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Local Participation at Stake: Between Emancipatory Goals and Co-Option Strategies. The Case of Territorially Focused Development Programs in Colombia

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ABSTRACT. **Objective/Context**: We examine how participatory peacebuilding projects create emancipatory outcomes by investigating the implementation of Territorially Focused Development Programs (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*, PDETs), one of the centerpieces of the Colombian peace process. We define "emancipatory outcomes" as allocations of decision-making power (e.g., control over budgets, project priorities) and/or material benefits (e.g., new infrastructure, public goods) to marginalized groups in society. **Methodology:** The article is based on a combination of ethnographic peace research and semi-structured interviews with key government and civil actors involved in the design and implementation of the PDETs both at the national and local levels. We focus on the PDET of the department of Chocó, where both authors conducted ethnographic work during the design and implementation of the peace program between January 2018 and March 2020. **Conclusions**: We argue that the emancipatory outcomes of a participatory project are never fixed in advance: the degree to which such projects serve bottom-up, emancipatory goals rather than top-down state expansion are contingent on the outcomes of contestation and cooperation processes between actors within and outside the state. **Originality**: Critical scholarship tends to understand participatory peacebuilding programs as top-down programs to co-opt grassroots actors and expand the reach of the state rather than emancipatory projects that create real shifts in existing political settlements. Our contribution lies in the study of the dynamics of these peace processes to identify the potential spaces they open for emancipatory goals.

KEYWORDS: Local participation; peacebuilding; emancipation; territorially focused development programs (PDETs); Colombia; Chocó.

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La participación local en juego: entre objetivos de emancipación y estrategias de cooptación. El caso de los Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial en Colombia

RESUMEN. **Objetivo/contexto:** este artículo explora si los proyectos participativos de construcción de paz generan resultados emancipatorios. Para ello analizamos la implementación de los PDET (Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial), una de las piezas centrales del proceso de paz colombiano. Definimos *resultados emancipadores* como la asignación de poder en la toma de decisiones (por ejemplo, control sobre presupuestos, prioridades de proyectos) y/o de beneficios materiales (por ejemplo, nueva infraestructura, bienes públicos) a grupos marginados de la sociedad. **Metodología**: el artículo se basa en una combinación de investigación de paz etnográfica y entrevistas semiestructuradas con actores gubernamentales y civiles clave involucrados en el diseño e implementación de los PDETs tanto a nivel nacional como local. Nos enfocamos en el PDET del departamento del Chocó, donde ambos autores realizamos un acompañamiento etnográfico durante el diseño e implementación del programa de paz entre enero de 2018 y marzo de 2020. **Conclusiones**: el artículo concluye que los resultados emancipatorios de un proyecto participativo nunca se fijan de antemano: el grado en que dichos proyectos sirven a objetivos emancipatorios de abajo hacia arriba en lugar de la expansión del Estado de arriba hacia abajo depende de los resultados de los procesos de disputa y cooperación entre actores de dentro y fuera del Estado. **Originalidad**: la corriente crítica tiende a entender los programas participativos de construcción de paz como programas diseñados de arriba hacia abajo para cooptar a los actores de base y expandir el alcance del Estado en lugar de concebirlos como proyectos emancipatorios que crean cambios reales en los acuerdos políticos existentes. Nuestro aporte radica en el estudio de la dinámica de estos procesos de paz para identificar los potenciales espacios que se abren para lograr objetivos emancipatorios.

PALABRAS CLAVE: participación local; construcción de paz; emancipación; Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (PDET); Colombia; Chocó.

A participação local em jogo: entre metas de emancipação e estratégias de cooptação. O caso dos programas da Colômbia com abordagem territorial

RESUMO. **Objetivo/contexto:** neste artigo, explora-se como os projetos participativos de construção de paz geram resultados emancipatórios. Para isso, analisamos a implementação dos programas de desenvolvimento com abordagem territorial (PDAT), uma das peças-chave do processo de paz colombiano. Definimos "resultados emancipadores" como a designação de poder na tomada de decisões (por exemplo, controle de orçamentos, prioridades de projetos) e/ou de benefícios materiais (por exemplo, nova infraestrutura, bens públicos) a grupos marginalizados da sociedade. **Metodologia**: o artigo está baseado numa combinação de pesquisa de paz etnográfica e entrevistas semiestruturadas com atores governamentais e civis fundamentais envolvidos no desenho e implementação do PDAT tanto no âmbito nacional

quanto local. Abordamos o PDAT de Chocó, onde ambos os autores realizam um acompanhamento etnográfico durante o desenho e a implementação do programa de paz entre janeiro de 2018 e março de 2020. **Conclusões**: no artigo, conclui-se que os resultados emancipatórios de um projeto participativo nunca são fixados antecipadamente: o grau em que esses projetos servem a objetivos emancipatórios de baixo para cima em lugar da expansão do Estado de cima para baixo depende dos resultados dos processos de disputa e cooperação entre atores de dentro e de fora do Estado. **Originalidade**: a corrente crítica tende a entender os programas participativos de construção de paz como programas desenhados de cima para baixo para cooptar os atores de base e expandir o escopo do Estado em lugar de concebê-los como projetos emancipatórios que criam mudanças reais nos acordos políticos existentes. Nossa contribuição está no estudo da dinâmica desses processos de paz para identificar os espaços que abrem para metas emancipatórias.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: participação local; construção de paz; emancipação; abordagem territorial; programas de desenvolvimento com abordagem territorial; Colômbia; Chocó.

Introduction

Spurred by global advocacy and research, "local" inclusion—meaningful opportunities for grassroots civil society actors to participate in decision-making—has become an established norm in the negotiation and implementation of contemporary peace agreements (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015;). The logic of local inclusion in peace processes is to create opportunities for horizontal dialogue between state and society, seeking to empower citizens, build the legitimacy of the state, and address structural issues at the heart of the conflict (Lederach 1997; Dudouet and Lundström 2016). However, critical peacebuilding scholars criticize such projects as liberal state-building interventions that seek to co-opt civilian movements and expand state authority through techniques of governmentality (Richmond 2010).

In this paper, we pose the question: How do participatory peacebuilding projects create emancipatory outcomes? We define "emancipatory outcomes" as allocations of decision-making power (e.g., control over budgets, project priorities) and/or material benefits (e.g., new infrastructure, public goods) to marginalized groups in society. We argue that the answer to this question is never fixed in advance: the degree to which participatory projects serve bottom-up emancipatory goals rather than top-down state expansion is contingent on the outcomes of contestation and cooperation processes between actors within and outside the state.

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First, we briefly review academic debates on the emancipatory potential of state-led participatory peacebuilding projects, drawing on critical peacebuilding studies. A second section puts in context the peace policy analyzed in this paper by explaining how the participatory project called Territorially Focused Development Programs (*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*, PDETs) emerged as a central piece of the Peace Agreement between the government of Colombia and the FARC. Next, we explore the formation and implementation of the PDETs with special focus on the department of Chocó, which has witnessed active contestation by ethno-territorial movements attempting to transform the PDETs to advance their own cosmovisions and development plans.

1. Emancipatory potential of state-led participatory peacebuilding

Participatory peacebuilding has its roots in the "local turn" in peacebuilding, defined as an attention to local context, local actors, and local agency (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). The local turn emerged in response to the shortcomings of the post-Cold War international community's early top-down efforts in Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and other countries. Scholars such as Adam Curle (1994), John Paul Lederach (1997), and Elise Boulding (2000) began formulating a peacebuilding agenda that emphasized civilians as active peacemaking resources rather than recipients. These scholars described the transformative, emancipatory potential of creating space for civilian voices, both in horizontal reconciliation and in bottom-up engagements with the state (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013).

Internationally led peacebuilding engagements dramatically expanded in scale at the beginning of the twenty-first century to include broad state-building projects that generally failed to construct a social contract perceived as legitimate by the population, creating what Richmond (2010, 28) describes as the "empty shell of a state." Conscious of these failures, international peacebuilders adopted the discourse of local inclusion as a mechanism to resolve such legitimacy gaps.[1] Increasingly, tactics from the development field, such as participatory planning, community scorecards, and transparency initiatives, became standard elements of the international peacebuilding toolkit.

The critical peacebuilding literature has offered a strong critique of the mainstreaming of inclusion and participation in peacebuilding, arguing that it

1 For example, inclusion and participation became central in the landmark UN peacebuilding documents of the last decade, notably in the 2015 HIPPO and AGE reports.

operates within a state-building framework that co-opts grassroots actors and movements to consolidate the frontiers of the hegemonic state (Richmond 2010). This approach of "peace as governance" implies the recognition of the other but within the hegemonic model of the nation-state. In Foucauldian terms, it is the expression of the biopolitical governance of territories through the exercise of power over the peripheral population.

Critical scholars press for a different approach to inclusion, rooted in emancipation. We understand peace as emancipation as radically horizontal spaces of encounter that permit the reconciliation of the nation and, in turn, the citizens with the state. It demands that rational-bureaucratic state actors shift to accommodate heterogeneous imaginaries emerging from the grassroots towards multivalent solutions on expanded time scales. It aspires to a decolonized peace: the end of structural state oppression, recognition of difference rooted in rights, and open space for a plurality of political and economic models according to ancestral knowledges (Cruz 2018; Sandoval Forero 2016; Richmond 2011).

2. Argument

Despite these strong cleavages between "emancipatory" and "governance" approaches, this scholarship argues that a peace process cannot be rigidly defined as one or the other. Rather, peace processes are always "hybrids" of top-down interventions and bottom-up resistance: a composite outcome of complex processes of coercion, negotiation, adaptation, and appropriation (Boege, Brown, and Clements 2009; Mac Ginty 2010). This literature has tended to take a macro focus, describing entire peace processes or states as "hybrid," mainly focusing on the interaction between international and local actors. We expand on this body of work by offering an analysis of these intersecting processes of contestation and cooperation at the micro level, within a specific participatory peacebuilding project.

We argue that a specific participatory project cannot be defined *a priori* as emancipatory or not. Indeed, we suggest that "participation" tends to operate as a floating signifier in peace processes, agreed to by different actors specifically because "participation" signals different meanings and political opportunities for them. State actors may accede to participatory programs with the implicit understanding that the program will exist within certain political boundaries and operate according to predefined state-institutional logics and timelines, in service to their political and personal interests.

However, we demonstrate that local actors are not passive observers in this process: to varying degrees, they actively engage with these programs, attempting to reshape such programs in their own interest. We expect that the extent

to which a participatory project serves bottom-up emancipatory goals is contingent on contestation between the state, which deploys strategies of coercion, co-option, and omission, and grassroots actors who frame alternative visions for peace and draw on both institutional (e.g., negotiation, formal complaints) and extra-institutional (e.g., direct action, protests, appeals to third parties) strategies.

Furthermore, each actor brings into these spaces not only their interests and goals, but their modes of operating and understanding the world: a state bureaucrat and an Indigenous or Afro farmer will not necessarily understand the process of planning an economic project in the same way, even if they share the same goals. Thus, in addition to a contest of interests, participatory peacebuilding projects are spaces of intercultural dialogue and translation with outcomes that depend on how well different groups can listen and make themselves understood.

Finally, neither the state nor society are unitary actors pursuing a cohesive set of goals simplifiable to civil society actors pursuing emancipatory goals in the face of a monolithic state. Through preceding processes of democratic reforms and other windows of opportunity, these movements institutionalize pro-democratic rules and insert actors within the state who share their goals. Likewise, civilians themselves are riven by gender, class, and ethnic and other identity-based divides (Hirblinger and Simons 2015), as well as lingering mistrust and fear from the conflict (Velásquez *et al.* 2020), which can severely limit the emancipatory reach of a given participatory space.

3. Methodology

The article is based on a combination of ethnographic peace research and semi-structured interviews with key government and civil actors involved in the design and implementation of the PDETs both at the national and local levels. One of the authors accompanied the communities and the Territorial Renewal Agency (Agencia de Renovación del Territorio, ART) during the design of the PDETs from January 2018 until the approval of the final document in August 2018. As part of this process, she attended various preliminary meetings of the ART during which civil servants were trained (January-February 2018, in Quibdó); the two-day concertation dialogue in which the ethnic communities decided upon the ethnic route of the PDET in Chocó (May 16-18, 2018, in Istmina); the community assembly in Bojayá (June 21-23, 2018); the Territorial Pact of Istmina (July 18, 2018); the workshop on the vision of the PDETs (August 12-14, 2018, in Quibdó); the signature of the Action Plan for Regional Transformation (Plan de Acción para la Transformación Regional, PATR) in Quibdó (August 18-19, 2018); and two meetings between the ART national team and the High-Level

Special Instance with Ethnic Peoples (Instancia Especial de Alto Nivel con Pueblos Étnicos, IEANPE), in Bogotá (March 6 and April 25, 2018). In addition, both authors conducted semi-structured and open interviews with local actors and leaders, ART advisors in Bogotá, the director of Chocó's ART regional office, and several other civil servants, as well as government and FARC representatives in charge of defining the territorial peace approach during the peace negotiations. For the follow-up of the implementation of the PDET and the development of the new tool called "Hojas de Ruta," the other author conducted field work in Chocó and Bogotá from February to August 2019, and February to March 2020, interviewing government representatives from the ART and the Procuraduría (the Inspector General's office), as well as social leaders from the IEANPE, the Inter-Ethnic Solidarity Forum of Chocó (Foro Interétnico Solidaridad Chocó, FISCH), and the Mesa Indígena (Indigenous Platform).

4. The territorial approach of the Peace Agreement

The peripheral regions of Colombia have historically faced abandonment by an excessively centralized state, creating an enormous gap in development outcomes between urban and rural Colombia (De la Calle Lombana 2017, 12). During the peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government in Havana, despite their major disagreements on the causes and solutions of the conflict, both parties agreed that sustainable peace required the transformation of the Colombian periphery towards a holistic state presence and a robust, inclusive, rural economy.

The government also supported the FARC's view that peacebuilding requires involving the whole society, particularly those communities most affected by the conflict. Thus, the Agreement establishes that peace must be built with differentiated attention to the territorial, gender, and ethnic dynamics of the conflict.

Sergio Jaramillo, the High Commissioner for Peace during the peace talks, described territorial peace as "a virtuous circle" by which the state-building process conducted from the territories would make citizens engage and demand more from those institutions, thus contributing to "institutionalizing the territory" and channeling problems through these institutions, instead of via armed actors that used to control those spaces.[2] This way the government sought to build the legitimacy of the state and expand its sovereignty in the periphery by gaining the support of local communities.

2 Interview, Sergio Jaramillo, High Commissioner for Peace, call, February 21, 2018.

This territorial approach is rooted in previous failures to bring the state to the periphery. As López (2016) shows, previous peace and state-building programs in Colombia had a territorial focus that aimed to "bring the state" to the regions by trying to close "the gap of investment, attention and political presence" in the periphery (163). The most recent attempt before the Peace Agreement was put in place during the Uribe administration. In his second term, the Ministry of Defense led by Juan Manuel Santos put into force the Comprehensive Territorial Consolidation Plan of La Macarena (2007-2010), in a region where the FARC used to run their financial and military operations. Sergio Jaramillo, then member of Santos' team at the Ministry, conceptualized a program that would build holistic state presence at the local level, aiming to undermine local support for the FARC. This plan would serve as inspiration for the PDETs later:

> Sergio proposed the issue of the Consolidation Plan, which initially was counterinsurgency-oriented, implying that the military arrives and sweeps the territory [of armed groups]; and Sergio gives it a turn and creates the Comprehensive Territorial Consolidation Plan of La Macarena. Sergio wanted to put on the agenda that the territory is not to be cleaned up, but the state has to be built to act as a peacebuilding support.[3]

However, the good intentions of the program were not accomplished because it over-emphasized the security element and failed to build sufficient institutional articulation and to fund enduring state institutions (López 2016, 318).

a. Territorial development at the core of the Comprehensive Rural Reform of the Peace Agreement

Conflicting visions for the economic model for Colombia's periphery have been at the heart of both the war and rural social movements since at least the 1960s. Although the Peace Agreement does recognize that the prevailing development model has not benefited many sectors of the society,[4] overall the government refused to negotiate the capital and extractive-based economic model. Nevertheless, Point 1 of the Agreement contemplates several measures intended to generate structural reforms in rural areas, including a land fund,

3 Interview, María del Pilar Barbosa, Director of Participation at the ART and former employee of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Bogotá, March 5, 2018.

4 The Agreement proposes "to construct a new territorial-based welfare and development paradigm to the benefit of broad sectors of the population that have hitherto been victims of exclusion and despair" (Final Peace Agreement 2016, 3).

land registry, national rural infrastructure projects, and the Territorially Focused Development Programs (PDETs).

We focus on the PDETs as a meeting point of the ethnic, territorial, and development dimensions of the Peace Agreement. The goal of the PDETs is to accelerate the transformation of the rural sector and guarantee the economic, political, and social rights of rural people by providing basic services and goods, access to land, integration of rural with urban areas through public investments, and supporting and promoting local organizations.

One hundred seventy municipalities were prioritized and grouped in 16 sub-regions,[5] including 13,000 villages, 425 indigenous reservations, 3,015 community councils, and 6 farming land-reserve zones, comprising 24% of the country's rural population (Escobar 2017). The High Commissioner for Peace Sergio Jaramillo led the PDET conceptualization based on his previous experience at the Ministry of Defense. According to him, the three key aspects were: (1) to think of the problems from the perspective of territories; (2) to accelerate the transformation of the territories most affected by the conflict; and (3) to build projects through citizen participation with a territorial focus, from the villages up.[6] In this line, Mariana Escobar (2017), the first director of the ART—governmental agency created in 2017 for the implementation of the PDETs—contended that "the very definition of what 'public' and 'collective' mean[t]" was at stake.

The government's peace team had both an aspirational and pragmatic approach in mind; they saw the PDETs as an instrument to consolidate the state in the regions by building trust in its institutions:

> It is about building or reconstructing the relationship between the state and its citizens that necessarily involves recognizing the citizen of that territory as a citizen (that is, giving them a voice). The logic is that these projects are the excuse to build trust with a government that has never been present or has been present through repression, and it has imposed things and generated distrust and exclusion.[7]

5 Alto Patía, Norte del Cauca, Arauca, Bajo Cauca and Nordeste Antioqueño, Catatumbo, Pacífico Medio, Pacífico y Frontera Nariñense, Putumayo, Sierra Nevada – Perijá, Sur de Bolívar, Sur de Córdoba, Tolima, Urabá Antioqueño, Chocó, Cuenca del Caguán and Piedemonte Caqueteño, Macarena-Guaviare, Montes de María.

6 Interview, Andrés García, consultant of the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Bogotá, April 12, 2018.

7 Interview, Andrés García.

As in previous programs, this transformative horizon that was designed during the peace process faded away during the implementation; as several members of the High Commissioner for Peace's team agree,[8] the essence of the Peace Agreement remained in Havana, and back in Colombia the text opened the door to a plurality of interpretations of peace within the state and its agencies. Many institutions demonstrated an overt lack of willingness and interest in implementing some aspects of the Agreement, particularly in allowing an active participation of citizens, generating multiple challenges: "You assume that everyone has the same reading of the Agreements as you that have been in Havana. In Cuba, we dreamt a lot, without considering the operational implications of implementing it and getting ideas landed."[9]

The ART had significant difficulties from the beginning. It was the last of the agencies created by the Peace Agreement to have a director (August 2016), and when Mariana Escobar was appointed, the Agency did not get enough economic resources to function, and initially had a team of only three consultants that were paid by the international community.[10] These delays affected the timing of the PDET plans from the very beginning. In addition, the ART received many workers from the Consolidation Territorial Plan, which caused distrust among the communities because of the program's counter-insurgency objectives.[11]

The FARC saw the PDETs as a mechanism to consolidate their influence in the territories and as a way to continue the structural economic negotiations that they had failed to advance in Havana:

> As the economic model was not under discussion with the FARC [in Havana], then it had to be discussed with society, starting from the particularities: it is not the same to design a development program for the department of Cundinamarca than for Chocó.[12]

As such, they requested to be hired by the ART. That option was never on the table because the government would not allow the FARC to have the power or prestige of overseeing state responsibilities; the government accepted

8 Interviews, Andrés García, María del Pilar Barbosa, and Carolina Varela, person responsible for the negotiation of Points 1 (rural reform) and 4 (illicit drugs) of the Peace Agreement from the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, Bogotá, March 16, 2018.
9 Interview, María del Pilar Barbosa.
10 Interview, Carolina Varela.
11 Interview, Carolina Varela.
12 Interview, Benkos Biohó, member of the Political Commission of the political party FARC in Choco, Quibdó, February 24, 2018.

that demobilized *guerrilleros* could be hired as ART consultants in their capacity of demobilized citizens, but not as members of the FARC political party. However, in the end, demobilized FARC members were not hired; some of them were invited to participate in the assemblies as members of the communities where they have been reintegrating.

The hopes raised by the Peace Agreement among some local communities were a valid entry card for many state officials in these territories; unlike previous occasions, the government had demonstrated a real commitment to peace by successfully negotiating with the FARC. As such, local ethnic and social leaders treated the Peace Agreement, and particularly the PDETs, as a crucial opportunity. As it became increasingly clear that much of the other elements of Point 1 of the peace deal were hopelessly delayed, movement leaders attached increasing hope and focus to the PDETs as one of the few chances for conflict-affected communities to receive something concretely positive from the peace deal.[13]

However, the "territorial" approach to peacebuilding also raised doubts from local communities. Peasants, Black, and Indigenous peoples were cautious of the government's intentions given previous failed experiences. The evident lack of trust of the communities in the state was explicit in various conversations the authors had with leaders of ethno-territorial organizations and ART workers. The government's agency also knew that the starting point to reach the communities was not an easy one: "This is an over-diagnosed and over-planned country; the challenge is that the communities no longer have trust in these processes, so the way to validate this process is to say that it is part of the Agreement and not a government policy."[14]

Yet, despite acknowledging the need to open up spaces for citizen participation, in general, as described in detail below, the overall impression was that the ART arrived to the territories with an already-set methodology that did not take into account the particularities of each territory; it rushed the process due to timing constraints that did not understand the communities' rhythm and pace; ART consultants had limited knowledge about the territorial dynamics, and there was a clear lack of interinstitutional articulation. Thus, the novelty of the territorial approach soon showed its limits, reflecting the centralist patterns of the institutions in Bogotá, historically present in all state-building projects.

13 Interview, Procuraduría, Asuntos Étnicos, Bogotá, April 2019.
14 Interview, Pablo Barriga, general advisor of the ART, Bogotá, February 12, 2018.

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5. The ethnic "routes" of the PDETs nationwide

Through a sustained multi-year pressure campaign, the leading Afro and Indigenous organizations of Colombia achieved the inclusion of a dedicated Ethnic Chapter in the Peace Agreement to ensure that ethnic rights were respected during peace implementation (Rodríguez Iglesias 2019). The Ethnic Chapter established a high-level panel to oversee and accompany the process—the IEANPE—as a consultant, representative, and interlocutor of the Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement (Comisión de Seguimiento, Impulso y Verificación a la Implementación del Acuerdo Final, CSIVI). Yet, this new organ had little capacity to make the government consult with them on most peace-related legislation.

The Decree 893 of May 28, 2017, which created the PDETs, was elaborated in consultation only with the national Indigenous Concertation Table, and the Indigenous representatives were able to establish that the PDETs in sub-regions with ethnic presence were required to have specific ethnic routes for implementation, in consultation with ethnic organizations.[15] Though Black organizations were not included in the consultation, Indigenous leaders represented their interests.

The design of the ethnic routes was a rocky one given the lack of knowledge of ethnic worldviews in Bogotá. The ethnic team of the ART was created months after the process had started, and they had to adapt quickly to the demands of the territories. Considering these delays, and the coordination and knowledge gaps demonstrated by the ART, the IEANPE sought out government allies in the Procuraduría to strengthen their voice in the PDET planning process. Elena Ambrosí,[16] Attorney for the Support of Victims and previous "right hand" of the High Commissioner for Peace, maneuvered to establish a direct channel of communication between the ART and the IEANPE. Particularly, the IEANPE protested the ART procedure of starting separate processes to plan the ethnic routes to implement each individual PDET. The IEANPE argued that this would lead to dividing up the organizations and requested to have national control over

15 Article 12 established that the PDETs "must contemplate a special mechanism of consultation for its implementation" that guarantees "the effective participation of ethnic peoples and communities in the design, formulation, execution, and follow-up of the PDETs" (paragraph 1).

16 Elena Ambrosí was a key member of the negotiations of the Peace Agreement in Havana. Within the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, she pushed for the inclusion of an Ethnic Chapter in the Peace Agreement, supporting the request made by different national and regional ethnic organizations. At the Procuraduría, she has acted as an ally for ethnic groups by defending the implementation of the ethnic focus of the Peace Agreement.

different ethnic routes. In the end, this request was not fulfilled, and different regional ethnic routes were defined at the regional level.[17]

Participants in these meetings with the ART reflected that despite the willingness of many members of the ART team to incorporate ethnic views, they had timing, logistics, and administrative pressures that did not coincide with the times and ways of doing/being/knowing of the territories. A particularly telling example is the contestation over the structure of the PDETs, originally defined as a three-tiered structure according to state-institutional territorial demarcations: *vereda*, municipality, and sub-region. This structure fails to recognize the territorial and structural logic of ethnic territories, which do not neatly overlap with municipal and departmental designations. We argue that the intent of the ART to impose this structure on ethnic spaces reflects a desire to maintain control over the participatory space according to state imaginaries of how territories should function: in accordance with official state demarcations.

As a result, the ART's PDET structure broke the continuity of ethnic territories by failing to shift in accordance with local territorial logics. Indeed, a leader of the Black Communities Process (Proceso de Comunidades Negras, PCN) argued that the PDETs are a strategy of territorial disintegration:

> The issue of territorial ordering that arises in the PDETs has several visions: that of the government, which is the vision of the country's dominant economic sectors; another is that of the FARC; other one is that of ethnic peoples; and another is that of peasants. For the government, it is a form of reordering the territory that for us generates disintegration of peoples.[18]

The methodologies and approaches used to implement the PDETs were not fixed and indeed shifted to accommodate ethnic voices along the process, but there were still some specific steps to follow, as well as technical and timing constraints that overall did not allow for effective participation. First, the government hired the German development agency GIZ to develop a toolbox for the implementation of the PDETs. This toolbox was full of acronyms and technical words, making the methodology inaccessible for ethnic communities. Furthermore, these communities shared the view that the socialization process was too quick, and they were not well-trained or prepared to participate in the workshops.[19]

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17 Personal observation of the meeting at which the conversation took place, Bogotá, 2018.
18 Interview, Charo Mina, call, 2018.
19 Personal observation from informal conversations with PDET participants during the ethnographic work.

Decree 893 mandated that the ART should incorporate pre-existing ethnic development plans, both from Indigenous (*planes de vida*) and Afro (*planes de etno-desarrollo*) communities. However, early in the process, communities felt that their development plans, which were already complete in some cases with structured projects and defined budgets, were being overlooked, as if the ART believed that these communities were beginning the development planning process for their regions from zero with the PDETs (Medina Bernal 2018). Following significant national pushback from ethnic leaders, the ART did begin integrating these ethnic development plans into the PDETs. However, the plans were integrated in an ad hoc fashion, dependent on the level of organization in each region (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies 2019). Even when these plans were integrated, there was a limited exercise of intercultural translation, meaning that these plans were imported into the PDETs without discussing the implications of conflating local views of development with those of the central government.

This lack of serious discussion about the implications of implementing ethnic development plans comes into sharp relief when considering local-level conflicts over economic models. Many of the ethnic development plans pose radical critiques of the neoliberal-extractive economic model predominant in rural Colombia. Yet the ART has been silent about how to resolve the inherent contrast between economic models, which is readily apparent in many PATRs.[20] In the early stages of the PDETs, communities feared that the PDET spaces would be subject to capture by political and economic interests (Díaz Parra 2018). Instead, the opposite happened: rural elites and their allies were notably absent from the entire PDET process, almost uniformly throughout the 16 PDET subregions.[21] Similarly absent were local political leaders—municipal mayors and governors—who are often closely linked to larger economic interests. These political leaders were uninterested in the PDETs because they knew that they would have limited control over them and would likely receive no additional funding from the programs.[22]

As a result, the serious, necessary dialogue between the representatives of ethnic territories and local economic and political interests over the future economic model for those ethnic territories largely did not happen. Instead of an open dialogue, this contest took place in a more covert fashion, as Pablo Abitbol explains:

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20 The PATR is the planning document that culminates the PDET participatory process; it operationalizes the PDETs through a selection of local and municipal proposals that preceded it.

21 Interview, Procuraduría, Asuntos Étnicos.

22 Interview, ART representative 1, Bogotá, August 2019.

> The point is that in a precarious and co-opted democracy like ours, the confrontations between development models and visions, and between actors with great asymmetries of power, are not resolved in the field of political debates, but in the terrain of clientelist, corrupt, and violent imposition.[23]

In some cases, state-led impositions to limit the reach of radical, ethnic-led proposals were fairly apparent. In some places, such as Montes de Maria, ethnic leaders felt that the critical issues of land access and environmental justice they advanced in community-level pacts were significantly downplayed in the subregional PATR produced by the ART (Junieles 2018). Across the PDETs, discussions on mining were displaced to other settings, such as the Mining Table or regional mining dialogues, and thus the whole community was not able to discuss in depth an economic activity that would affect all the inhabitants, nature, and environment as well.

Much more frequently, political actors have employed less visible strategies to confine the boundaries of the PDET proposals within the realm of state interests. In general, participants felt that the PDET assemblies did not open space to debate the economic model, so they realized that many of their demands would not be taken into consideration. Even where PDET participants succeeded in pushing through radical proposals, doubts lingered about how much their input would really be heard. For instance, PDET participants in the departments of Putumayo and Caquetá proposed for their PATR that these subregions be declared areas free of mining and transgenic seeds, but it seemed difficult that the new government would take account of these proposals. Without the opportunity to discuss these fundamental issues or any support from the ART to either open spaces for dialogue or advance the ethnic communities' positions, the communities felt that there was no progress and the status quo prevailed.

> There is the view that Black and Indigenous people are a problem for development and that we are always putting obstacles to the development of the country. An ethnic approach was needed from the beginning to avoid conflicts. The capitalist system is not being questioned; that was a mistake of the FARC.[24]

Furthermore, the lurking threat of violence from paramilitary groups with shadowy links to parts of the state is another way in which elite interests are maintained and enforced in rural Colombia. The government has not provided

23 Interview, Pablo Abitbol, email correspondence, September 2018.
24 Interview, Charo Mina.

the necessary security guarantees for social leaders to safely participate in the PDETs, yet it is no exaggeration to say that some were risking their lives by participating. In 2018, two participants in the Urabá PDET were assassinated. The Pacífico Medio and Meta-Guaviare PDETs were delayed because of threats to ART functionaries. Even where leaders have not been directly threatened, persistent insecurity dramatically reduces the quality of participation, as people are aware that they cannot speak freely (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies 2019; Velásquez *et al.* 2020).

Probably the fact that affected the process the most was timing. The presidential elections in 2018 and the change of government by July of that year generated a lot of uncertainty about the continuity of the program. The Democratic Centre's candidate Iván Duque, supported by Álvaro Uribe, ran a campaign against the peace accords; thus, there was a fear that the Peace Agreement would be reversed. The ART then worked against the clock to have ready as many PATR as possible before the change of government, so that the communities could have the leverage—with a program approved in their hands—to claim for the implementation of the programs under a new political setting.

However, due to time constraints, the communities claimed that there was a lack of reflection and the PATR became a "shopping list," without a deep understanding and dialogue of knowledge between the communities and the institutions. As a local leader from Urabá put it: "It is not only talking about the construction of a school or college, but the contents of them, the approach, etc."[25] Not only the failure to adapt to the rhythms of the communities, but also the severe time shortage even by Western standards did not allow for a profound discussion of the territory and its development. Thus, a technical peacebuilding approach based on linear processes prevailed over "alternative temporal registers" (Lederach 2017).

Also, the fact that the ART was in charge of processing all the information generated in the Assemblies caused distrust, because the communities expected some feedback from each meeting to know what had been included and excluded, and how it was written on paper. Some participants also felt that, at the end, the ART had the last word in the process and some procedures were imposed and not concerted. The territorial approach was expected to help strengthen territorial organizations in terms of gaining more autonomy, executing resources, and overseeing the whole process. Nevertheless, due to how the methodology was designed, the ART ended up controlling all the information, the procedures, and

25 Intervention of a community leader from Urabá in the assembly held in Quibdó, August 2018.

finally also the budget discussions. In addition, the PDETs created new structures of participation that multiplied the spaces of dialogue at the local level, resulting in an overload of work for regional leaders who had to take part in many long meetings per week and could not balance different activities.[26]

a. The Ethnic Territorially Focused Development Program of Chocó

We have focused on ethnic issues in the PDETs as they offer a framework to clearly see the contestation between state-building and the emancipatory frames of peacebuilding. We extend that logic in our focus on Chocó, described by a member of the IEANPE as the ethnic PDET par excellence: a region almost entirely composed of ethnic collective titles, with a strong organizing history and a notable level of success in their coordination with the ART.[27] As such, the Chocó case represents a unique opportunity to examine both the extent and limitations of the possibilities for creating emancipatory outcomes in state-led participatory peacebuilding. As we will demonstrate, Chocó's ethnic organizations offered a strong challenge to the PDET program, demanding a broad shift in both its process and outcomes. Despite significant advances, many of these changes seem more symbolic today than substantial, given the tightening government control and stagnant advances of the PATR implementation.

For the regional director of the ART in Chocó, Elisabeth "Betty" Moreno,[28] the design of the PDET in Chocó represented "a challenge to the centralist and technical approach from Bogotá." According to her, there were many ethnic-territorial challenges during the design of the program due to the knowledge gap between the center and the periphery of the country:

> The relationship with the national level is not easy due to the ignorance of the regional context and the conviction of the technicians and officials of the national level that the proposal designed for the country should be executed in a homogeneous manner, ignoring that technicalities that are seen from the national level clash with regional diversities, in a country that is not homogeneous, that is diverse, that has regional differences marked by geography, culture, history, territories, but above all, development.[29]

26 Informal conversation with participants during the meetings.
27 Interview, IEANPE representative 1, Bogotá, February 2020.
28 Former director of the Office of Victims in Chocó.
29 Interview, Betty Moreno, Quibdó, August 24, 2018.

This determination to proceed with the PDET structure established in Bogotá created huge challenges to ethnic territorial unity, since the selection of prioritized territories was based on the administrative divisions of the territory even though collective territories and *resguardos* do not have frontiers and follow the logic of the rivers that dominate the department's geography. The state's lack of knowledge about this reality was clear when the transportation budget for the PDETs did not include waterways. As a result, it was necessary to make an addendum to the transportation contract that delayed the start of the PDET in Chocó by months. In addition, the budget was never enough to transport people through rivers, and most of the meetings had to be financed by the international community. Plus, in Chocó, only 12 out of 30 municipalities were prioritized for budgetary reasons, causing a lot of discomfort among the community councils and cabildos, since the whole territory was affected by the conflict and state abandonment.[30]

Like other ethnic PDET regions, initially the ART began implementing this PDET without acknowledging or inviting ethnic leadership. Rosendo Blandón, legal representative of the influential Consejo Comunitario Mayor de la Asociación Campesina Integral del Atrato (COCOMACIA), explained that the ART did not invite them to meetings, and they had to show up uninvited, covering the costs of their own travel, so that the ART acknowledged the organization.

Nevertheless, the ethnic-territorial organizations of Chocó, led by the FISCH and the Mesa Indígena—the main Black and Indigenous regional organizations of Chocó—got deeply involved in the development of the PDET, taking on a strong leadership role in socializing the program in Chocó, providing additional layer of accountability by verifying the identity of ethnic leaders and coordinating the relationships between the communities and the ART.[31]

The first battle for ethnic communities was to secure a mechanism of special concertation as established in the PDET decree, so the communities could autonomously define the different steps of the process. This mechanism was unique nationwide; Chocó was the only region where all the ethnic peoples of the subregion succeeded in creating a single, unified ethnic route for PDET implementation. The representatives of 64 community councils, 55 indigenous authorities, representatives of the Antioquia Indigenous Organization (Organización

30 The subregion Chocó includes 12 municipalities from Chocó (Unguía, Acandí, Riosucio, Carmen del Darién, Medio Atrato, Condoto, Medio San Juan, Bojayá, Sipí, Nóvita, Istmina, Litoral de San Juan) and two from Antioquia (Vigía del Fuerte and Murindó). The last two are similar to those of Chocó in economic, population, and cultural terms. In different meetings, the ethnic organizations formally requested the ART to include the whole department, but this was not considered by the government since the chronogram was already established.

31 Interview, COCOMACIA Youth Leader, Quibdó, June 2019.

Indígena de Antioquia, OIA), as well as of the FISCH and the Mesa Indígena, participated in the event and decided upon the ethnic route, despite of the timing and budget constraints established by the ART. Although it was supposed to be an autonomous concertation, the ART was present in the meetings and established some limits about the possible duration and calendar of the assemblies to fulfil its own schedule.

At the end of this concertation process, the ART agreed to shift the name of the subregion's PDET to PDET-E, the "E" standing for "Ethnic" to reflect how the entire PDET process of Chocó was intended as a community-controlled process reflecting Afro and Indigenous methodologies. As Nixon Chamorro, a representative of the Mesa Indígena argued, the leaders pushed the ART to understand that Chocó is a unique place that requires a completely different structure, programming, and set of proposals.[32] The Kroc Institute called the change a "positive deviation" from the peace deal, evidence that the implementation of peace must be flexible enough to accommodate local demands. Because of this shift, they argue that the ethnic leaders created more space to fully integrate ethnic development plans into the PDETs (Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies 2019). Betty Moreno argued that the consequences of this shift to a PDET-E would be far reaching, not just in the methodology, but in the implementation as well: community leaders would have a leadership role in the implementation, and PDET projects would have to be directly linked to ethnic cosmovisions.[33]

Yet, the inclusion of the ethnic perspective has proved to be in some ways more symbolic than substantial. In addition to the name change, the Indigenous and Black leaders requested that the eight pillars[34] of the national PDETs be adapted to the categories established within their ethno-development and life plans.[35] Yet, after all this exercise with the regional ART, the information of all the local, municipal, and regional assemblies had to be processed according to the national systems, classified in the eight defined pillars. Thus, although the name had changed, in the end, they still had to work within the national framework.

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32 Interview, Mesa Indígena representative, Quibdó, July 2019.

33 Interview, Betty Moreno, Quibdó, July 2019.

34 The pillars discussed in the PDETs are: 1. Social organization of rural property and land use; 2. Economic reactivation and agricultural production; 3. Rural education; 4. Housing, drinking water, and sanitation; 5. Rural health; 6. Right to food; 7. Reconciliation, coexistence, and peace; 8. Infrastructure and land adaptation.

35 For the Afro communities, the five pillars are: economic development, social development, development and sustainable development, development and ethnic-territorial strengthening, and development of infrastructure. For the Indigenous communities, the five pillars are: natural ordering of the territory and economic development, social development and gender equity, sustainable and environmental development, development and ethnic-territorial strengthening, and development of infrastructure.

On a positive note, the PATR in Chocó was approved in a record time despite its late start, altered methodology, and severe budget constraints. Ethnic communities, used to the fact that things in Chocó always seem late, congratulated themselves on a technical level for their successful coordination with the ART. However, speed prevailed over the depth of reflections about what kind of territorial development they sought for their territories. Chocoan leaders claimed that the rush to finish according to the ART-imposed timelines made the dialogue between state and communities shallow: many people could not participate effectively, and necessary conversations reflecting the plurality of visions on Chocó's economic model had to be cut short (Consejo Nacional de Paz Afrocolombiana 2020).

Beyond technicalities, all the intercultural discussions and debates that took place in the territories remained in the territories. This means that when a leader explains why and how they need to recover their ancestral medicine plants and knowledge, and how it should be made compatible with Western medicine, their insights were lost because the information was processed in general terms that simply stated "health system with an ethnic focus" without explaining what that focus would explicitly imply. Thus, despite some epistemic conciliation, the hegemonic positivist and centralist methodology impeded the exchange of knowledges from transcending specific exercises. This is extremely worrisome for the case of Chocó, where both ethnic communities have gone through years of detachment from their cultures due to the arrival of foreign companies and armed actors that have altered their traditional systems of production, collaborative work, cultural beliefs, and practices.

One of the main colonial footprints in the daily lives of Chocoans is that many of them tend to understand development in Andean terms, referring to the central regions of the country that are traversed by the Andes and whose modes of production vary due to their geographical location, even though the Pacific region displays other natural characteristics. For instance, one of the main cases of disagreement among the local communities is the role mining should play in territorial development. Even at the interior of Black community councils, there is a strong division between those who defend traditional or even mechanized mining as long as it is done by themselves, and those who defend a territory free of mining. Most Indigenous organizations, on the contrary, oppose mining activities because they view these practices as damaging the Mother Earth, and thus claim for a more sustainable and harmonious development model that respects nature. Other Indigenous leaders have adopted a westernized discourse that includes the perspective of sustainability, biodiversity, eco-guardians, payment for environmental services, among others, that reproduce a hegemonic micro-physics

of power that gives shape to their subjectivities and identities as collaborators and indispensable actors of a "sustainable and green economic growth/development" (Asher and Ojeda 2014; McKay 2018; Castro-Gómez 2005). This tension was also not caught in the PATR, and these discussions were cut short.

Similarly, regarding this point, there were many initiatives related to the pillar of economic development that some saw as Andean solutions to Pacific needs. As Elías Córdoba, a well-known Black urban intellectual from Quibdó, explains, "people need to re-read the territory; otherwise, they take bad decisions such as extractivism and economic activities that are not viable in Chocoan soils." As Córdoba argues, the community did not have adequate technical support for discussing this pillar and followed a reading of the territory that was not in accordance with their own resources and traditional diversified productive systems.[36] This coloniality of knowledge/power happens because the centralist discourse of the state has always been that Black and Indigenous peoples are an "impediment for development," in comparison with the mestizo population of the Andean region; hence, many local people assume that the Andean model is the solution. Thus, the lack of knowledge of the centralist state about the needs of the periphery has reproduced the same mistakes for centuries and based the development of these regions in extractive strategies that only benefit big national and international companies.

In addition to some fundamental differences over the economic model in Chocó, divisions along identity lines—particularly gender—hampered the ability of Chocó's PDET to advance emancipatory outcomes. The ART sought to favor women's participation by expressly calling on women to participate and highlighting the importance of women's contributions at every meeting. In addition, the international community through agencies such as the UN Women accompanied some of the processes to train women to be able to actively participate in the assemblies. Yet, the lack of time and the rush to mobilize women implied that their participation was more symbolic than effective, based more on numbers than on content. However, the patriarchal culture that permeates ethnic communities was not discussed as such; male leaders had a protagonist role in the meetings, and women were invited to talk only as a requisite to comply with.[37]

The communities and the regional ART team did succeed in consolidating a negotiated vision for the territory, making explicit the ethnic territorial autonomy, sovereignty, and governance, and their spiritual connection with the

36 Interview, Elías Córdoba, Quibdó, 2018.

37 Observation from the author's participatory role in the meetings and insights from informal conversations with workers of the UN Women Office in Chocó.

territory, as the PATR vision summarizes it: "(Chocó) will be the product of a commitment to competitive social, political, and economic development, in harmony with the natural and cultural heritage, guaranteeing territorial autonomy, sovereignty, and governance, with a differential ethnic, gender, and generational approach" (PATR 2018).

Unfortunately, the document does not go into detail to explain how the ethnic-territorial perspective can be implemented in practice by centralist institutions in Bogotá if the PDET-E is finally implemented. Thus, the analysis of the PATR can be concluded with a bittersweet remark: despite the regional efforts to accommodate ethnic worldviews, the program still reproduces the overall centralist view of the nation-state through technical systems, timing and financial constraints, and the lack of understanding of the periphery and its ethnic dimensions. The participation and articulation of the ethnic communities around the process thus represents a mechanism of co-option, by linking them to the rigidities of the system and establishing a dependency dynamic in which the communities demand things to a providing state, but this does not improve the ethnic capacity to self-administer public policies in their territories. In the signature of the PATR in Quibdó, the leader of the OIA Eugenio Bailarín concluded: "The PDET-E has to navigate five centuries; we have already suffered discrimination for five centuries; now they have to reinforce the sense of belonging. We need healthy hearts and spirits in connection with nature. Return the institutions to the people."

Conclusions: Whither PDET Implementation?

In general, the participation of ethnic communities in the PDETs did not represent a profound change in the traditional design of public policies. The ethnic communities were more objects of study than knowledge producers. The state collected an enormous database of the needs of these communities, but there is very little information about when the new government is going to fund all the proposals included in the PATR and how their implementation is going to be coordinated with the communities (as of December 2020). The PATR itself makes this lack of certainty over implementation explicit:

> The initiatives of these municipal pacts will be technically reviewed based on feasibility and prioritized by the competent sectors of national and territorial levels, considering public policies, current regulations, and the particularities of the territory. Those that are feasible and prioritized may be implemented in the next 10 years, depending on budget availability, the

> fiscal framework of the national and territorial public sector, the offer of the private sector and international cooperation. (PATR 2018, 9).

This extractivism of information, far from reconciling the communities with the state, as Jaramillo envisioned, created a new opportunity for frustration and distancing. A clear sign of the lack of interest in the project was the absence of the governor and mayors of Chocó along the process; these authorities or their representatives only participated when they had to sign a document but did not accompany the discussions and were not interested in the results. As Betty Moreno remarks:

> We approached the 14 mayors and the governor, as well as regional entities, but I feel that the institutions are completely weak. The uncertainty about who is going to execute the resources is not attractive for the mayors and the governor, especially when it feels that they will have a strong oversight by the communities. It is perceived that the mayors have deep differences with community councils and indigenous cabildos regarding the issues of territorial administration and the management of property resources.[38]

And yet, the national government is offering these same actors who abstained from participating in the PDETs a leading role in channeling its implementation. In a program called "Obras por Impuestos" (Public Works for Taxes), business interests are offered major tax breaks if they implement PDET projects, offering them the opportunity to pick and choose PDET programs that align with their commercial interests. Municipal and departmental politicians have also been accorded a central role in the implementation. The ART and the Presidential Council for Stabilization and Consolidation (Consejería Presidencial para la Estabilización y la Consolidación, CPEC)[39] centered their PDET efforts in early 2020 on pushing newly elected politicians to include the PDETs in their development plans, asking each mayor to select three initiatives per pillar to prioritize (Consejería Presidencial para la Estabilización y la Consolidación 2020). Another key effort from the ART has been to budget and structure PDET proposals so that mayors can apply for government funding, essentially leaving implementation up to the inclinations of the mayors. Both approaches allow ample opportunity for local politicians to choose projects that advance their political and private interests.[40]

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38 Interview, Betty Moreno.
39 The CPEC is the agency charged with overseeing peace implementation.
40 Interview, FISCH representative 1, March 2020

The national government under Duque has also taken an active part in this "channeling" process in implementation, most notably through the creation of "Hojas de Ruta" ("Roadmaps"). The Hojas de Ruta are the solution the Duque administration has offered to remedy the problems with the PATRs, as they are seen as a laundry list of initiatives that lack structuration, budget, and interagency coordination. Though government officials are not necessarily incorrect in their analysis, the Hojas de Ruta create an opaque, technocratic process for the state to select which of the community initiatives they deem feasible and important (Ante Meneses 2019). Originally, there was no formalized role for civilian participation in defining the Hojas de Ruta. Community pressure, supported by allies within the ART and the Procuraduría, forced the Duque administration to allow for some participation.[41] Still, even actors inside the Procuraduría are unsure of the eventual role of civilians in the Hojas de Ruta process.[42] As such, the Hojas de Ruta represent an ongoing lack of trust from the government towards civilians, a perception that civilians are unable to articulate realistic or cohesive proposals.[43]

Nevertheless, ethnic organizations across the country continue to find innovative ways to keep inserting their voices in the PDET implementation. In Chocó, the FISCH appeared uninvited to meetings between the ART and municipal mayors to ensure that there was some oversight from social leaders when the mayors selected PDET priorities; in addition, the FISCH has been designing its own Hoja de Ruta as a way of following the official process.[44] Other ethnic organizations have constructed *veedurías*, civilian accountability bodies, and other strategies to monitor and shape PDET implementation. Thus, we conclude that although the PDET initiative fell short of overcoming the "abyssal lines" (Sousa Santos, 2014) between the center and the periphery, it nevertheless reflects insistent, ongoing efforts from society to reshape the PDET project towards an emancipatory vision emerging from the grassroots.

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