflict) societies, it fails to provide an adequate answer as to *how* trust may be established in yet-fragmented societies.

Case Study: Estados Unidos

The research for this thesis will be done in the *corregimiento*[2] of Estados Unidos, Cesar, Colombia. Estados Unidos lies in the mining region of the municipality of Becerril, which is designated as one of the 344 Colombian '*Zonas Más Afectados por el Conflicto Armado*' (Zones Most Affected by the Armed Conflict : ZOMAC, Agencia de la Renovación del Territorio, 2018). Paramilitary violence surged in the mining region of Cesar between 1996 and 2003: at least 3100 people were killed and 55,000 got violently displaced. A community member of Estados Unidos stated that *"paramilitaries would go around, killing people in their houses, or on the streets, it was as if they'd just kill people who'd get in their way. So many people have been killed or disappeared*'' (Bayona Producciones, 2013 - 3:28 - 4:07). Witnessing two public massacres and continuous indiscriminate violence, the community literally fragmented as most people in the corregimiento fled. They went to nearby municipalities such as Codazzi, Pailitas or Astrea. The population of the corregimiento dropped from an estimated 1600 before the violence until only 10 in 2001, when most people had been displaced (Semana, 2007).

This indicates a high chance of a severe impact on trust and communal ties in the area. The impact of the violence seemed indeed big, as *'severe psychosocial problems'* are said to exist in the community (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014 : 38). Interestingly, though, the reports that come from Estados Unidos are quite positive. A social leader from the region stated that the trust relations

Figure 1 The municipality Becerril,located in Cesar. (Author: Milenioscuro, 2012,Colombia – Cesar – Becerril, online image, access date: 07-06-2019 at: Wikipedia: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colombia_-_Cesar_-_Becerril.svg)

within the community - of which most members had returned - were good. One of the NGO-leaders of PAX[3] called it *''one of the best-organized communities in the region''*. There is an active victim's association that works for peace and reconciliation in several parts of the territory. It sparked my interest. Did the trust relations in the area not get affected during the time of the violence? Or, if it means that they were negatively affected, does it mean that they were reconstructed? If so - how?

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[2] The word *corregimiento* has no clear-cut translation to English. It is best described as a demarcated rural area consisting of different *veredas*, covering an area smaller than a municipality. It falls under the jurisdiction of the municipality (Wikipedia, 2019).

[3] PAX is a global peace organization that actively works with victims of the armed conflict in Cesar. More about this organization in chapter 3.

The history of corregimiento as it is now starts around 60 years ago. Before the '60s, the entire piece of land taking up the space of Estados Unidos today was owned by Daniel Daní. As a livestock owner, he had divided his land into different corrals. Legend goes that one of his guests was astonished by the sheer size of the territory. Upon finally reaching one of the corrals, he said: 'these corrals lie further away than the United States!' (Plan Desarrollo del Cesar, 2019 : 6). This is where the name 'Estados Unidos', literally translating to United States, comes from.

In the '60s, people from all over the country started arriving to Estados Unidos. The economic possibilities in the corregimiento attracted people from within Cesar, but also internally displaced Colombians from other states such as Santander, Antioquia and Tolima (Plan Desarrollo del Cesar, 2019). Daní gradually sold pieces of his land. These parcels would come to form the veredas[4] that exist in the territory nowadays: Estados Unidos, Tucuycito la Loma, Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé, (Altos del) Tucuy, Santa Cecilia, Buenavista, Canadá, Manantial, Progreso, La Unión and Pitalito. The veredas were divided in two parts: the 'upper' veredas, lying in the high part of the area on the Serranía del Perijá mountain range and 'lower' Estados Unidos, lying in a non-mountainous area.

I have chosen to focus upon the lower part of Estados Unidos, namely: Tucuycito la Loma, Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé, Pitalito, Santa Cecilia and Buenavista. I have chosen these veredas because three of these - Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé and Tucuycito la Loma - are actively engaged in peacebuilding processes. Pitalito is a small vereda, and several people who first lived here now live in Santa Fé. Santa Cecilia and Buenavista have the same type of geographic and demographic characteristics as these veredas and would therefore form good subjects of comparison[5].

Investigation

The case of Estados Unidos provides the relatively unique opportunity to study trust processes and their convergence with armed conflict and peacebuilding in a relatively demarcated area and a set timeframe. I will present overviews of trajectory of the conflict and communal processes in Estados Unidos in my empirical chapters and will provide a subsequent analysis on how this trajectory influenced the trust in the territory. Through this, it might be possible to understand whether and how trust can be reconstructed after armed conflict and subsequently be used for peacebuilding. The main question of this thesis is:

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[4] *Vereda* is a Colombian term that does not lend itself for a direct translation to English. It is a rural plot of land that contains several houses (Spanish for Social Change, 2008).

[5] The 'upper veredas' are geographically very different, in the sense that there is no access through any public road and reaching them would require at least 2 hours of walking.

How did (dis)trust develop over the course of the protracted social conflict in Estados Unidos, Becerril between 1960 and 2019 and how did id converge with peacebuilding?

This main puzzle consists of several parts that require explanation. To understand possible trust building processes that may have emerged after the armed conflict, it is first important what the influence of the armed conflict and violence was on the community. The first sub question this thesis attempts to answer is:

1. *How did the armed conflict influence trust in the community of Estados Unidos, Becerril?*

One of the social leaders in the area stated that the trust relations in the community were good. Was his opinion representative for the experience of the entire community? The second question this thesis aims to answer is:

2. What is the state of trust in the community today, 2019?

If found that trust relations in the community are indeed good, and in the case that the investigation leads to the finding that trust relations were indeed harmed by the armed conflict, it means that there has been a transformation. The third question this thesis aims to answer is:

3. How was trust reconstructed in the community?

Embedding trust in the Colombian context

Embedding this study about trust and its influences on communal processes in its empirical context is important to represent its true functioning (Rousseau et al.,, 1998). Trust is related to dispositions, decisions, behaviors, social networks, and institutions - and as such they imply individual and cultural differences. This asks for cultural sensitivity when studying the term (Bar-Tal 2016) and makes it worth shedding light on the views on trust in the Latin American context.

The direct translation of the word trust to Spanish is *confianza*. This term deserves an explanation of its own. Confianza is used to characterize the intimate relationships that exist between individuals or an individual and a group of individuals. It is found in day-today contact and physical closeness (Lomnitz, 2006), formed around notions of reciprocity (Baud, 2018) and the constant reconfirmation of social relations (Fitts & McClure, 2015). They are based upon contextual moral standards of fairness and equality, and are largely practical: morality should be reflected in actions (Baud, 2018). This makes the term therefore also largely related to organizational processes; confianza relations can arise in the absence of state institutions, as a substitute for services that are supposed to be provided by the government (Baud, 2018). Beneficially, this can create a positive feedback loop where reciprocity and help continuously reconfirm the trustworthiness of the other and increase the willingness to rely on the other party whilst tackling vulnerability. Even more so when facing outside violence, interpersonal relations can become closed and insulated, making people more dependent on confianza relations (Sánchez, 2011). In the highly collective Colombian culture (Retsema, 2011), it combines the definition of trust, as previously stated, and confidence, the assurance that one gets from previous experiences with others (Visionary Network, 2019).

As such, confianza relations might seem similar to the previously posed community trust, but there are some important differences. Confianza can be seen as a type of intimate relationship based upon reciprocity, responsibility and constant reconfirmation of mutual ties. Community trust exists in relatively demarcated space and comes up through the *feeling* of being part of a community without necessarily being in constant contact with other community members (Wollebæk et al., 2012). Similarly, reciprocal relations that go by the name of confianza do not necessarily have to indicate the existence of trust. They can exist out of necessity or out of a hope for goodwill to return in the future, something which Tocqueville (1835) termed as 'self-interest well-understood'. So while community trust describes the level on which trust manifests, confianza describes the practices that may - or may not - be necessary to establish it in the Latin American context. Scrutinizing trust in relation to communal processes in Estados Unidos will not be complete without understanding the importance of confianza relations in Latin American society and how these are, and are not, merged with trust.

Outline of the thesis

The analyzed timespan of how (dis)trust manifested itself in the territory starts at the time of the first arrival of the population, in the 1960s and ends at 2019. 2019 is the end of the analyzed timespan as this was the year that the research was conducted. Chapter one looks at confianza relations and dynamics before and during the violence up until the time of displacement. This understanding is important and relevant to understand the trust people felt in the area and the trust rebuilding process that would follow in the years after that. Some light will be shed upon the time during the displacement as well, showing that despite (or, rather: because of) these hard circumstances new trust relations can emerge. The second chapter focuses on the process of return for the population to the incredibly insecure territory of Estados Unidos, which started in 2003. It looks at the spontaneous community efforts and creative strategies that the people of Estados Unidos have used to strengthen their social ties and shows the importance of cohesion for the sense of security. The third chapter focuses on how conscious organizational processes intersected with the confianza building process in the area. Here, too, one must keep in mind that organizing in an insecure area such as Estados Unidos was dangerous and required trust.

Methodology

Research design and data collection techniques

This research attempts to understand the social phenomena of trust, the possibilities for reconstructing it in victimized communities and the possible convergence of (the reconstruction of) trust with peacebuilding. Trust is seen as inter-subjective; as a phenomena that emerges from a psychological interaction between individuals, and cannot be seen separately from their views, feelings and experiences, which are embedded within a social context. As the social context of this research is Colombia, a culturally sensitive manner of studying trust is chosen, namely by seeing it as imbued- but an integral part of the concept of confianza. From this point of approaching the social world, people are seen as actors that are firmly embedded within society but simultaneously have agency. They both create and are created by the social world (Hollis, 1994). As such, this research lends itself most to take an epistemologically interpretative perspective, ontologically looking at individuals in their relationships with others.

The largest part of this exploratory case-study will be done by conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The duration of the interviews will average around 45 minutes. The population of focus is the community of several veredas of the corregimiento of Estados Unidos. Most of the interviews will, thus, be held with members of this community. Nevertheless, several social leaders that are part of the Peasant's Assembly (aligned with and supported by PAX Cesar, see chapter 3) will be interviewed as well. This is to compare situations between different communities, possibly gaining extra insight in the situation of Estados Unidos. Next to community members and social leaders, several experts around the topics of psychology, reintegration and law have been interviewed as well.

Research strategy and case selection

Having done an internship at PAX in Colombia before, I used the network I previously built to find a place to go for my data collection. PAX is a global peace organization that works with communities in three departments of Colombia: Meta, Cauca and Cesar. I explained the focus of my research and the team of PAX Cesar was enthusiastic about me engaging with the communities in Cesar for the collection of my data. PAX helped me to get in touch with communities that had been forcefully displaced and are now trying to organize themselves in order to try and get back to their lands, get compensation for what happened to them or try and develop their territories.

PAX allowed me to attend several meetings of the Peasant's Assembly of Cesar. Here, I got in touch with some social leaders from the corregimiento of Estados Unidos, Becerril. It became apparent that Estados Unidos was well-organized: a large part of the community had returned to their lands and the community had been able to form several, relatively new, victim's organizations and a youth movement. Knowing about the violent history of the corregimiento, it sparked my interest to know more about how the community of Estados Unidos functions nowadays. This is when and why I decided to focus my thesis upon the process of trust reconstruction in this corregimiento.

During the time of my fieldwork, I lived in Valledupar, the capital city of the department of Cesar. This is where the office of PAX is, and where the communities that PAX provides assistance to gather for meetings. Although focusing on a community finding itself about 2,5 hours south of the city, I decided to stay and live in Valledupar instead of living in the corregimiento, due to safety concerns. After establishing contact with social leaders of the corregimiento of Estados Unidos, I consulted with them what would be the best setting to conduct the interviews in. We agreed that visiting the corregimiento would serve best for gathering data instead of interviewing in Valledupar. There were a multitude of reasons for this:

- I would be able to conduct interviews with a greater amount of people, as not everyone had money to come to Valledupar or found his/herself in Valledupar frequently
- Being able to come to the houses of my interviewees would provide a larger sense of safety and comfort for my interviewees, which was important as we would be talking about sensitive subjects
- I would be able to observe the area in order to better understand the local context next to conducting interviews

For security reasons and because the veredas were quite spread-out over the territory (and no public transport was available), I would always go to the corregimiento with a private driver. A social youth leader from the area helped me with setting up the interviews in the corregimiento. He would drive with us from the village of Becerril and guide us to the houses of the people we could speak to. This way of convenience sampling brings the limitation that the results of the investigation might not be representative for the entire area. Nevertheless, it was simply not feasible or realistic for me to go around the area by myself. Talking about the armed conflict can be painful and sometimes bring a sense of insecurity for community members. The social leader, who is partly known and respected in the area for wanting to connect the community, showed the people we visited that it was safe to talk with me about the armed conflict. This allowed the community members to talk more freely. Similarly, going around

with the social leader prevented that I would ask for interviews or talk about my research with people who could possibly form a security risk for me.

Before the start of every interview, I verbally guided the informed consent process by telling my interviewees:
- That I would store their data in a confidential and anonymous manner
- That I would use their data in a confidential and anonymous manner in the thesis
- That my participants were in no case obliged to answer questions they did not feel comfortable answering
- That my interviewees could always pause or stop the interview in case they wanted to do so
- That the duration of the interview would average 30-45 minutes

Then, I would ask them whether they gave me permission to record the interviews. In all cases my interviewees agreed. Afterwards, I would start the recorder and asked my interviewees in three separate questions to confirm my explanation of the aforementioned information by saying 'yes' ['si'] aloud as a response to each question.

The personal history of the interviewee relating the armed conflict was asked about, as well as feelings and perspectives about the amount of trust the interviewee felt and feels within the area. As these are possibly quite personal subjects, the interviews were always conducted in private. I made sure that there was no one else who would be able to overhear the conversation. Whenever people would get emotional, I reassured them and reminded them that we could stop or pause the interview at any time if the interviewee felt overwhelmed.

All interviews were conducted in Spanish. Although I speak Spanish relatively well, it is not my native language and I do not speak it fluently. This, thus formed a small limitation. Nevertheless, my Spanish is good enough to conduct the interviews independently and without a translator.

Although most of my interviews were conducted in the corregimiento, a few were done in Valledupar. This was mostly when the participants would come to Valledupar for meetings of the Peasant's Assembly or other meetings. The interviews with experts were also held in Valledupar. This is a central point in Cesar and where the majority of them lived. Hereby a list of the people I have interviewed:

Interview #	Date interview	Short background subject	Manner of appearance in thesis
Interview 1	12-3-2019	Psychiatrist Universidad del Bosque Bogotá, expert dealing with victims of the armed conflict	Alfonso Rodriguez
Interview 2	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira. Displaced and still lives in Becerril	Miranda, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 3	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira. Displaced and still lives in Becerril	Josefina, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 4	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira. Displaced and still lives in Becerril, but family goes to finca frequently	Sandra, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 5	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira. Displaced and still lives in Becerril	Sara, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 6	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira. Displaced and still lives in Becerril	Stephanie, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 7	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict and social leader from Hatos la Guajira	Matías, Hatos la Guajira*
Interview 8	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict - originally from Pitalito, now lives in Santa Fé. Social leader	Tobías, Pitalito
Interview 9	10-4-2019	Victim armed conflict and youth leader from Tucuycito la Loma	María, Tucuycito la Loma
Interview 10	16-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Santa Fé	Luna, Santa Fé
Interview 11	16-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Santa Fé	Leonardo, Santa Fé
Interview 12	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Chiriguana but lives in Hatos la Guajira with her family now**	Melissa, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 13	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira, lives in Valledupar (for work) but often comes back to the territory as family lives here	Ariana, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 14	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Tucuycito la Loma	Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma
Interview 15	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Tucuycito la Loma	Morena, Tucuycito la Loma
Interview 16	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Pitalito	Naomí, Pitalito
Interview 17	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Tucuycito la Loma	Alexia, Tucuycito la Loma
Interview 18	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira	Yvonne, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 19	17-4-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira	Ernesto, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 20	7-5-2019	Victim armed conflict and youth leader from Tucuycito la Loma	Nina, Tucuycito la Loma
Interview 21	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Hatos la Guajira, still lives in Becerríl	Briana, Hatos la Guajira
Interview 22	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Santa Cecilia. Comes to the land during the day, goes back to Becerril at night	Irene, Santa Cecilia
Interview 23	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Santa Cecilia. Comes to the land during the day, goes back to Becerril at night	Valentina, Santa Cecilia
Interview 24	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Santa Cecilia. Comes to the land during the day, goes back to Becerril at night	Manuel, Santa Cecilia
Interview 25	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Buenavista. Still lives in Becerril	Maria José, Buenavista
Interview 26	14-5-2019	Victim armed conflict from Buenavista. Still lives in Becerril	Claudia, Buenavista
Interview 27	15-5-2019	Victim armed conflict and Social leader from Hatos la Guajira	Matías, Hatos la Guajira*
Interview 28	16-5-2019	Social leader Peasant's Assembly from Copey	Paulina, Copey - Peasant's Assembly
Interview 29	16-5-2019	Social leader Peasant's Assembly from Platanal	Eduardo, Platanal - Peasant's Assembly
Interview 30	3-5-2019	Expert on reintegration - ARN	Orlando Carreño

Table 1 *overview of interviews and basic details of interviewees*

I used a random name generator to generate aliases for the community members for privacy and safety reasons. I will use the vereda where they lived when they were displaced to indicate where they come from. An exception to this rule is the case of Melissa, who is originally from the nearby municipality of Chiriguana and got displaced here. She has been living with her family in Hatos la Guajira for over 10 years now. I will use her name in combination with the place she currently lives because she is well-embedded in community life in Hatos la Guajira. I have consciously treated the fact that she is not from Estados Unidos when interpreting the data. Similarly, a table of relevant conversations that are taken up in the thesis. These interviews were not recorded, but I did ask permission to use the information given in the thesis:

Conversations - non-recorded interviews #	Date conversation	Position subject(s)	Name in thesis
Conversation 1	29-3-2019	Victim armed conflict and Youth leader from Hatos la Guajira	Valentín, Hatos la Guajira
Conversation 2	31-3-2019	Psychologist PAX	Estrella
Conversation 3	1-5-2019	Project leader PAX	Daniel
Conversation 4	4-5-2019	Victim armed conflict and Youth leader Tucuycito la Loma	Hector, Tucuycito la Loma
Conversation 5	10-4-2019	Previous member of security force, patrolled in Becerril and Estados Unidos	Juan

Table 2 *list of conversations used in thesis*

Security

Cesar is a quite insecure territory, especially for people working around the themes of peace, conflict and human rights (Cárdenas, 2019). This is why I kept a low profile by not telling many people about the research I was conducting. Although the community of focus was Estados Unidos, located in the center of the department of Cesar, I lived in Valledupar for the duration of my stay. This was more secure for both myself and the community of subject and fitted in the strategy of maintaining a low profile. Next to that, the regional manager of PAX Cesar supervised and advised me on my safety. We were in touch with each other on a regular basis. He updated me about relevant security changes in the region and I reported to him when I was leaving and coming back to Valledupar from Estados Unidos. I would always do so with a private driver. A social leader guided us (me and my driver) around whilst being in the corregimiento, in order to be sure that the interviews we would conduct would not form any type of security risk.

<center>**Historical context**</center>

The conflict in Colombia

As stated previously, Colombian society is highly corrupt and elitist, with power traditionally centered in a limited number of families (Escobar, 2002). Frustrated by the inability to find democratic openings in order to address or change social and political problems, the largest guerrilla group in Colombian history, the FARC was created in 1964 (Skretteberg, 2016). At its peak in 1990, this Marxist-Leninist group counted an estimated 16,000 soldiers (Infobae, 2016). Next to the FARC, other left-wing guerrillas, such as the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army: ELN - 1965), the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (Popular Liberation Army: EPL -1966) and the *Movimiento 19* (19-Movement: M-19 - 1973) would mobilize and extend their presence into rural areas and cities in the years after their creation. Paramilitary groups came up in the 1980s, and were a manifestation of the increasingly intertwined interests of the Colombian political elite, important businessman, cattle rangers and some of Colombia's wealthy and powerful drug cartels. In processes described as 'parapolitics', an estimated 11,000 politicians, public officials and businessmen were colliding with these armed groups (Colombia Reports, 2016). They would finance the paramilitary actors to combat guerrilla groups and eradicate political opposition (García Pérez, 2016).

After 1994, high-level functionaries, among whom the largely influential governor Álvaro Úribe, helped for the creation of a law which made the creation of 'Self-defense groups' that went under the name of '*Cooperativas de Vigilancia y Seguridad Privada*' (Special Vigilance and Private Security Services : *CONVIVIR*) legal (Colombia Reports, 2016). They combined forces with national security forces and their subsequent expansion - both in manpower and territorial claim - was enormous. Under the lead of Carlos Castaño Gil, self-defense groups in the entire country were combined (McDermott, 2013). From 1997 onwards, they were to go by the name of *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia: AUC) (PNUD, 2014) and started to live a political life of their own. The interests of the groups became increasingly intertwined with the drug business, making their financial position even stronger (CRIC, 2012). The groups were increasingly able to establish local and regional political influence in different parts of the country. Their strategies mainly involved threat, intimidation and extreme violence, also towards civilians. Paramilitary expansion was met with a military hardening of guerrilla groups, making the conflict even bloodier after this. A shocking amount of 80.427 people died and 763.347 people got displaced due to the armed conflict in 2002 alone. Important to keep in mind is that these are only the officially registered statistics - as a lot of victims of the conflict do not dare to declare what has happened to them, there are likely to be a lot more in practice (Registro Único de las Víctimas, 2019).

Peace attempts: a red line of relapse

The first time that a ceasefire agreement was signed between the FARC and the Colombian government was in 1984, under President Betancourt (El Espectador, 2014). The agreement decreed amnesty to demobilized fighters and promised a modernization and reform of institutions, redistribution of wealth and the strengthening of democracy. The FARC was allowed to create political party, resulting in the formation of Unión Patriótica (Patriotic Union, UP) (Pares, 2016). Nevertheless, as the FARC was never forced to turn in their weapons and UP-members were not granted any security, suspicion towards the 'political branch of the guerrilla' remained. In the years to come, right-wing violence would cost the life of an estimated 3000 to 4000 members of the newly established UP-party (Pares, 2016). This, in addition to the failure of the Colombian state to comply with other parts of the peace agreement entailing social reform, caused the ceasefire to officially collapse in 1987 (Verdad Abierta, 2012).

Similar developments would be seen in the years after that. Although in some occasions agreements were reached and led to the creation of mechanisms favoring a more just society, groups kept returning to the armed struggle due to a lack of security for demobilized combatants, the breaking of ceasefires and a failure to comply with parts of the agreements (Pares, 2019).

A successful peace agreement was reached, though, between the AUC and the Colombian government in 2005 (Verdad Abierta, 2018). The process allowed an estimated 31.671 combatants to demobilize, disarm and reintegrate into society (Nussio, 2011). Nevertheless, the process is often defined as sham process; paramilitary actors were obviously aligned to the Colombian state and the agreement did not meet international justice standards for Human Rights violations and was insulting for the victims of the armed conflict (Colombia Reports, 2016). Similarly, newly-formed armed groups would emerge from the demobilized AUC, continuing their work, be it on a smaller scale. (Pares, 2019).

The best-known peace accord, though, is the accord that the FARC and the Colombian government signed in November 2016. It was the most ample in Colombia's history. Next to guaranteeing bilateral ceasefire and security for ex-combatants, some of the most important points of the accord include the set-up of a comprehensive rural reform agenda, which aims to support the well-being of the rural population, eradicate extreme poverty and reduce rural poverty. Similarly, a more participatory and diverse political arena is facilitated, by increasing the access of citizens to the political arena, whilst promoting a culture of reconciliation, coexistence, tolerance and non-discrimination. A mechanism was created to monitor and verify the implementation of the accord (Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016). The new accord allowed for a reserved wave of hope for a peaceful future amongst the Colombian population (PAX, 2017). Nevertheless, also today multiple issues have arisen, possibly obstructing the successful attainment of peace. The Colombian government is accused of corrupting the peace funds acquired by international donors (Puerta, 2018) and effective implementation of the peace accord stays

out (ABC Colombia, 2019). The most pressing, though: 702 social leaders together with an estimated 138 ex-combatants of the FARC have already been killed ever November 2016 (Indepaz, 2019; Justice for Colombia, 2019). This shows the difficulty of reaching peace in Colombia

The conflict in the department Cesar

Cesar is one of the poorest and state-abandoned departments in Colombia and has traditionally been abandoned by the state. Disputes in Cesar have mainly been mainly over land. Ever since the '60s, the *Camilo Torres* and *Manuel Martinez Quiroz* fronts have strategically positioned themselves in the outskirts of the department, which served as perfect gateways for drug trafficking, a well-known source of income for armed groups. The FARC started arriving in the territory around this time as well. The 20th, 37th and the 41st fronts that would remain present (PNUD, 2014).

From the mid-1980s, guerrilla influence started growing heavily in Cesar. The main targets of the guerrilla were great-landowners, cattle ranchers, families who were traditionally influential in local politics and other financially well-off families. They would be kidnapped for money, their cattle was stolen, their farm workers were forcefully recruited or their property burnt (Verdad Abierta, 2010). As a satisfactory reaction of the state stayed out, the targeted citizens decided to take defense into their own hands. By the late '80s, 'private justice' or self-defense groups were being formed in different parts of the department: ''*their protection costed less than the extortion tax the guerrilla would charge*'' (Verdad Abierta, 2010). Although these groups were arguably initiated in order to protect the economic elite against attacks from the guerrilla, it became obvious relatively quickly that this was not the only reason for the formation of these groups.

Social movements such as the *Asociación Nacional de Usuarios Campesinos* (National Farmworkers Association : ANUC), political movements, syndicalists and human rights defenders started being more united in Cesar. Around 10,000 workers under the name of 'common cause' (*Causa Común*) protested to demand public services, land, roads and better salary in 1987 (Verdad Abierta, 2010). Similarly, the UP gained a lot of votes in the municipal elections this decade (PNUD, 2014).

The increasing popularity of left-wing social movements were experienced as a threat to the establishment (Verdad Abierta, 2010). The selective targeting, not only of guerrilla fighters, but also of social leaders started growing exponentially in the second half of the 1980s, as they were being accused of colliding with the guerrilla. Paramilitary groups expanded rapidly and began living a political and economic live on their own (PNUD, 2014). *The Autodefensas Campesinas de Córdoba y Urabá* (Autodefense Groups of Urabá and Cordobá: ACCU) were sent to Cesar in 1995, and merged with yet-present self-defense groups that were initially set up. These would soon after that merge with the AUC (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). The 'Northern Bloc', of the AUC, under the lead of Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, alias

'Jorge 40', would start to control the largest part of Cesar from then on. Jorge 40 strengthened one of his blocks in 1999 and called it 'Juan Andrés Álvarez' (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). It was this front, under the command of alias El Samario, alias Tolemaida and alias El Tigre, that would do the most damage to Estados Unidos (PNUD, 2014).

Chapter 1: Violence and the breakdown of trust in Estados Unidos

'Allá se empezó el temor' (that's when the fear began)

– Tobías, Santa Fé

This chapter focuses on the experiences of the community of Estados Unidos before and during the time of the violence and what the impact of the violence was on trust.

1.1 Before 'the violence'

Community members remember living in a peaceful territory right after they arrived in the 1960s. ''*Children could safely walk around the area, there was no danger, no problem at all. The tranquility is what allowed people in the village to feel happy*'' (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019 : 16-17). In these first years after the foundation of the corregimiento, there was *'nothing to be afraid of'* (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019 : 17). Although the corregimiento lied in an isolated area and was largely abandoned by the state *''it was a peaceful territory, people lived happily. We did not have electricity, nor asphalted roads, but that didn't matter - we lived in peace, as a community''* [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019]. Members of the community remember how people would rely on each other, how they would help each other out when needed and that the social ties were generally strong in the area: *''everyone knew who Fulana⁶ was, who Fulano was, simply who the other was - everyone knew each other''* [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

There was a communal action board *''that helped uniting us''*, which took up things such as organizing events, coordinating harvest, etc. (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019). *"The social ties before the violence were very good, the coexistence here was very healthy. We saw each other a lot and lived in good harmony''* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 14-5-2019].

1.1.1 Guerrilla presence

The first period of insecurity began in the 1970s. It was in this decade that left-wing guerrilla groups arrived to the territory. The M-19 would be seen sporadically in the territory, but there was not much exchange between the community and this group. The ELN mainly used the territory for the smuggling of drugs and did not impose a lot of its authority on the population either. The FARC, nevertheless, managed to establish a base on the vereda of Santa Fé and controlled the territory of Estados

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⁶ Fulano (m)/Fulana(f) is a way to refer to a hypothetical person, the Spanish equivalents of 'John Doe' and 'Jane Doe'

Unidos for several years. When the population speaks of the time under the 'guerrilla' it is thus the period under the control of the FARC they are referring to.

The FARC started to control more things in daily life. They helped some landless peasants with invading the land of great landowners and started demanding 'tax': money that would have to be given in exchange for protection [Nina, Tucuycito la Loma - 07-05-2019]. Juan remembers how much the presence of the FARC became an unremarkable part of daily life for the members of the community:

''The FARC would walk around the area in their uniforms - they were easy to recognize and they didn't mind. And people of the community knew who was aligned to the FARC. They could point out boyfriends and girlfriends of commanders and soldiers, you name it. If you'd go up to these people and ask whether it was true that they were 'with the FARC', they wouldn't deny it and not be ashamed to admit it either - the FARC simply had control and that was it.'' [10-04-2019]

This surely did not mean that everyone was happy with the control of the FARC, though. A lot of community members could not deal with what they called hypocrisy:

''So, supposedly they are fighting for the well-being of the people [el pueblo]. They stole all of our cattle! What 'well-being' are they talking about, then - robbing and taking the things that 'the people' they're supposed to protect have worked so hard for!'' [Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019]

The family of Lucía left for a little while after the FARC stole all of their cattle. Nevertheless, as it was difficult to find sustainable work and income being away from their lands, they eventually did come back. Physical damage was not the only type of damage the FARC brought to the community:

''Psychologically, the thing that marked me the most was when my husband got kidnapped by the guerrilla. They kidnapped him out of political reasons, they said, to show the state that the security situation in the department was very bad. They held him hostage for 52 very long days. I do not wish to remember these days, it was truly dreadful.'' [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 14-04-2019].

After the '80s, there were several confrontations between the national army and the FARC. The FARC seemed to be needing more soldiers:

''I was very small still, so I don't remember this, but my sister told me that the guerrilla came up to our house to take her for recruitment. She didn't go with them, but she told me she was very afraid and that it was a horrible experience for her'' [Sandra, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]

(...)

''They would come up to you if they saw you pass. Or they'd arrive to your house to take the ''goods'' they saw - people that is'' [Naomí, Pitalito - 17-04-2019]

(...)

''From the moment my brother and I were 18 years old, the guerrilla repeatedly started to come to our house. They would tell us that we had to serve them. We always refused. Then they started to harass us. My brother and I left the area in the '80s - we went to another city and spent a few years there. Upon return, the guerrilla came up to us again: 'we're so happy that you're back, you can join our ranks now!' I left again'' [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

The territory started to get more violent. The first large combat occurred in 1981, lasting for 8 days. The largest combat in the history of the corregimiento, nevertheless, was in 1991 and lasted for 60 days. Then, in 1986, the FARC perpetrated a massacre in which 4 members of the same family were assassinated (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019). In 1991, the FARC perpetrated a massive attack against one of the great cattle owners in the region: they set fire to his land, took his workers hostage for more than 2 days, and took 862 cows from him, as a way of protesting his alleged involvement in the disappearance of indigenous people (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019). A second massacre occurred this same year, leaving five peasants dead. Whether the FARC was actually behind this latter event remains uncertain, though (El Tiempo, 1991). Although the times under the FARC were difficult:

''The guerrilla damaged the community a lot. It's unjust - my family, all of these humble farmers who would just try and live their lives and try and get by''
[Miranda, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]

- and people would leave the area in certain times of extreme violence or fear, the majority of the people continued to live within the area or returned after things had calmed down. It is said that two years after the last massacre, in 1993, paramilitary soldiers were first seen in Estados Unidos (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019). Little did the community know that the appearance of the paramilitaries would mark the start of the darkest period in the history of the corregimiento.

1.2 La Violencia in Estados Unidos

       1.2.1 Paramilitary arrival

For most Colombians, the infamous term 'la Violencia' [the violence] represents the period of social and political turmoil that shook the country between 1946 and 1958 and left an estimated 200,000 people dead (Biblioteca Nacional, 2019; Norman A. Bailey, 1967). In Estados Unidos, the term represents something else. Here, it is used to refer to the extremely violent period that the community experienced between 1996 and 2003:

''We lost. We lost our goods, we lost our cattle and we lost our people. We lost young people and we lost old people. We lost a lot'' [Jorge, Santa Cecilia - 14-05-2019].

As previously stated, the paramilitary chapter of Cesar started in the 1980s, when 'self-defense' groups were formed in several parts of the department. Their creation was an answer to the continuous and 'unbearable guerrilla presence', for which the local elites said to be needing protection (Verdad Abierta, 2010). They would start living a political and economic life of their own and rapidly expanded in size and strength in the years after that. A former paramilitary commander admitted that *'fear was generalized throughout the area'* when asked to look back upon his experiences during the time of the conflict in the mining region of Cesar (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014).

Indeed, the fear that the paramilitaries caused in their areas of influence is something that comes back in the stories of the community of Estados Unidos as well. Although the people in the corregimiento knew what it was like to live under the authority of an armed group, the new paramilitary order was different. The violence and threat towards the community that were seen during the years of the FARC seemed marginal compared to the years after 1996:

*''Sure, we suffered during the time of the guerrilla. But the **real** suffering started when the paramilitaries arrived''* [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

Irene's (Santa Cecilia) husband, who was kidnapped by the guerrilla (he returned after about two months) a few years before the paramilitary violence began. She said the following:

''First, I was most afraid for the FARC. But when the paramilitaries came around, I knew who to be afraid of. The FARC at least did some investigation, some research, they did not go around killing everyone just like that. With the paramilitaries that was different…'' [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 14-05-2019].

Upon their 'official' arrival in 1996, pamphlets demonstrating their extreme anti-leftist stance were distributed across the community. Shortly after the distribution of the pamphlets they demonstrated

that they were to be taken seriously, when they assassinated 31 people in the nearby municipality of San Diego (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014).

In March 1997, the AUC arrived at the vereda of Santa Fé, Estados Unidos. They told the peasants that *''Carlos Castaño was their commander and that they were going to stay here to carry out social cleansing''* (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014 : 38). The killing of a 13-year old boy in front of the community of Santa Fé during this same event was a bleak introduction for the years to come (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). It confused the community:

> *''He was just running over the field. They shot him right there, without any reason...''* [Tobías, Pitalito, pointing out the place the boy was killed in an interview - 10-04-2019].

1.2.2 Guerrilla targeting?

In the years to come, paramilitaries would arrive to the veredas at night in pick-up trucks, carrying lists of people who were supposedly part of the guerrilla. They would drag people from their homes and make them disappear (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). Everything to get rid of 'anything that even smelled leftist' was done. Attempting to cut off 'any lifeline' of the guerrilla, daily life became increasingly controlled by the paramilitaries:

> *''They'd check you - if you'd have a family of 3 people, you could only buy a certain amount of rice and beans, because if you'd buy more, you'd be accused and suspected of taking the rest to the guerrilla''* [Matías, Hatos la Guajira 10-04-2019].

Two years after their arrival, on the 16th of November 1998, the first paramilitary-led massacre took place in Estados Unidos. 8 people were killed and 3 disappeared, as they were accused of being part of the guerrilla, when in fact some of these people would only be involved in social movements. In the second massacre that the community saw, taking place on the 18th of January 2000, 7 people were publicly executed in the central square (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). Among the ones killed was a community member who had the only transport company in the region: *''the paramilitaries thought that this driver transported food and other goods for the guerrilla, they got rid of him''* [Matías, Hatos la Guajira 10-04-2019].

It became apparent that anyone could become a target of paramilitary violence:

''They would come into some innocent farmer's house at night and kill him or her and then say they'd belonged to the guerrilla when this wasn't true at all. Innocent farmers! How could they? This didn't have anything to do with being against the guerrilla'' [Briana, Hatos la Guajira - 14-05-2019].

The paramilitaries had no problems with making their violence visible as they would ''*throw the bodies of those who were killed in the village in front of the entrances of the veredas''* [Morena, Tucuycito la Loma, 17-04-2019]. The community found itself in a difficult position. Obeying the wishes of the armed groups was basically the only option to stay alive

''The paramilitaries threatened us: give us your cattle or there will be consequences (...) every morning new people would appear dead. They had killed our neighbor there, on the road. So of course we gave them our cattle, we were so afraid''
[Josefina, Hatos la Guajira - 10-4-2019]
(...)
''They would come to our vereda, a big group of paramilitaries, and just sit there. They would eat our food and destroy the stuff they wanted to destroy. As a woman, you were afraid to get raped. And you couldn't do anything. It was horrible''
[Alexia, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019]
(...)
''One time, a huge group of paramilitaries came to our plot and just stayed there for three days. We had no idea what they wanted, it was so scary. We knew that they could've killed us. But in the end, they just moved on - after eating all of our stuff''
[Yvonne, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019]

Nevertheless, as the guerrilla was still in the area as well, it became difficult to keep a neutral appearance:

''Imagine: one day the paramilitaries arrive here, ordering to give you food, etc. Next day the guerrilla comes and accuses you of collaborating with the paramilitaries because you gave them food! Declaring you a 'military objective' because you 'collaborated' with the paramilitaries!'' [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019]

However horrible the situation might have been, the community knew not to expect any attention or help from the state. Ever since the arrival of the paramilitaries, it was obvious that they collaborated with soldiers of the national army - they were 'strategic partners against the left' (Giraldo v. Drummond, 2012 : 56). The army had even set up a base and a paramilitary training camp close to the corregimiento (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014).

1.2.2 (des)confianza and fragmentation

In the years under paramilitary control, violence and survival unwillingly became part of the lives of the entire community, as it was very clear that being part of the guerrilla was not a necessity to be threatened or killed. Melissa describes what this meant in practice, looking back at the time she was about 4 years old:

''Sometimes at night there was violence going on in the territory. Our parents would wake us up and get us out of bed and we'd run up the mountains and hide there. Most of the times you would find your neighbors hiding there as well. We'd hide there until the light of the day, until the violence was over. It was horrible'' [Melissa, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019].

A big problem in the community became the phenomena of 'misinformation'. This girl tells about the first time she was relentlessly introduced to the phenomena:

''(...) at this day, I was playing in front of the house. They [the paramilitaries] *arrived and put bags in the mouths of my parents. Then they started to beat my father. Someone had 'misinformed' the paramilitaries: they had told them that both my uncle and my grandparents were part of the guerrilla. The paramilitaries wanted to know where they were. When my father wanted to gasp for air, the men thought that he wanted to speak, so they took the bag from his mouth. They, again, asked him where our family members were, but my father replied by saying that he wasn't going to answer. They beat him up even more and told him that they would make him disappear. I got petrified, horrified. Tears were flowing over my cheeks but no sound came out of my mouth. I was only 7 years old, but I knew: they would kill him and I would never see him again. I already knew, despite being very small, that this was the fate of the 'disappeared''* [Melissa, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019].

Tragically, the person who turned out to have misinformed the paramilitaries was this families' neighbor. It remains difficult to get information on the exact amount of people who collaborated with the paramilitaries and what their exact role was in the armed conflict. There are several stories similar to this one:

''My parents kept receiving threats, although they did not have anything to do with the guerrilla. We found out that one of the families on this vereda collaborated with the paramilitaries. They harmed more families. They would go tell the paramilitaries about 'guerrilla collaborators' in the community and then these supposed 'guerrilla collaborators' would be threatened. Why? Because it was financially viable to do so and he wanted to look good in the eyes of the paramilitaries''
[Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

Even fellow family members weren't safe sometimes:

''My cousin misinformed the guerrilla that I was a sapo [informant] *for the paramilitaries. One day the guerrilla came looking for me in my house. They told my wife that they were going to kill me (...) I escaped death that day because I wasn't home. (...) the guerrilla eventually understood that my cousin was lying - there were even stories about him wanting to pass over to the paramilitaries. Then the guerrilla killed him. Nevertheless, my sister and my other cousin blamed his death on me. They thought that I had told the guerrilla to kill him. That's very difficult, because our connection has been broken ever since. And I feel very sad about it, it's a pain that I take with me every day, and it's sad to think that I'll die with this feeling''* [Jorge, Santa Cecilia - 14-05-2019]

At least one family I spoke to admitted that one of its family members has actively perpetrated direct violence against the community whilst having been involved in an armed group [Sandra, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]. Nevertheless, amidst the fear, insecurity and misinformation there were some beautiful stories as well. Some communal ties would even become stronger, as people would be risking their lives for each other. *''In the conflict you find out who your real friends are'':*

''So my uncle first hid under our roof as he got threatened with death by the paramilitaries. When they came to look for him, they turned the whole house upside down. My uncle was able to get away in that moment and ran to the land of the neighbors. They took him in and hid him. It was horrible, but beautiful at the same time. Knowing that someone is risking his life for you is truly of unspeakable beauty'' [Nina, Tucuycito de la Loma - 07-05-2019].

How dangerous this was is shown by the systematic killing of anyone who would obstruct the work of the groups:

"The son of one of the families in the area disappeared. His father started a search and got killed one month after. He probably got too close to the truth of what happened, and this was too inconvenient for the paracos[7], so they just killed them'' [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

This obstructed any type of communal resistance. In 2000, the community decided to discontinue the meetings of the only still-standing communal organization in the area, the communal action group, as its leaders continuously received threats and they were afraid of prosecution. A woman describes how she felt towards the community at this point: *''I felt isolated. People only cared about saving themselves. When they came to displace us, everyone just took off and the community dispersed all over the country''* [Yvonne, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019].

After the second massacre in the area, in 2000, the majority of the population fled the area. Exact numbers stay out, but the Victim's Unit estimates that this was the fate of about 1050 people (200 families), leaving for different places all over the country ('Plan de Retorno o Reubicación', internal document, 2014). Only 7 families remained, transforming Estados Unidos into a 'ghost town' (Resolución No. 2016- 159615 del 22 de agosto de 2016). These, though, were also 'removed' in 2001. In a few extremely violent acts, perpetrated in the timespan of a few months, nearly everyone in the territory got expelled (La Guerra por Estados Unidos, 2007), leaving only 10 people in the corregimiento (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019).

''The front of Juan Andres Alvarez had done its work very well'' [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

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[7] Short for paramilitaries

1.3 Displacement

   Although people generally wanted to go back to their lands and faced difficult times outside of the corregimiento, there are stories of how the tough experience of displacement created beauty as well. One community member tells how her family tried to find a way through the constant fear and insecurity:

''(...) we moved around so much. We went to a few places close to Estados Unidos first, but then decided to go very far away, to another state. Unfortunately, this state also got heavily affected by violence and it became too dangerous to stay there as well, and we left again. We ended up in a mud house in Becerril, our uncle had offered it to us. I remember being afraid, as we never knew what was going on outside. It was worse at night, we were afraid to sleep by ourselves. This led us to always sleep together as a family. The house had two rooms, so we used one room as a living space and the other one to sleep in. Our parents would put us two together in a hammock and lie down next to us on the ground, using pieces of cardboard for some comfort. This way we slept together, united, always. Thank God. I am so grateful for this. We lived through horrible things and we were very scared, but at least we did not go through something even worse, such as having our parents killed. I learned how to appreciate the simple memory of always sleeping together with my family during the time we were displaced. This whole experience united us more as a family - the ties between my family members are very strong and there are no other people in whom I will ever trust more than in my family members. The love that you can get from your family is the most important thing there is in life''
[Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

   This experience shows how people managed to transform the hardship they went through into something positive. But sometimes even family-ties, despite being extremely important, suffer under the armed conflict.

   ''*Some people closed the doors for us. We had conflicts within our family because they did not help us. Not one of our family members said: 'hey, we've got a good economic situation, come here and let us help you!' They knew what we were going through and did not help us. Going through such an experience and not getting help from your family - especially when you see that some acquaintance of an acquaintance is putting more effort in helping you - is very hard''*
[Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

Conclusions

The atmosphere inside of the corregimiento changed a lot in the time between the 1960s until the violence - and the communal ties changed along with it. Confianza as well as communal trust were destroyed in the wake of the armed conflict.

A key asset for trust to arise is the conviction that the other has positive intentions. This shapes the willingness to rely on the other whilst the actions of the other are outside of one's control and a certain height of vulnerability is involved. Confianza relations sometimes form in the absence of state institutions and substitute services that are supposed to be provided by the government (Baud, 2018). If this is put in relation to trust, it means that the absence of state institutions impose a type of vulnerability that makes the formation of confianza relations not 'just' a choice, but increases the chances for comfortable living for everyone. This puts the decision to engage with others somewhere between choice and necessity. This could be an explanation for the confianza relations as described in Estados Unidos in the time before the violence: despite not having access to multiple services that should be provided by the state, there were forms of organization, social ties were healthy and people did not feel very insecure.

Whether this proves for the existence of 'communal trust' or confianza is difficult to say. It is clear that the trust relations were based upon reciprocity, physical closeness and that they were formed in the absence of functioning state institutions (Lomnitz, 2006). Although this shows with relative certainty that *at least* confianza relations existed, it is difficult to say in hindsight whether communal trust was present as well. There are some indications to say there were, as not only interpersonal ties were described as peaceful, but the entire situation in the territory was as well.

The sense of security started to change after the 1980s, when the FARC arrived to the territory. Although the people of Estados Unidos undeniably suffered during the times under the guerrilla - people left out of fear of recruitment or loss of cattle - most people did stay in the territory. This was because life remained relatively livable. Most people still had their crops and cattle and thus their source of income and leaving was not an absolute necessity. Even the woman whose husband was kidnapped and who describes being away from him as 'the worst time of her life' preferred living under the FARC than under paramilitary control. She said that she understood that the FARC at least did some investigation before engaging in violence. To gain power over a territory, the FARC often tried and seek at least some legitimacy - recognition and justification of the right to exercise power and influence (Hough et al., 2014) - for their rule (Arjona, 2016). The recognition for them to exercise power and influence probably got enhanced through 'soft power', such as helping farmers to gain access to land. Although they were often still seen as hypocrite, they would at least not engage in indiscriminate killing and 'do some research before they would target someone'. Fear - although it was present in daily life - did not take over complete control of life. Despite the violence perpetrated here, the community ties remained relatively

intact and there were still forms of organization processes, also ones that genuinely benefited the community, such as the community action committee. I argue that this allowed for at least some trust to remain existing within the area - both towards the FARC and the other community members, as community members did not have to be overly wary about their survival. This is probably also the reason that the time under the FARC was not the first thing to come to mind when speaking with my participants about their experiences during the armed conflict.

The time under the paramilitaries was notably harder than under the FARC. Their use of indiscriminate and extreme violence - and leaving the results highly visible through throwing bodies in front of the veredas - spread a lot of fear in the community. Human beings generally fear death and harm (Pyszczynski, 2004). The persistent confrontation with indiscriminate violence and death unwillingly drew the attention of all the individual community members to their own vulnerability and the possibility to be harmed or killed. This is in line with the work of (Vigh, 2011), who opts that in highly uncertain environments that lack predictability, people are constantly aware of the possible future damage that could be done to them. When survival is at stake, securing this - and avoiding harm - gets a first priority (Pyszczynski, 2004).

The losses that the community of Estados Unidos suffered during the time of la violencia were great. Especially in a community as small as Estados Unidos, counting an estimated 1500-1600 people before the mass displacement, each victim of the violence would be personally known to all members of the community. In a culture in which close, day-to-day contact and communal living is highly valued, suffered losses become very close and form painful absences (Sánchez-Torrez & Díaz, 2005). Sánchez (2011) describes how trust relations within communities can become stronger under the influence of violence and threat. It is a highly humane tendency to bond together in the face of violence (Demmers, 2017), and it can largely enhance the possibilities for survival (Knauft et al., 1991). Kaplan (2017) has distinguished several factors that are necessary in order for communities to resist control from armed actors, based upon fieldwork in Colombia. He describes the case of the community of Santa Rosa, where community members asked the recently-arrived paramilitaries whether 'they would be there regardless of the wishes of the community'. The paramilitaries stated that if the entire community wished for them to leave, they would leave. But that if only two or three people wanted them to go, they would stay (ICNC, 2013). One of the things necessary to organize such a collective resistance is a strong communal organization with strict internal rules (Kaplan, 2017). In the case of Estados Unidos, setting up such an organization was effectively impossible.

This had to do with several things. Most importantly, the paramilitaries systematically targeted the guerrilla and guerrilla collaborators. Being a social leader in Cesar (and Colombia) was increasingly brought in relation to being part of the guerrilla. This automatically meant that social leaders were

threatened to stop engaging in their work as social leaders or that they were killed. This naturally undermined the capacity for the community to engage in organizational processes, as it is social leaders who take up the role of uniting communities (Kaplan, 2017). The last effective way of communal organization in Estados Unidos was disbanded when leaders of the communal action committee where continuously threatened.

Secondly, it was not only actual collaborators who were targeted, but merely the *suspicion* to belong to this category would be enough to face death. Nevertheless, the suspicion to be collaborating with the guerrilla could arise very quickly: being a truck driver would be sufficient reason to be assassinated. As so, in an attempt to diminish any form of suspicion, people could not do anything else but comply to the wishes the groups. This was not because of learning rationally about the consequences of disobeying, but because extreme fear can lead people to psychologically 'freeze' – and make them incapable of reacting in any way but with compliance (Hollister, 1948). This is also seen in the testimonies of community members that obeyed any request the paramilitaries made when they would arrive to their lands and be demanding or taking food or goods. Sometimes paramilitaries would stay on the plots of the community members for several days whilst the community members were not able to do anything. They would 'hope they would go away and not be killed. The woman hoped they would not be raped'. The extreme fear caused by the realization that anyone could be a target of paramilitary violence, naturally, also impeded taking over the organizational processes that would have been necessary to resist the paramilitaries collectively. People are - obviously - less likely to engage in organizational communal processes when the fear of being targeted because of this takes an overhand (Rubio, 2014) and collective resistance is then perceived as more costly than 'simply' obeying (Arjona, 2017).

The realization that communally organizing against the paramilitaries lied in the extent of the comprehension that the community was defenseless against the paramilitaries. This confirmed the vulnerability of each of the individual community members and the community as a whole. Trusting in the community, then, on that one most pressing need which was survival, was not an option. This is what led the communal trust that had previously existed to diminish and increased the feelings of fear and insecurity tremendously.

Next to that there were other, extremely harmful processes going on within the community as well. Over the course of the violence, it became clear that there were people within the territory who collaborated with the paramilitaries armed groups and 'misinformed' them about their neighbors - or even family members - involvement in opposite armed groups. They would get money or status for this. Alfonso Rodriguez acknowledges that one of the most difficult things of the conflict in Colombia is that 'not everyone involved in the armed conflict is walking around in uniforms' [12-03-2019]. This makes it

extremely hard for civilians to know who to trust and caused even more reason to share as little as possible with fellow community members about their perceptions of the armed actors in the conflict.

All these processes combined led to the diminishing of trust in the community and between individuals. Survival mostly became an individual engagement. I argue that this is what gave rise to the 'feeling of isolation' that the woman in the corregimiento described.

This, though, is not the same as to say that there was no trust in the interpersonal relations between the community members nor that all interpersonal trust relations were destroyed. Most community members would not directly perpetrate harm towards their fellow community members. In some occasions, yet-existing trust relations were consolidated during the armed conflict. There are stories of fellow-community members risking their own lives in order for other community members to survive. Asking for help to hide because of being suspected of being part of a targeted group, increases vulnerability for both the helper and the one asking for help. These acts of inter-individual 'non-obedience' (Arjona, 2017) are so risky that a degree of trust needs to exist between community members in order to engage in them. The helper can be accused of being part of the targeted group itself, and the one asking for help faces the risk of being rejected. It is essential to know for both parties that these acts are kept an absolute secret. That is why these acts are most likely to consolidate the trust relations between specific people, as they take place in a relatively isolated space. It is when you come to understand ''who your real friends are''.

Especially in a context where continuous interaction is an important building block for trust relations, being displaced and dispersed over the entire country as a community was difficult. Nevertheless, there were also stories that show that under the influence of vulnerability and fear some ties can get much stronger, such as the one between the family who always stuck together to sleep. Although it may seem rather unsurprising that trust grows within families during times of conflict as yet-existing relationships and dependency gets more prominent, this surely is not always the case. The same community member described how her family would close doors for them. Similarly, the cousin who misinformed the guerrilla about the alleged paramilitary ties of his uncle left the trust within this family completely destroyed.

Chapter 2: Returning and constructing confianza

Pioneers, latecomers and those who do not return

This chapter will focus on the process of return of the community to the territory and how this intersected with trust building. The process started around 2003, a few years after the last massive displacement took place.

2.1 Desire to return

2.1.1: Displaced campesinos and economic hardship

Being outside the territory of Estados Unidos was something difficult for most community members. Despite having awful memories of the violence and conflict they had witnessed in the corregimiento, most people wanted to return. This had several reasons.

First of all, the mere fact of being away from the soil that they felt a connection with was difficult. Peasants emphasized that 'any land' wouldn't have done, it was the land they were steered away from, *their land*, that they wanted to return to. In events organized by PAX[8], reuniting displaced peasants, emphasis was put on the difference between 'earth' and 'territory': *''the earth becomes land, a territory, when you have created your life on it, connected to it; it's where you've cultivated your yuca and potatoes, it's where you've raised your children and constructed ties with other peasants close to you. It's the place where you feel that you belong''* [Estrella, PAX - 5-04-2019].

The desire to return to the land was only strengthened by the fact that a lot of people ended up in places where they wouldn't know other people or had difficulty adapting to the local customs. This brought up a type of nostalgia about the land and the *'campesino culture'* [peasant culture] that they used to be a part of:

''Life is so much better in the countryside. Days seem to be passing more slowly in the city''
[Maria, Tucuycito la Loma - 10-04-2019].
(...)
''People are more sane in the countryside. Your head is clearer, you're more flexible and open-minded; if you don't have work, you can do something else, but something good''
[Morena, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

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[8] More about PAX and its work in chapter three

But there was more than the emotional connection to the land and the yearning for the campesino culture that made the community want to return. People simply did not have much else but their lands. For a lot of them counted that the only thing they knew to do well was farmwork. With the lack of expertise to do any type of other work, living in a village or even the city was difficult. Alongside that, the possibilities to financially sustain their families became limited.

Even more, one family did try to mount a store in a nearby village, but as soon as the word got spread that they fled from the community of Estados Unidos and might have ties with the guerrilla, they got threatened and had to leave again [Nina, Tucuycito la Loma - 07-05-2019]. Other people ended up in marginal neighborhoods, which were known for hosting a large number of guerrillas. The mere fact of living in these neighborhoods made it difficult to find work. Another woman told me that she got displaced after paramilitaries assassinated her husband. She did not have any schooling and always worked as a housewife. She told me that she *''basically became a beggar''* [Alexia, Tucuycito la Loma - 16-04-2019] until someone took her into their house. Other people told me how after being relatively well-off as cattle owners, they were forced to sell empanadas on the streets to get by. The economic hardship was big.

2.2 Those who returned and confianza
2.2.1 Obstructions for return: appropriated lands and the paramilitaries

Although the desire and necessity to return was there, the unsafety of the territory obstructed this from happening. This is linked to the suspected reason of the mass displacement. Ever since 1997, Carbones del Caribe, a big mining company, has shown interest in the land of Estados Unidos. It started to approach its owners and inquired about its prices. As the violence was going on, some community members saw selling their land as a 'lifeline' out of the situation. Some peasants initially refused to leave, they were directly targeted by paramilitaries and told that they had to leave and sell their lands to Carbones del Caribe by the manager of the mine, Edgardo Percy Diazgranado. Some abandoned lands were not directly sold to Percy, but declared 'abandoned' by INCORA and sold to the mining companies indirectly. The plots were then covered with palm oil trees or used as a dump for the waste material of the mine (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). The plots would later go to Carbones de Sororia, after which they were sold to the multinational Prodeco (Navarette & Rodriguez, 2017).

Testimonies of former paramilitary commanders acknowledge the flow of huge sums of money between the mining companies and the armed groups (Giraldo et al., v. Drummond inc., testimony el Tigre, 2012 : 33). These hearings also reveal that the paramilitaries were getting paid to simply 'remain present' in the area in order to prevent the peasants from coming back to their lands (Giraldo et al., v.

Drummond inc., testimony el Samario, 2012 : 30). Nevertheless, some people did come to take a look at the territory in 2003. They decided to stay and to deal with the insecurity in their own way:

''There were about 10 families that came back at this time. The majority of the returnees was from the same vereda, Tucuycito la Loma. There were still armed groups in the region; both paramilitaries and guerrilleros. And yes, it was a big risk to come back, we were scared as well. To deal with the fear, we would all sleep in one house; all members of these 10 families. The kids would stay at home with people to take care of them, whilst the others worked the land during the day. They wouldn't separate - no, they would work together, because everyone felt more secure whilst working in a group than individually or when they were only with their family'' [Nina, Tucuycito la Loma - 07-05-2019].

This community member looks back at this time with fond memories. The ties between these families are now really 'family-like'; more than just friends. *''Perhaps the only positive thing that I can say about the conflict is that you find out who your real friends are. The bond we have between these families now is truly powerful, it's more than just a friendship''* [Nina, Tucuycito la Loma - 07-05-2019].

2.2.2 A lonely return

The families remember how more people slowly started coming back to the territory after that. Merely seeing and hearing that there were people living in the area again, served as a reinforcer to return for the community that was still outside of the area. They did so independently: ''*we returned to the community ourselves. We did not have any help from our government, we made a plan ourselves. In some parts of the country the government would help you a bit, at least provide some kind of base for return; help to reconstruct a house, get you some animals to get going again. For us, the government did nothing - absolutely nothing*'' [Morena, Tucuycito la Loma - 14-04-2019]. One community leader tried to plan the return for a large part of the displaced community in 2003. He spoke to the paramilitary leader Tolemaida, and explained that the people wanted to come back to their lands. The paramilitaries agreed, upon the condition that they were to have control of the return. A list of the people they permitted to return, based on their 'personal preferences' was created [Matías, Hatos la Guajira - 07-04-2019]. The social leader organized the transport to Estados Unidos from Valledupar for several families.

The fact that more people returned did not mean that the social ties were reconstructed simultaneously, though. This made returning to the territory came to come mixed feelings. The families were happy to be able to return to their territories, but being confronted with the aftermath of the conflict was difficult. Encountering the community in the state that it was served as a bitter reminder of what had happened to the corregimiento in the previous years:

‘‘The community was so disunited. It was very difficult to reconstruct the social ties’’ [Lucía,

Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019]

(...)

‘‘Coming back was hard. Some people who fled never came back - their absence reflected the

state of the social ties we encountered here when we returned’’

[Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

2.3 Facing insecurity

2.3.1 Insecurity after return

Next to that, most of the houses were destroyed, and anything of value from the houses robbed. It was *‘‘difficult to start from zero, we were now very, very poor’’* [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019] - but people had no choice but to work on their lands if they wanted to get by, have something to eat and get some type of income. The same social leader who had put himself in charge of the return plan, sought assistance from a municipal assistance program for agricultural development (Unidades Municipales de Asistencia Técnica Agropecuaria - ‘UMATA’), which helped the community to set up a plan allowing the cultivation of palm trees.

Nevertheless, a range of problems in the area made the situation of the community problematic. There was no water and livestock was continuously being stolen. Matías, a social leader, decided to speak to the leaders of UMATA about the problems:

‘‘We were supposed to grow palm trees. How are we going to grow palm trees if we don't have

any water? We're supposed to return - but how can people return to this area if their livestock is being

stolen? I spoke to the leadership, told them that we were unsatisfied. But the leadership was apparently

very close to the paramilitaries, and my name and the fact that I was ‘complaining’ ended up with them’’

[Matías, Hatos la Guajira -10-04-2019].

They were not happy with this and declared him a military objective. In January 2005, he got shot at 15 times in his home on the vereda of Hatos la Guajira. 4 bullets actually hit him. When he was transported to the hospital, armed men awaited him outside of the hospital to shoot him again. He was guarded for 12 days at the hospital after which he got transported to Bogotá with help from the Red Cross. He lived there for 6 years, waiting for the situation to calm down [Matías, Hatos la Guajira -10-04-2019]. This same year, another community member who went by the name of Cesar Guillen disappeared from the vereda of Hatos la Guajira (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019).

A bit of hope came after the peace agreement that was set up between the Colombian government and the AUC in 2005. The paramilitary groups in Cesar were disarmed and disbanded in 2006 and more people started to come back (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). Nevertheless, as also became clear in the interviews with the people in the territory, this demobilization process was more a political show than a well-executed and thorough operation. Violence and Human Rights violations continued, although on another scale and in a different manner (see chapter 3). Still not everyone returned to the territory permanently right away. Some would come during the daytime to work on their lands and return to the village during the day:

''*My mother was afraid too afraid to sleep here, because of the memories. So we'd come during the daytime and leave at night*'' [Maria, Tucuycito la Loma - 10-04-2019].

Nevertheless, the communal ties grew and the amount of people settling permanently increased: where there were only 10 people left in the entire territory right after the displacement, an estimated 1786 people had permanently returned by the year of 2016 (Resolución no. 2016- 159615, 2016).

2.3.2 A continuous insecurity

Still, today, a lot of community members said that the situation in the territory is still quite insecure and difficult. Poverty is often named as a factor of insecurity - something that is visible when visiting the fincas of the farmers. It is estimated that only 36% of the community has access to drinking water, and 3% has basic sanitation facilities (Plan Estratégico de Desarrollo, 2019). Also delinquency is often named as a security issue for the community:

''*Whether I feel secure-secure? No, I can't say that. Nothing here is really secure; last week at 5:00 in the afternoon my phone was stolen right in front of my house. That stuff happens a lot in here*''
[Sandra, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019].
(...)
''*Robberies rise right before Christmas because you've got a lot of people here that don't want to work for their money. They rather steal from poor peasants than getting a job*''
[Maria, Tucuycito la Loma - 10-04-2019].
(...)
''*We need construction material for houses, but there is still no drinking water either. We have to go to the river in order to get water*''
[Jorge, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].

2.4 Confianza and trust today and the difference in veredas

2.4.1 Confianza on the veredas

Most people, from all over the corregimiento, would say that the *confianza* within the corregimiento was good. There were a lot of times in which multiple families were uniting on the same piece of land, simply chatting and interacting with each other. Integrity and reciprocity are indeed valued very much, as also became clear when I asked how one can recognize someone worthy of confianza:

''You have to be friendly, you simply have to know how to talk to other people. Imagine! If I wouldn't talk to you or be rude to you, would you lend me a helping hand? Of course not! Such a person never achieves anything, nena. If I treat you well and grant you a favor, it'll return to me as well''
[Melissa, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019].

This was reflected in the way we were treated: we would arrive at the veredas without any notice, but this was never a problem. The people on the veredas were always open to help me. We made clear before conducting the interviews that it was an academic investigation, and that I wasn't there to *directly* help the community. Still, everyone agreed on doing the interview (except for one community member, for whom bringing up memories of the armed conflict was simply too painful). Now, in 2019, out of the 17 people I spoke to who were originally from the veredas of Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé, Pitalito and Tucuycito de la Loma and had actually returned to the corregimiento, *every single one* of them answered positively to the question of whether they felt as if there was confianza:

''Yes, there's confianza. People living in different plots started to come together again!''
[Ariana, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019]
(...)
''We simply know each other much better nowadays. We interact, we know what's going on in each other's lives and we check upon each other frequently''
[Matías, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]
(...)
''Our father got sick last year, the doctors told us that we should prepare for the fact that he wouldn't make it. The neighbors helped us without wanting anything back. They just came over to help us. This actually really did help us''
[Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019]
(...)

''The people here are good! They're my compadres de Sacramento [linked to me through god parenthood relations]''
[Ernesto, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019]

Strikingly, when I asked the community members that were part of strong confianza-relations what they thought of their security in the area, their answers were as follows:

''There's a possibility that the armed conflict may return, yes. There are rumors about armed groups and the area is insecure. But whether I'm afraid? No, I'm not''
[Morena, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019]
(...)
''People feel more secure in the area now''
[Matías, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]
(...)
''Yes, I live in an insecure place. It is very vulnerable, because it's on an open field, with a road lying next to it. Sometimes you see people pass and you think back to the armed conflict - it could be that these people are coming again. Next to that, I'm a social leader, and it's not a secret to anyone that there are still armed groups in the area. They can come to take revenge, no doubt about it. And I understand the insecurity, I'm sometimes startled, but I'm not afraid. I don't feel afraid to say what I want and need to say''
[Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

2.4.2 Those who did not return and confianza

Interestingly, there seemed to be a big difference between the people who were originally from Estados Unidos but continued living in the village of Becerril. I interviewed two families that were originally from Hatos la Guajira but lived in the village. They would much less positive about communal life: *''Help? If I had to wait for help I could wait until I'm dead. Here, no one helps anyone.''* [Sara, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]. These families do sometimes come back to the veredas during the daytime, to work, but always return to the village at night. They did not have much interaction with other people and their social circles are limited. Fear seemed to have a big influence on their actions and lives. This was the case in relation to other people:

"Sure, I talk to people. When I see them on the streets, I say hi, I chat and everything. But talk-talk to people? Intimately, about the conflict and what happened to us? Just to the people I know well. It's just… You never know who you're talking to, and after the things we've been through.. I know it's bad, but you always think the worst of people. You could be talking to a former paramilitary, you know, it could be harmful..."

[Josefina, Hatos la Guajira, 10-04-2019].

But also relating to other issues: *"I don't know how to move on, how to tackle the economic insecurity - these are things that are always with me, I think about pretty much constantly"* [Josefina, Hatos la Guajira, 10-04-2019]. Both these families, separately from each other, told me that '*they only trust in their families, not in anyone else'*. They did not declare their displacement out of fear for targeting. Talking about the fear of a new armed conflict, they stated: *"Yes, I'm afraid that they'll start again. When I'm alone, at night, for example, I think about the armed conflict. The armed conflict takes up a big space in my mind"* [Josefina, Hatos la Guajira, 10-04-2019].

2.4.3 Confianza in Santa Cecilia and Buenavista

After having spoken to people from the veredas of Hatos la Guajira, Pitalito, Santa Fé and Tucuycito de la Loma, I wanted to know how the communities of the veredas of Buenavista and Santa Cecilia felt about living in the territory. The majority of the community of Santa Cecilia spends a lot of time in their houses, but still did not come back entirely: *"we come here every day, but we have never slept here after my husband got kidnapped. We drive here in the morning, have breakfast, stay here until the end of the afternoon, and then we drive back. We're still too afraid to sleep here"* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].

Nevertheless, the people from Santa Cecilia do state that the social ties are good, describing the community as 'being in good harmony'. This was the same in Buenavista. There is some kind of organization in the vereda of Santa Cecilia: *"we gather together in the local school if there are things that need to be discussed collectively"* [Manual, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]. It was not difficult for the people of this vereda to see each other again after the displacement, the amount of community organization was similar before the violence as afterwards - there is *confianza* in this territory:

''Maybe there's more now, actually, than before the violence. We communicate more, we're more aware of the importance of communication. We simply have to take care of each other: you don't want something to happen to yourself, and you don't want anything to happen to your neighbor either. We have to take care of each other, of ourselves, because we, as a community, are also one person'' [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].

The person I spoke to in Buenavista told me that she feels connected to the community and that the social ties here are quite good as well. Nevertheless, she still has not returned completely either, mostly out of fear as well. The first people in the area of Buenavista came back around two years ago, and the majority still has not returned to the territory [Maria José, Buenavista - 14-05-2019].

2.5 Security provision
2.5.1 State absence
The community of Santa Cecilia has witnessed a few occasions in which robbers went around the vereda or other people did harm to the community: ''*not too long ago a woman was raped here at night - that causes fear*'' [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]. When calling the police, *''there is always an excuse: they didn't have the vehicles, didn't have the time, etc. So we take it into our own hands''* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]. The painful absence of the state to take care of the community led the farmers of Santa Cecilia to take care of themselves:

''*I hope that you touch this topic in your investigation. We know that there are governments, maybe your government in the Netherlands, that actually take care of you. But here - the Colombian government, 'our government', doesn't do anything for us. A 'public order'? Not here. We really need more help we're doing about everything ourselves now*''
[Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]
(...)
''*When we hear dogs bark somewhere, for example at the neighbors' house, we go over and have a look. If there are people that aren't supposed to be there, we gather more people from the community: 'hey, there's something going on at fulano's house' and simply chase the robbers away the collectively; by foot, by motor, by car - whatever's available to us*''
[Manual, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].

2.5.2 Community processes

The community notices that they are more aware about what is happening in the territory now: *''in the past, when a motor would pass on the street, you wouldn't even pay attention. Now you do, you're always watching who you're seeing and what everyone's doing''* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]. This type of vigilance was also clear when arriving at the vereda of Santa Cecilia. The social leader I drove around the area with helped me setting up interviews in Santa Cecilia through his social network, although it was the first time he set foot onto this vereda as well and he did not know the people on the vereda either.

We got to a plot with a house that had some people sitting around and we asked them about the interviewee we were supposed to meet. One guy was about to take off on his motorcycle but waited for our conversation to finish. Another man told us that we could probably find our interviewee one plot further down the road. We thanked them, turned around and drove off. The man on the motorcycle drove away as well. He obviously managed to drive much faster than we did on the unpaved road and we lost him out of sight.

When we turned up at the house we were directed to, the interviewee had already been informed about our visit. The guy on the motorcycle had advised her that *''there were some people asking for her''* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]. It did not stop with just the information provision. There were some people around the house who *''all stopped, stayed around the house and looked at who we were''* [Irene, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].

Nowadays, information provision does not only take shape in face-to-face contact, social media such as WhatsApp provide a useful medium for the establishment good information networks as well. Several people, from different veredas, stated that:

''Whenever there are people in the territory that we don't know, we just ask in the group who they are. Then, if they're someone's guests or family, we simply know, and we can be at ease. Nevertheless, if no one knows who they are, we know something might be up''
[Jorge, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019].
(...)
''If I see someone that I don't know passing through the veredas, I immediately call my neighbours to tell them or ask them what's going on. The strong social ties allow for us to look out for each other, we're out of our isolation and that's good'' [Morena, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

2.6 Trust and memories of the conflict

    2.6.1 The scars of the conflict and its effects on general trust

The armed conflict brought a lot of damage to the community. Not only physically - it left some deep emotional scars as well. Although the confianza relations were good in the area, most people would state that they had a difficult time trusting new people. Even more, that they would not let people too close on an emotional level:

''*After all we've been through, the things we've seen other people do - people who did so much damage to us - it's hard to trust. I don't have a lot of friends and I don't talk to people easily.. It's just, you never really know someone.. People can damage you; perhaps not by taking something from you materially, but by hurting you somewhere inside, emotionally. So you protect yourself, your life, by putting up a shell. You don't open up to other people. Because if they won't betray you in one way, they'll do it in another...*''

[Lucía, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

(...)

''*I do not want to be too close to many people, I don't like having too many friends. I'm a bit 'cured' of being close to others*''

[Naomi, Pitalito - 17-04-2019]

Whenever I would be conducting my interviews, I would ask what talking about the armed conflict did with my interviewees. Most people told me that they would have a bad feeling reviving the memories. Some people would feel their throats constricting, others would have a bad feeling in their stomach and multiple people started crying. There is at least one girl in the vereda who has had severe PTSD - although she says she is better now, in her worst moments she would attack her family members with knives, scissors or her fingernails [Luna, Santa Fé - 16-04-2019].

There are others who cannot talk about what happened. When asking one of the community members of Santa Fé whether he was open to speak with me about the conflict, he said that it was too difficult for him. Similarly, there is the story of a community member who was about 14 years old when his mother was killed during the violence. During a recent meeting he wanted to speak about the necessities of the corregimiento. When this led to memories of his mother to come up, however, he was not able to reproduce any words and could only cry [Tobías, Pitalito - 10-04-2019].

2.6.2 The scars of the conflict on trust in the territory

The burden that the conflict brought has some direct influence on the trust relations with fellow-community members. The area holds several people who have previously done harm to the community. These people are generally treated differently than the rest of the community and not as well integrated in confianza networks.

People told me that they are more reserved when dealing with them:

''*I say hello, but that's it. I will never trust them again''*

[Yvonne, Hatos la Guajira - 17-04-2019]

(...)

''Trust-trust? No, that's something I don't have in them. But we act normally and say hi, that's alright''

[Valentina, Santa Cecilia - 17-04-2019]

(...)

''One never really changes his heart''

[Sandra, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019]

Especially when things have gotten more personal, it is difficult to reconstruct trust:

''The people who misinformed the paramilitaries about my mother are still here. One has served in jail, but he came back. But I'll never trust these people again''

[Tobías, Santa Fé -10-04-2019].

Conclusions

During the time of the research, in 2019, about 18 years after the collective displacement, the majority of the veredas Santa Fé, Hatos la Guajira, Pitalito and Tucuycito la Loma has returned to their territory. Most of them answered positively to the question of whether there was *confianza* in the territory and it seems as if there is at least some level of trust. Confianza and trust were not constructed overnight, though, and the community faced a lot of challenges in the time after their return.

The reconstruction of trust that had to be achieved after the return to the territory meant, in the first place, reconstructing the *confianza* relations of intimacy and integrity; attempting to convert a collection of individuals that are struggling to get by into a strong community that is collectively trying to get by. Albrecht (2006) states that community trust building can only be achieved if security needs are accommodated. He argues that the state should actively attempt to provide physical security. Although agreeing with the author that the state *should* make sure that its citizens are protected and safe, the case of Estados Unidos proves that trust building and security building can function in the extent of one another. People who found themselves outside of the territory had a difficult time and wanted to return. Not having sufficient (economic) means to get by is a big incentive for internally displaced people to try and go back to their place of origins (Arias, Ibañez and Querubin, 2014). Yet the fact that there were still armed actors in the territory caused fear and prevented people from taking the first step. Here, the painful absence of the state in the provision of goods and services forced community members to take care of their own (2006). The 'spontaneous communal strategy' (Ajdukovic, 2006) of always staying together - whilst working and sleeping - helped these families to tackle fear and caused the ties between the first 10 families who returned to get very - 'family-like' - strong.

The fact that there were people in the area provided an incentive for the people outside of the area to come back. Although it was difficult - many people stated that they encountered broken social ties and were too afraid to sleep in the area at first - confianza relations grew and provided stability for the people on the veredas. Still today, the absence of the state can be felt in the provision of security and people continue to find their own community-based solutions for security threats. The good information networks that exist on the veredas are a good example of this (Sánchez, 2011). These networks exist both face-to-face, but also through social media such as WhatsApp. Good information networks do not only need only good cohesion to be functional, trusting the members in the network is of crucial importance when spreading information (Kaplan, 2016). The trust that may or may not arise is largely dependent upon 'appropriate' - friendly and helping - conduct and conformity is expected. This shows the strength and importance of the confianza relations on the veredas, which secure the route to social security (Tilly, 2005).

There are still some people who (partly) remain outside of the territory. Several community members from Hatos la Guajira still live in Becerril and do not come back to the territory often. Out of the (small set of) people I interviewed who did not go back to the territory, everyone seemed to experience a lot of fear in their daily lives. They were afraid for the outbreak of a new conflict and for the possible harm that others could do to them. They would tell me that the negative ideas they had about other people *''you can't help it but you are always thinking negatively about others''* would come up more when they interacted with others. They told me that the only people they really trusted were their own family members. This kept their social circles small and limited.

This was an important finding. People living in insecure environments are unexceptionally aware of the security threat they face (Vigh, 2011), which is of no difference in Estados Unidos. People stated 'noticing all the motorcycles that passed' and that they would analyze people well before they trusted them. Generalized mistrust is quite apparent, here, and trusting people who have done harm to the community is stated to be very difficult or impossible. Nevertheless, there was a big difference in the sense of security to be seen between the people who were well-integrated in good confianza networks and those who were not. The latter expressed that they did not feel overly fearful and some even stated that they felt secure. This shows the convergence between post-conflict healing and social processes (Wessells, 2007). Although it might be difficult to re-establish social ties after armed conflict - the general trust you have in other people might severely be diminished - it is important to gradually but surely start engaging with other again. This can initially be through simple things, such as finding some common ground to speak about, but serves as an important tool to re-humanize the dehumanized image there might be of others [Alfonso Rodriguez - 12-03-2019]. While this may not be a substitute for trauma recovery after armed conflict, it does make the strong critique on individualized approaches understandable. Solely focusing on healing the psyche of the individual, something that is mostly advocated in western literature, is insufficient if not impossible without stimulating social processes as well (Wessells, 2007).

When speaking to the people of Santa Cecilia and Buena Vista, it became clear that the 'confianza' here is good as well. The interpersonal social ties are good and community gatherings happen when things need to be discussed. Nevertheless, the majority of people has not completely returned and continues to sleep outside of the territory, mainly because of fear. This is a contrast to the people of Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé, who all have returned and feel secure. Even social leader Tobías, who understood that he lives in a highly vulnerable place, still indicated a sense of security. This cannot be attributed to the physical closeness of his community members; he lives on the outskirts of the community and the next house is at least a 10 minute drive by car. This might be an indication for the existence of community trust in the latter-named veredas. Although literature on this phenomena is still relatively new, it provides the most appropriate way to term the trust that exists in these communities. It is

the type of trust that arises within an 'imagined community' in a relatively demarcated space (Wollebæk et al., 2012). Confianza relations are said to be able to develop into 'societal trust' and create *'a more or less autonomous moral universe''* (Baud, 2018 : 7). This indeed seems to converge with 'community trust' (Wollebæk et al., 2012). The difference with Santa Cecilia and Buenavista, then, might be that physical security is more dependent upon direct interpersonal contact than on feeling part of a community. The community trust that may have emerged in the communities of Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé might be derived from the strong organizational processes that will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Peace in Estados Unidos: 'el futuro es de todos'

The role of community trust and organization in the path to a stable peace in Cesar

In the previous chapter I have established that the confianza relations are good in several veredas of Estados Unidos, especially in those of Tucuycito la Loma, Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé and Pitalito. People feel secure here and have trust in one another. The type of community trust portrayed in the previous chapter did not arise entirely spontaneously. Conscious effort was put in uniting the community as well. This chapter looks at the conscious efforts of community organization.

3.1 Organization

3.1.1 Peasant's Assembly

Under special victims laws established in 1997 and 2011, victims of forced displacement are allowed help from the Colombian government in the process of return. Nevertheless, people have to make a declaration stating that they are displaced in order to be able to get this help (Defensoría del Pueblo, 2019). This was something that a lot of the victims in Estados Unidos did not dare doing. It was obvious that the new victim's law could affect the interests of people who did not want to lose the property they had accumulated (Documentación del Despojo, 2012). They were afraid that the right-wing armed groups would seek revenge if they would declare what happened to them.

This was not a far-fetched scenario. After the renewed land restitution law 1448 was passed in 2011, displaced farmers all over Cesar started to declare what had happened to them in an attempt to enroll in the land restitution process. Subsequently, some of the farmers were threatened or attacked. In Estados Unidos, this was especially the case for farmers on the vereda of Santa Fé. Attacks coming from the 'Armed Group against the Restitution of Lands in Cesar' (*Grupo Armado Antirestitución de Tierras del Cesar*) were first denounced in 2012 (Documentación del Despojo, 2012). This led to the birth of the 'Peasant's Assembly for the restitution of land and wellbeing' (*Asamblea Campesina por la Restitución de Tierras y el Buen Vivir*) in Cesar in 2013. Social leaders in Cesar understood that they would stand stronger if they would come together in a collective of victim's organizations to approach restitution processes collectively. Next to the land restitution process, the Assembly fights for peasant's rights and strives for peace in the region. The first organizations that would constitute the Assembly came from the municipalities of Aguachica, La Gloria, Pelaya and Tamalameque (Verdad Abierta, 2015). Nowadays, the Assembly is representing over 2500 farmers divided over 15 communities in the mining region of Cesar. PAX has been of continuous juridical, psychosocial and organizational support for the Peasants Assembly since 2014 (Voces Fuertes y Resistentes, Voces Campesinas, 2019).

3.1.2 NGO assistance: PAX

As sketched out in the previous chapter, when the community returned to their land, they encountered a chaos. Houses were plundered, damaged or destroyed and had to be rebuilt or strengthened. Some plots were used as a dump for waste material of the nearby coal mines, other plots were used to plant palm oil trees. The nearby mining company Prodeco was seen as one of the parties that was responsible for damage to the properties. A few community members tried to approach them in order to try and get financial compensation in order to rebuild their houses. Also because they understood that the exploitation of the La Jagua mine, about 7 kilometer away from the village, had caused damage to their properties over the course of the past 25 years. Although some meetings with the mining companies came off the ground, it did not bring the community much further. Mining companies would not accept responsibility and did not acknowledge the damage that they had done. Matías sought ties with the municipal prosecutor's office and the MAPP-OEA, who advised him to unite the community in order to stand stronger [15-05-2019].

The Dutch NGO PAX works through three different strategies: it investigates Human Rights abuses and conflict in zones and reports these; it sets up campaigns in the Netherlands to make conflicts and Human Rights abuses known to the Dutch and international public and it directly assists communities 'on the ground' in conflict areas who are willing and wanting to build a sustainable peace. PAX started its first field investigation in Cesar in 2012, after the victims of the armed conflict requested to lay bare the truth about what the mining companies had done (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). PAX has the (worldwide) endeavor to let (mining) enterprises take their responsibilities in protecting and respecting human rights and guaranteeing the security of local communities in the region whilst conducting their work - as unanimously adopted in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011 (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014 : 11). It started its direct assistance to the community of Estados Unidos in 2014. Practically, this means that the representatives of the organization frequently meet with the victims of the armed conflict either in Valledupar or in the corregimiento of Estados Unidos. For the community of Estados Unidos, it meant that they helped facilitating organizational aspects, such as making an inventory of needs for the zone in order to create a plan for development. PAX also assisted the community in the making of claims for land restitution and helped with addressing the psychosocial needs of the community. By making the community understand what their rights are, the people of the 'AVHALOS'-veredas are: *''convinced that they are more resilient. People would not just leave again in the face of a new conflict, but go and make our voice heard - first at the municipality, and if they send us away, we'll go to Valledupar or even further!''* [Morena, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

3.1.3 AVHALOS

On the 30th of September 2017, the community held a commemoration of the massacres perpetrated in the area during the paramilitary violence. About 800 people assisted the events, including which representatives of PAX, representatives of the mining companies and the victims of the armed conflict. In this event, the social leader Matías stressed the fact that the community had to unite if they wanted to advance in their territory. He motivated the people of the corregimiento of Estados Unidos to unite in the form of an association especially for the victims of the armed conflict. Shortly after, 22 families were united in AVHALOS - '*Asociación de Campesinos Victimas del Conflicto, de las veredas Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma y Santa Fé*' - (Farmers Association for Victims of the Conflict of the Veredas Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé). Matías stated that: *''the community started realizing that we had to come together in order to stand stronger. Alone, you're nothing. Really, sometimes we form the biggest obstacles to ourselves''* [10-04-2019].

AVHALOS started with trying to constructing some economic security for the community, as this was urgent. The community got help from an Italian religious association, facilitating the launch of some productive projects. The community got the means to grow and sell corn and yuca. Instead of dividing the money that came in from selling the crops, the association kept a part of the money that came in and bought a tractor for communal use. This way they were able to work the land more efficiently. The income of the community grew a lot through this project. Nevertheless, not only the economic stability grew because of AVHALOS:

''We <u>literally </u>came together more often because of the association. We would work together on the land and have meetings discussing the future of the projects. This helped strengthening the communal ties''

[Alexia, Tucuycito la Loma - 17-04-2019].

In 2017, AVHALOS got integrated in the Peasant's Assembly.

3.1.4 Youth Movement of Peasants Assembly

Another strength for the community, especially for the younger generation, is the youth movement of the Peasant's Assembly. This movement gathers youth from several municipalities over Cesar and has quite a strong representation in the corregimiento of Estados Unidos. It is especially aimed at bringing the youth back in contact with the *'campesino culture'* and has the strengthening of the social fabric as one of its aims:

''after the conflict, people don't really want to be associated with being a farmer anymore. They see it as a dirty word. But it's beautiful. We have to show the new generation of youth on these vereda's that being a farmer is something to be proud of. The practices in the past - thinking that we're all one; that 'mi vecino tiene porque yo tengo' [my neighbor has because I have] - those are beautiful, we need to get that back''

[Valentin, Hatos la Guajira - 29-03-2019]

Similarly, it motivates youth to participate in the Peasant's Assembly:

''These will be the next generation farmers. If we want to keep the Peasant's Assembly as strong as it is, the youth needs to get engaged''

[Estrella - 31-03-2019].

3.2 Demanding truth

3.2.1. Request for dialogue

As touched upon before, after the large-scale displacement of the community, the Colombian Institute for Agrarian Reform INCORA declared parts of the land 'abandoned' and sold it at auction. There were other parts of the corregimiento that were bought up directly by the Carbones del Caribe mining company - after which it was resold to Carbones de la Jagua, which was part of the Prodeco Group since 2005 (Moor & vd Sandt, 2014). During the commemoration of the massacres, requests to renew the talks with the mining companies were made by the community of Estados Unidos and other victim groups affiliated to the Asamblea Campesina of central Cesar. Dialogues are envisioned to find the truth around their role in the displacement and violence in the zone:

''*It is very important to know what has happened after suffering so much losses and violence. We still don't know why we were put off our lands. The community has the right to know what has happened*''

[Matías, 15-04-2019].

PAX affirmed its support to the community in the preparations for a dialogue and in case a dialogue would come off the ground. Some steps were taken after that. The first conference to address these issues was set up in 2017 in the Netherlands, and government representatives, mining companies, port authorities, civil society organizations, energy utilities and civil society organizations came together. The mining companies were told explicitly that engaging in these dialogues would not have any juridical consequences for the companies [Matías, 15-04-2019]. Energy giant Vatenvall, one of the clients of mining companies of the region, presented its report 'A Human Right Risk Assessment in Colombia' one

day after the conference. The company stated that it is willing to cancel coal imports if mining companies do not take concrete actions in the reconciliation dialogues. Also, they urged the companies to take up a zero-tolerance policy regarding threats, intimidation and attacks of Human Rights defenders (PAX, 2017). Mining minister Zapata Acre stated '*that it is time to move from statements to actions when it comes to remedy of victims of past human rights violations.*' (PAX, 2017).

3.2.2 Threats as a response, being a social leader in Cesar

Three social leaders from the Peasants Assembly engaged in exploratory dialogues and expressed what they had seen happening in the region in relation to Human Rights abuses during the violence. They were threatened shortly after. They were told to stop their activities and were followed by unknown people for several days (Arellano, 2017). One of these social leaders was Matías, the same social leader who had been shot in 2005 and fled to Bogota after that. This shows the harsh reality of being a social leader in Colombia and, even more so, in Cesar. In an interview with an expert on reintegration of former combatants in Cesar, he told me that the thing that obstructs any progress in the region the very most is

''That the 'paramilitary project' did its work very well in Cesar. It did its work very well in delegitimizing everything that has to do with left-wing thinking, critical thinking and progressive thinking. It helped in obstructing all types of alternative movements''
[Orlando Carreño, 03-05-2019].

Even if these types of movements exist, there are forces that want to disband them. Cases of infiltration in Human Rights and peace mechanisms by third parties all over the country are said to have happened (OBS, 2018). Within the communities that PAX works with, social leaders have been approached by third parties as well. They offered them money in order to stop with the communal processes - such as reclaiming their land - they were involved in. This was successful in at least 3 occasions [Meeting, 29-03]. This leads the social leaders to be very careful with their information distribution. The first time I attended a meeting of the Peasant's Assembly, the people in the room were fearful as it was unclear who I was - and what I was doing there.

10 social leaders have been killed in Cesar since the signage of the peace accord (Indepaz, 2019). The community of Estados Unidos has seen several of its social leaders seen being killed during the violence and in the aftermath of other peace processes, such as those with M-19 and the EPL. Previously noted, the communal action committee of Estados Unidos was disbanded in 2000 after receiving threats. A similar thing happened in the years before that, when the communal action committee arranged the allowance of an aqueduct in the era after the peace accord with M-19. Nevertheless,

''the paramilitaries killed the presidents of the communal action board - leading to the fact that no one wanted to be president of an organization anymore''
[Matías, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019].

This is why the leadership of AVHALOS has consciously been set-up very linearly. There are several leaders and the responsibilities that come along with each of the projects are divided amongst different people. A youth leader in the zone tells that this construction makes him feel good, as he feels that trust is being put in him and that this motivates him to do his best for the community [Leonardo, Santa Fé - 16-04-2019]. Also:

''This way, if the leadership is strong and linear, the process won't stop when one person can't continue or is threatened. Because this is, of course, what they want: letting victim's organizations collapse because people are too scared to continue if their president is being threatened. But we're with 5 leaders in the association now and we can continue if one of us is forced to stop''
[Matías, Hatos la Guajira - 10-04-2019].

How close this scenario can get became clear after one of the exploratory dialogues, also referred to as a roundtable, that was held in May 2019. After the roundtable – that was closed for public – in which syndicalists, two social leaders from Estados Unidos, representatives of PAX, Dutch parliamentarians and representatives of mining companies were present, Matías was threatened again. This was, arguably, because he urged the international community to keep watching the process in Estados Unidos. The pamphlet, which was posted online by the ultra-right-wing group Aguilas Negras, stated that the social leader had 48 hours to leave the country or else he would be killed. He was accused of being a collaborator of left-wing guerrilla groups (PAX, 2019). Below, a translation of the pamphlet (PAX, 2019):

''This is the moment to clean the country, death to syndicalists, guerrilleros, sons of bitches who do not want to keep quiet. This is directed to anyone who supports a new socialism and wants to impose it on our territory. They travel throughout the country looking for help, and those who will protect them for what is coming are sons of bitches *sapos* [collaborators of the guerrilla] who deserve to die, we are passing the bill, especially those who believe they are leaders but are nothing more than guerrilleros disguised as a workers, this is addressed to xxx and the collaborators under his command (...) who meet the guerrilla disguised as a peasant Matías washing the ears of the people with his ideas and looking for an alliance with international NGOs - as if that would save his life.

[They live off the companies and try to bring a halt of process to Colombia]
You have 48 hours to get out of the country or you will suffer the consequences.
For a Colombia without terrorists and free of scum.''

3.2.3 Support from the network

As the dialogues were exclusive (with only members of the Peasant's Assembly, syndicalists of the mining company, representatives of the mining companies, Dutch parliamentarians and representatives of PAX involved), the threat has filtered through and reached social leaders. This is of course quite a paradox given the content of the conversations.

The Peasant's Assembly gathered shortly after the threats to discuss the situation among its members. Some of the Assembly members were scared, and gathering was seen as a good way to take some panic away. When I asked one of the presidents of the Assembly what she thought of the threat she answered by saying that she was not surprised - it was more a question of *when* rather than *whether*:

''We know that they want us to be fearful, we know that they want us to stop these processes - but we won't. These processes stand or fall with us. We know this only means that we are onto something''
[Paulina, Copey, Peasant's Assembly - 16-05-2019].

Most of the people in the Peasant's Assembly have been threatened before and know what it is like. They even said that every threat is an opportunity to bring communities closer together, as long as the situation is dealt with correctly and panic does not take an overhand. Matías did not leave the country and remains living in Estados Unidos.

PAX helped setting up protective measures for Matías. It immediately denounced the threat at the Colombian authorities and the UN Human Rights office in Bogota, together with the help of the Dutch Embassy. It urged the Colombian authorities to investigate the sources of the threats. Joris van de Sandt, program leader at PAX stated: *"A very worrying cycle of violence is developing in Colombia where social leaders are being silenced with violence. Even talking to Dutch parliamentarians is risky. If companies and governments don't make additional efforts to reduce violence and support peace building, violence will regain control"* (Pax, 2019).

3.3 A sustainable peace?
3.3.1 Development in the region

The threat did not only come as a shock for the organization and the community, it was a blowback for some other processes that were going on in the zone as well. One of the main points under the recently signed peace accord between the Colombian government and the FARC was integral rural development (Reforma Rural Integral - RRI). The 'Development Program with Territorial Focus' (Programa de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial - PDET) was set up under the decree of 893 of 2017,

which allowed the municipalities that designated as 'ZOMAC' to be prioritized in developmental programs (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2017). Becerril, which consists of an estimated 99,85% of rural area falls under this (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2017). There are several initiatives that aim to help and stimulate the development of the region, although the community still did not see a lot of change on the basis of the RRI.[9]

There are, nevertheless, also private-public partnerships that claim to be aiming for the same development goals. The 'Program for Development and Peace in Cesar' (*Plan del Desarrollo y Paz Cesar - PDPC*), which touches the development for the zone until 2040, was set up this year. The program outlines a plan for the development of 'a peaceful territory by 2040 with a better quality of life for everyone' and states that sustainable development and Human Rights are taken as its core values. The plan includes points on education, culture, healthcare, biodiversity, sanitation and other points of development. It states the desire to allow for truth, reconciliation and peace in the region. Around 369 community members have been directly or indirectly involved in the creation of the plan. The main contributors of the plan is the mining company Prodeco.

Interestingly, the development plan starts with an overview of the history of the corregimiento. Although it does so in relative detail, it completely leaves out any suspected links between the paramilitaries and the mining companies. This is the same in the chapter about 'finding truth about the past', that the plan claims to be supporting - where mining companies are named not even once.

Whilst the taking up of social responsibility was something that PAX had demanded from the company for a long time, the NGO-leaders on the ground are also critical. The demand for truth and dialogues remains – implementing programs and investing money will not be enough to heal the wounds from the past.

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[9] For an overview of these initiatives see the 'Pacto Municipal para la Transformacion Regional - Municipio de Becerril Agencia de Renovacion del Territorio':
http://www.renovacionterritorio.gov.co/Documentos/planes_estrategicos/programas_de_desarrollo_con_e nfoque_territorial_pdet/pactos_municipales/sierra_nevada_perija

Conclusions

This chapter scrutinized the organizational processes in the communities of Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé - the veredas engaged in the victim's association AVHALOS. These processes began when a certain amount of trust in the region was yet established, something that I discussed in the previous chapter.

The processes that the communities in Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé were engaged in first and foremost revolved around the needs of the community and were aimed at tackling insecurity. The processes in the region started with the tackling of immediate developmental and insecurity needs through making claims for restitution and productive projects, which were enhanced by external support. This is both true in the sense that the MAPP-OEA recommended the community to unite and by the Italian church facilitated some stability to get productive projects off the ground. Instead of distributing the money that got derived out of these productive projects under individual community members, it got invested in a tractor. In this way, the entire community benefited more from the projects. Similarly, it was a reason for the community members to physically get together more often. This, eventually, led to the restoration of confianza.

A big influence on the effective engagement in these communal processes is the fact that the community is part of a bigger alliance: PAX and the Peasant's Assembly. The global peace organization PAX has directly helped the community with several things. Firstly, the psychologists of the organization have helped the community members how to deal with fear and insecurity and enhanced bringing the community together. Secondly, they help with organizational and juridical processes that are directly needed to enhance the development of the communities and increase the chances of the development of peace. These needs are presented by the communities themselves, which means that PAX mainly plays an accommodating and facilitating role. For the NGO it is also highly important to let the communities know the truth of whether there was a collusion between the mining companies and the paramilitaries. Without this truth it is impossible to 'learn from the past' and this would legitimize the practices that the mining companies have possibly perpetrated or have been engaged in. Therefore, PAX supports these dialogues. The NGO is in close contact with the peasants, which enhances the legitimacy and the feeling of proximity to the NGO enormously.

How paradoxical this NGO-alliance can get, though, was shown when the threat of the social leader Matías appeared after the dialogues in the territory. The pamphlet appeared after the farmer had expressed his wish for the international community to remain watching the process in the territory during a dialogue with the mining companies about the past. Although this initially caused fear, the Dutch NGO immediately took measures to secure the position of the peasant, both immediately, on the ground, in the

form of a bodyguard and through denouncing the threat towards a larger community. Making the threat visible can make it more dangerous and costly for actors to engage in violence (Kaplan 2016).

The same type of process was seen in the Peasant's Assembly, which gathered several of its social leaders right after the threat appeared. The Assembly arose out of the realization that union is important to claim the rights of the victims of the armed conflict and secure the position of social leaders in Cesar. It attempts to picture the threat as such: as an opportunity to come together more closely. The people involved in the Peasant's Assembly know what it is like to be threatened, which enhances their credibility to deal with these types of threats and calm others down. Knowing to be part of a bigger alliance whilst being engaged in risky processes such as these has a positive influence on social leaders and community members, who feel much more security through by it. The sense of security can in this case be defined as trust: the willingness to accept vulnerability based on the belief of positive expectations of the other. 'The other', in this situation, is embodied by the community of social leaders and victims of the armed conflict who are in turn connected by something bigger in the form of a Peasant Assembly and an NGO. That this sense of trust has arisen is interesting, as the territory has not gotten more secure. Cesar remains to be a highly dangerous place for social leaders and Human Rights defenders.

This causes the social leaders to be cautious when engaging with other people: their past experiences have taught them to do so. There are forces continuously trying to obstruct the processes they are engaged in. There are even reports from all over Colombia about infiltrations in organizations to get information. It is understandable, then, that they were rather cautious when I came in for the first time during the meeting. I argue that they do not have ''a pervasive mistrust of one's fellow human being'' (Dickson Gomez, 2002 : 218), but are generally more cautious rightly because of the processes they are engaged in and because harming these processes means a harm to the entire community. This, again, shows the importance of cohesiveness and trust within information networks, something which very much counts for the Peasant's Assembly - but also PAX and the other social leaders and members of the community that are engaged in developmental and peacebuilding processes (Kaplan, 2016). The strong position of the Peasant's Assembly has even encouraged the younger generation in Estados Unidos to try and continue their process by strengthening the social ties

The determination of PAX and its allied communities to build a sustainable peace and let the mining companies take responsibility for their actions makes their hesitance towards the developmental processes that these mining companies have proposed understandable. Even more so because of their close-knit trust and the fact that the mining companies have actively approached people in the veredas of Estados Unidos to get engaged with their development plan. As truth-finding is a highly valued aspect of the work of PAX, getting directly involved with other developmental aspects of the region might obstruct the truth-finding process, as it might give the companies the legitimacy to abstain from it. There is not a

word about the possible collusion between them and the paramilitaries in their development plan. This could be detrimental not only for the trust networks formed through and around PAX, but also for the bigger peace process.

The types of processes that the AVHALOS-communities, together with PAX and the Peasant's Assembly are engaged in are necessary to effectively address the underlying root causes of the conflict in the region, which means increasing the likelihood of building a sustainable peace. By and because of these processes cooperation was greatly facilitated. All these factors combined provide some good indicators to state trust building and peacebuilding in Estados Unidos went hand in hand.

<center>**Conclusions**</center>

Analysis

This research has investigated the effects of armed conflict on trust in Colombia. More specifically, it has focused on the severely hit community of Estados Unidos, Becerril. It has attempted to show how trust building processes are an important part of peacebuilding and how, conversely, peacebuilding processes are important in the reconstruction of trust. The case of Estados Unidos allowed for a rather unique possibility to study the convergence of trust alongside the stages of protracted social conflict that the corregimiento has seen.

The first part of this thesis illuminated the effects of the armed conflict on trust in the community of Estados Unidos. The research indicated that communal processes were highly disturbed during the time of the violence due to several reasons. People agreed that trust relations in the area before the violence were good. It was a 'territory of peace' and social relations were harmonious. It is clear that the trust relations were based upon reciprocity, physical closeness and that they were formed in the absence of functioning state institutions. Although this shows with relative certainty that *at least* confianza relations existed, it is difficult to say in hindsight whether communal trust was present as well. There are some indications to say there were, as not only interpersonal ties were described as peaceful, but the entire situation in the territory was as well.

The violence destroyed a lot in the corregimiento. It ruptured communal harmony, sabotaged interpersonal trust relations between neighbors and families and altered worldviews through violence and fear. People stated they felt very isolated right before they were displaced, and the community literally dispersed in the time after that. The time of displacement was difficult; a lot of the community members lost all they had, were stigmatized for where they came from and would be traveling around the country in a few occasions. In relation to its effects on trust, it helped strengthening some specific interpersonal ties - such as with family members or people who granted help - but also ruptured some ties, such as those with family members who would not offer help. A lot of people state that this period influenced the view they have on people in general - generalized trust - a lot.

The second part of this thesis looked at the state of trust in the communities today. That experiencing violence and conflict does not have to mean being caught in the 'trap' of mistrust and violence, is what the veredas of Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé have shown. They make beautiful examples of how trust building and peacebuilding are two sides of the same coin. Although an initial degree of trust between individuals on these veredas was needed in order to initiate the organizational and communal processes aimed at development and peace in the area, it were these processes that would enhance and improve the trust in the community more. In this sense, the

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peacebuilding process served as a positive reinforcer for trust. Similarly, it subsequently enhanced the willingness of the people in the corregimiento to engage in further peacebuilding processes. The sense of security that is felt within these veredas is highly surprising when knowing the type of security threats the community actually faces.

That the violence did do a lot of damage is undeniable, though, and the consequences of it are even more visible in the people who haven't returned to the community. The people who remained in the village of Becerril and are less in contact with other community members are less capable to overcome the feelings of fear and insecurity. This counts both in relation to other people as to their overall vulnerable situation which they *''do not know how to deal with''*. Both their particularized and generalized trust seems to be severely damaged; they do not speak with other people easily, would often 'think the worst of them' and do not have a lot of intimate relations. The conflict is still a big part of their lives; they are more afraid for it to come back and also look back on it with more fear. These findings are in line with the repeatedly heard critique on Western models of approaching mental health after armed conflict, which are mostly aimed at tackling trauma at an individual level. As multiple authors have suggested, and this research highly confirms, a psycho*social* approach might be much more effective. Engaging in collective forms of healing can help bringing fragmented communities together whilst simultaneously relieving the sense of extreme fear that the conflict has brought to basically all facets of life (Wessells, 2007). Engaging in seemingly simple processes, such as finding common ground with other people [Alfonso Rodriguez - 12-03-2019] can eventually contribute in overcoming the *''pervasive sense of mistrust of one fellow human being''* (Dickson-Gomez, 2002 : 418) that is said to exist in post-conflict societies. As such, it may provide the start an answer to overcoming the fragmentation of societies after armed conflict.

As an answer to the question of what the 'state of trust' in the community is today, this thesis thus shows that there is a difference between the communities: the people living in Hatos la Guajira, Santa Fé and Tucuycito la Loma have managed to create community trust, the findings on the veredas of Santa Cecilia and Buenavista indicate high levels of confianza and the people who remain in Becerril are not part of strong confianza relations and remain very mistrustful.

Similarly, this is what was seen on several veredas of Estados Unidos and allowed for the opening to what the third part of the thesis tried answer: *if* trust was reconstructed, how? The initial trust that was needed here to start conscious organizational processes came from a natural form of sticking together in the face of insecurity, which is known to be able to enhance interpersonal relations (Sanchez, 2011). These spontaneous community processes have allowed trust to expand over the vereda (Ajdukovic, 2006). Confianza relations are said to not inherently entail, but to have the potential to eventually ''*create a more or less autonomous moral universe''* where social trust exists (Baud, 2018 : 7) and allow the

people within the 'AVHALOS'-communities to be more confident about the peacebuilding process they are engaged in.

That this does not come without risk, though, cannot be denied. In the insecure context of Colombia, it is in line with the theory of Kaplan (2016) that external ties were beneficial (if not crucial) in order to secure peacebuilding -and thus the trust building- processes. In this case, the NGO PAX has been of tremendous help for the community, as they have closely monitored processes in the area together with the community, and tried to accommodate (security) needs where desired. The visibility that being linked to an international organization brings, serves the community well. In times of threat, such as recently, when the name of a community member of Estados Unidos was put on a pamphlet of Aguilas Negras, PAX was able to draw attention at the international community. This visibility makes it more costly and risky for armed actors to engage in violent practices (Kaplan, 2015). Also being integrated in the larger Peasant's Assembly provides something to fall back upon in times of insecurity. The organization, linking several communities that are engaged in peacebuilding practices, united shortly after the threats were made. This helped reassuring the social leader that he was part of a larger community that collectively continues with their struggle for peace. Similarly, the social leaders in the Peasant's Assembly all know what it is like to be threatened, which increases their credibility to help with the management of situations of insecurity (Kelly, 2009). The correct management of the threats provide opportunities for the communities united in the Peasant's Assembly to increase their cohesiveness and mutual trust. Both PAX and presidents of the Peasant's Assembly show the communities how to effectively manage fear by showing them how to find spaces to exercise control where possible. Exercising control is done by denouncing threats publicly, arranging security provisions for the threatened, etc. This decreases both the tendency to panic and the sense of vulnerability.

The difference between the veredas that are engaged in peacebuilding processes and those who are not - Santa Cecilia and Buenavista - is seen in the sense of security community members have. The community members of Buenavista and Santa Cecilia still have not completely returned to their territories because they remain relatively fearful. They arrive at their veredas during the day and leave at night. However, they, do state that the *confianza* relations in the territory are good. I argue that it is possible that their sense of security is still mostly dependent upon being in direct physical contact with fellow community members, something that is very typical for confianza relations (Baud, 2018). This can very well depend upon the level of organization that exists within this vereda. Although there are constructive processes of organization - people gather relatively frequently to discuss communal subjects - they do not nearly have the same level of community organization as existing on the veredas of Hatos la Guajira, Tucuycito la Loma and Santa Fé. In the latter vereda, there are not only projects of direct peacebuilding, there is also a youth community that has the strengthening of the social ties as one of its main goals.

The external ties that exist with both local as well as national and international actors allows the inclusive network of the farmers of Estados Unidos to make their voices heard. Often has the democratization of Latin American societies been brought in relation to the gradual expansion of confianza networks out of the direct community sphere and into public space. This converges with the functions and potentials that Tilly (2005) attributes to trust networks on the way to a stable democracy and allows for a glimmer of hope for Colombia.

It remains, though, an extremely fragile process, in which the continuous targeting of social leaders, being a rampant problem in Colombia today, forms one of the biggest spoilers. It is therefore of great importance to keep watching and supporting local peace initiatives from outside, denounce any violence perpetrated against social leaders and demand protection for them. If we fail to do so, the chances for any type of future peace to take hold in Colombia will plummet - and the chances for relapse into armed conflict will rise again. The community of Estados Unidos does its part - let's make it worthwhile.

Conclusion

This research shows that reconstructing trust after armed is possible. When this process is initiated within insecure contexts, it is done through intimate personal relations that directly help tackling vulnerability and reconfirm the trustworthiness of the other continuously. These rather insulated trust relations can eventually result in larger, though still intimate, trust building processes between members living in the same territory. Trust building, here, converges with security building.

The importance of reconstructing interpersonal trust relations is high. Failing to do so leads to higher levels of fear and more mistrust, which will highly obstruct further community-building processes.

If intimate trust relations are established between members in the same territory, inclusive organizational processes aimed at addressing the direct needs of the people within the territory can lead to the emergence of communal trust. This is where the initial convergence between trust building and peacebuilding can be seen, as these organizational processes might be revolving around themes relating to peace and development.

The difference between trust that is based upon interpersonal trust relations and community trust lies in the possibilities for the sense of security to emerge. In situations of interpersonal trust relations, security gets derived from physical closeness. Community trust, though, derives from the feeling of being part of a community and can exist in a relatively demarcated territory, even without being in direct contact with fellow community members.

Community trust can serve as a reinforcer to remain engaged in peacebuilding processes. In highly insecure contexts, forms of protection and support for the ones engaged in peacebuilding processes are important. External ties - either nationally or internationally - can provide such forms of support and protection.

This process may eventually lead to the expansion of trust networks into the public arena and contribute to larger processes of society-building, such as the creation of legitimate institutions and a stable and inclusive democracy. As such, this is the second point of convergence between trust building and peacebuilding: the successful establishment of these societal building blocks contribute to the process of attaining a self-sustaining peace.

Discussion and implications for peacebuilding

The conclusion of this thesis - namely that trust building after armed conflict is possible and may eventually contribute to a self-sustaining peace - is highly positive. Nevertheless, the insecure context of Colombia also shows that these types of processes are extremely fragile and face an immense amount of obstacles. ''Sometimes we form the biggest obstacles to ourselves'', as Matías said, is very true: experiences with the armed conflict, trauma and continued insecurity may impede people to engage in peacebuilding processes. I understand that the process as described in the relatively successful vereda's of Estados Unidos might be more of an exception than a rule.

Nevertheless, if spaces within communities to engage in these processes do arise, it is greatly desirable that (international) NGOs or other actors are available to provide assistance. This assistance should manifest in the form of supporting the needs on the ground and drawing attention to the community as a form of protection. This is why I urge the international community to not lose interest in the fragile peace processes existing all over Colombia and to remain attentive to those risking their lives for peace.

In the context of this research, it was shown that trust got reconstructed through peacebuilding practices. Other organizational practices may have the power to do so as well, but are less directly related to peacebuilding.

To those who have been studying confianza relations, it may be unsurprising that 'social trust', here termed as 'community trust' can arise from confianza relations. Nevertheless, if the results of the previously presented research are compared to those of Wollebæk (2013), it is clear that it this type of emerges trust in different contexts and is not dependent on the existence of close, interpersonal contact. People from more individualistic cultures might experience severe hindrance from finding themselves embedded in close confianza relations that are so typical for Latin American society - and as such it may impede trust building rather than enhance it. What this shows, not as a complete surprise, is that local

customs, traditions and practices are highly important to take into account if aiming to successfully achieve community trust- and peacebuilding.

Recommendations for future research

This thesis has shown how relatively spontaneous and voluntary interaction in the insecure initial phase after the armed conflict allowed for strong trust relations to form. This research indicates that it is because of these relations that subsequent peacebuilding processes initiated. It would be interesting to compare the experiences of other communities who have been through the same type of trust building processes to see how long the initial phase of 'spontaneous' trust building usually takes, and whether there are specific factors enhancing (or obstructing) this phase. This may give an answer to the question of whether there are ways to facilitate fragile trust building processes in the future.

In line with the previous, this research indicated that there was an important division in levels of perceived security and fear between people who did- and who did not come back to the corregimiento. It remains unsure why these community members have failed to permanently come back to the corregimiento or engage in communal processes, even when a lot of their fellow community members have managed to come back. There is no indication of having been aligned to an armed group, portraying non-conformist behavior, or having been exposed to more - or less - violence in the conflict than those who have returned. Further research in the corregimiento of Estados Unidos should focus upon the factors that obstructed the return for the people who remain living in Becerril.

Also, this research has clearly shown the emergence of community trust, but has less focused upon particular trust. It would be interesting to zoom in on the interpersonal trust relations of people within a community, see to what extent positive interpersonal trust relations are necessary within a community in order for communal trust to arise. Similarly, it would be interesting to know whether - and how many - relations of interpersonal mistrust might obstruct communal trust to arise. The corregimiento of Estados Unidos holds some people who have recently done harm to their community, but not a lot. It would be valuable to see how trust building takes shape in the case of there being more people who have previously been aligned to an armed group.

Also, this thesis shows that the term 'community trust' as posed by Wollebaeck (2013) deserves more attention in the trust literature. Although particularized and generalized trust are undoubtedly of great importance, and highly influence each other, failing to comprehend the construct community trust gives an incomplete picture of the potential for trust to exist- or emerge in individuals. More research to community trust and the similarities and differences for it to arise over different contexts is highly desirable.

Re-establishing trust after armed conflict might allow for a slightly more positive image of fellow human beings might be restored. Although the generations that have been directly confronted with the conflict might fail to re-establish generalized trust, passing over at least some positive messages about the world and fellow human beings to their children might diminish the transgenerational effects of conflict. It would be interesting to compare the kin of those who successfully came back to the corregimiento and those who did not in terms of worldview and generalized trust.

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