

## Colombia's Negative Peace - a Challenge for Civil Society?

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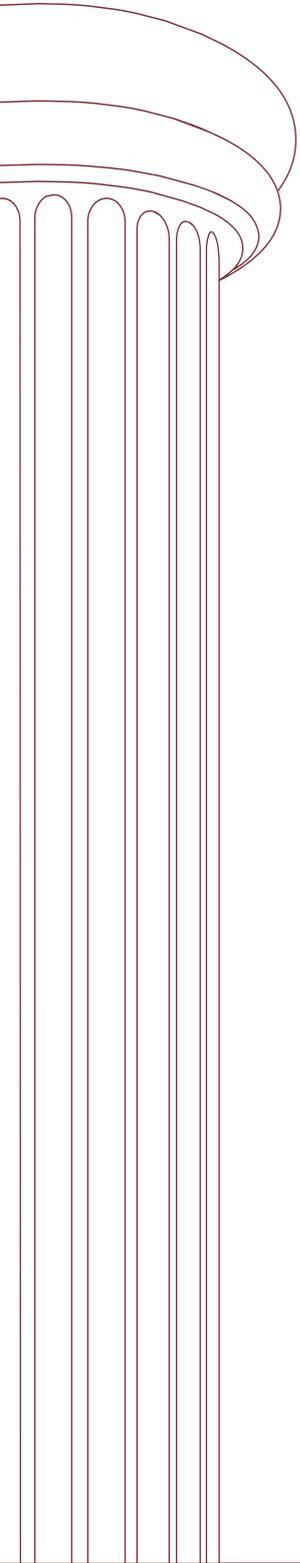
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# MAECENATA



Wolfgang Chr. Goede

## Colombia's Negative Peace – A Challenge for Civil Society?

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## **Abstract**

*Colombia two and half years after the historic peace treaty with the FARC: The longest civil war in history has formally been pacified – but as yet, violence continues to rock the country. This dossier is about Colombia's current status, what has been accomplished, and what remains to be done; about conflict lines and reconciliation strategies; about how peace researchers, journalists and human rights workers assess the situation; and about peace-making efforts of civil society in Colombia and Germany. I will argue that civil society has a unique role and potential in mediating conflicts, and in rendering peace-building processes more effective and in introducing innovative concepts to reframe academia and society.*

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Wolfgang Chr. Goede

## **Colombia's Negative Peace – A Challenge for Civil Society?**

A Dossier on the Struggle of the Global South with its Heritage  
and Post-Modernization

## 1. A Bloody History

To do history justice: Since the beginning of time, Latin America has never been a haven of peace, as some myths suggest. Its native populations, from the Aztecs to the Incas were fierce warriors. Their mighty empires were built on constant warfare, of conquest and submission. The Spanish conquerors in their alliance with the Catholic church perpetuated the continent's constant struggle between privileged and enslaved, rich and poor, empowered and disempowered. The uprising for justice, equality and human rights and alternating submission to authoritarian systems and dictators seems to be within the genetic code of the subcontinent.

Mexico's new president Andrés Manuel López Obrador recently caused political turmoil, when he demanded that the King of Spain and the Pope apologize for the conquista, which left millions of the indigenous people dead and impoverished the region due to robbery, looting of its precious metals and land appropriation. The statesman's intervention is in line with the above and thereby completely legitimate, nonetheless he goes out on a populist limb with his claim. Why? National governments throughout the continent had centuries to make up for losses and injustices. Instead, the elites indulge blatantly in corruption, mismanagement, political scandals, get caught in fruitless battles between the extreme right and left. The Spaniards transferred to Latin America the feudal society of the middle ages. The colonies, later as independent states, missed out on the age of enlightenment and the democratic revolution. This may serve as an excuse to unscrupulous politicians, but does not let them off the hook when it comes to searching for new and suitable political concepts to deal with this historic and burdensome heritage and systemic deficits.

This background and context as an introduction to the subject may help to understand the situation of Colombia as an integral part of the Americas, and explain why Hispanic America is so much more vulnerable and instable than Anglo America. A huge obstacle for a better peace are the subcontinent's extremes, especially notable in Colombia. It remains one of the countries with the most unequal land distribution in the world. A report by Oxfam International shows that 1 percent of the population holds 80 percent of the land, leaving just 20 percent of the land distributed amongst the remaining 99 percent of the population<sup>1</sup>.

Since the late 1940s, this fact has instigated open violence and fueled a civil war, at first mainly between the major political parties, since the 1970s increasingly between various guerilla groups and the state as well as landholders who fought back with paramilitary forces. Added to this, there is Colombia's favorable climate, as another extreme, so to speak, which allows

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Matthews 2018. In: PBI Colombia <https://pbicolombia.org/2018/01/02/so-much-land-in-the-hands-of-so-few/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

for a high biodiversity and up to three crops each year, and provides for excellent conditions to cultivate coca plants. This did not only lure drug cartels such as Pablo Escobar's Medellín cartel, but also underground combatants as a source to finance their operations.

This gets us to the third reason why Colombia is very special in the subcontinent's societal, agrarian and also geographic landscape. Its highly diverse topography, hardly accessible rainforests, jungles, mountains make it easy for illegal groups to simply disappear. In the remote areas of the country, which are rich in natural hideouts, mainly in parts of the Caribbean and Pacific coast, the Andes and Amazonia, the state and its authorities, police and the justice system have very little presence. They are corrupt and largely defunct, so gangs and mafia-type organizations as well as guerilla and paramilitary forces rule. This brief excursion into history and geography is essential to comprehend the circumstances of violence and war, truce and peace in Colombia.

To complete this overview, we also need to recognize that the concept of civil society as an actor and player in politics and society is still rather unknown in Colombia and yet needs to be introduced into the mainstream of thinking in this country, alongside with Latin America as a whole. While "civil society" and "citizens' participation" are increasingly used in the media and political statements, and the notion even shows up in the peace contract between the Colombian Government and the FARC, it needs to be filled with definitions and philosophy, activities and goals, if it wants to be accepted as a major field of civic engagement, completion and also correction of the political, economic, technological dealings of the nation.

As the historic rundown may indicate, the Hispanic parts of the Americas remain largely patriarchal with "caudillo"-type leaders (such as General Francisco Franco). While the North became the cradle of our modern society, the South remained an archaic society, somewhat frozen in the medieval system and ruled by long-standing privileged elites and family clans. It is the overall hypothesis of this dossier that this is not only the cause of many of the violent disruptions in Colombia, but that the stumbling peace process could be stabilized and enhanced by strong civil society players and influencers. They could initiate processes, which would make up for historic deficits and promote a new post-modern, future-oriented understanding of peace-making as a key element of a democratic culture embedded in an appropriate scientific framework.

## 2. Peace Treaty Essentials

Colombia's internal conflicts were not only fueled by the narco-mafia around Pablo Escobar as a self-proclaimed Robin Hood and his warfare against politicians and media, which escalated in the 1980's, but was overlaid by stepped up activities of insurgent forces, mostly driven by a communist agenda. After Escobar's death in 1993 the guerilla detected the lucrative trade with cocaine to finance its activities and acquire sophisticated arms and turned into a narco-guerilla. The rebel movement first had climaxed in 1985, when members of the M19 guerilla occupied the palace of justice in Bogotá, which resulted in great bloodshed and political shock waves.

In the aftermath, the Colombian government signed a peace treaty with the rebels. With a variety of measures, it was attempted to integrate them into the society. They were allowed to found a party of their own, which became a significant political force. It did not last, because many ex-rebels were shot in acts of revenge. One of the few who survived and remained a controversial political figure until today is Gustavo Petro, former mayor of Bogotá and 2018 presidential candidate. This may demonstrate how Colombia has tried to deal with the guerilla problem, with some success, but is far from resolving it and treating its underlying roots.

After M19 had vanished, the FARC moved into the vacuum and became extremely powerful in the 1990s, to the point that by the turn of the century it controlled major parts of the country. Its "trademark" and substantial source of income became the kidnapping of influential citizens, among others the Green Party leader Ingrid Betancourt, who remained a FARC hostage for six years. The government's policy at the end of the century had been dialogue and negotiations, during which they had granted a territory as large as Switzerland to the insurgents. By the year 2000, FARC controlled major arterial roads in the country, traveling became unsafe, rebels were moving in on large metropolitan areas like Medellín. The sharp turning point was 2002, when Álvaro Uribe was elected president. He canceled negotiations and called for an all-out rollback of the FARC. By the end of his two terms, Uribe had driven the rebels back into the outback. When in 2010, his defense minister and protégé Juan Manuel Santos became his successor, the new president immediately announced the return to dialogue and peace talks. They took place between 2012 and 2016 in Cuba's capital Havana. A nation-wide referendum for the approval of the treaty failed in the fall 2016, so that last-minute changes and adaptations were made, and both chambers of the Colombian Congress passed it, resulting in Santos receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016. Before the end of his term in 2018, the outgoing president tried to include the Eln guerilla in the treaty, but failed to reach an agreement. So, actually, the armed conflict between the Colombian government and its adversaries never came to an official end but has rumbled on.

The legal agreement with FARC is over 300 pages long. It is a meticulous document with numerable layers in a serious attempt to nail down all the odds of the difficult peace process after decades of warfare. It regulates the surrender of weapons, reincorporation of the rebels with financial support and vocational training as well as a rural reform, which had been the main objective of the civil war. However, the land was not divided and redistributed, against the personal interests of the great land owners, oligarchs and historic elite (to which both, Uribe as well as Santos belong, alongside most Colombian presidents and many office holders in politics and administration).

In the wording of document, the treaty calls for an “integral rural reform” with an improved infrastructure, such as better access of marginal populations to the markets. Another important part of the treaty is a more proficient political participation, which explicitly names and includes civil society and its resources. What is essential in this section is that the ex-rebels were granted the right to establish the FARC party to funnel their fight into parliamentary channels. As of the national elections in 2018, they had been granted ten seats, five in each house. FARC’s candidate for the president’s office had to quit the race, after he had been attacked at public appearances and eventually suffered from a heart attack.

The corner stone of the peace agreement, however, is the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, short JEP (Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz).

Here is a short run-down of the highly complicated legal content. The truth commission tries to preserve the historical memory and reach an understanding of the conflict’s multiple dimensions to promote co-existence of victims and offenders. To reconcile the families of the victims a unit is established, which will search for missing persons. Almost 300,000 persons were killed and 60,000 disappeared in the conflict (with 8 million Colombians – out of a current population of nearly 50 million – affected and thus victims). While JEP will “grant the broadest possible amnesty” in light violations, crimes against humanity, genocide, hostage taking, torture, extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, child abduction, recruitment of minors are not eligible for pardon, but will be punished with up to eight years of imprisonment.

This not only applies to FARC fighters, but explicitly also to supporters of paramilitary operations, however seemingly no reference is made to members of the army, who committed atrocious crimes in this conflict. Five bodies were created for the investigation and five additional ones for the peace tribunal. Persons as prominent as the Pope and the Secretary General of the UN appoint members to this tribunal.

Extradition (in general to the USA, greatly feared by Colombians because of severe punishments including death sentences) are excluded in the legal catalogue. It includes reparations, which apply to all responsible parties, which for example are supposed to engage in environmental conservation projects and reforestation. Land restitution measures are addressed, which means to return disappropriated farmland to their former owners. Though being of supreme priority, this in practice is often times extremely difficult in Colombia, due to the lack of legal titles. Unclear remains how to proceed with the ex-rebels' financial assets, which they gained with illegal activities.

### **3. Ongoing Political Shifts**

President Santos, whose term expired in mid 2018, was under strong political pressure. The fact that he had turned from Uribe's loyal defense minister and chief operator of the fierce roll-back strategy into a staunch and committed peace negotiator, had never been fully accepted, neither by the political system nor by a large part of the population. Especially Uribe, who eventually founded a new party and became a senator with ongoing strong political power, attacked his successor on numerous occasions and raised doubts regarding his moral and political credibility. Santos, in turn, failed to convince the majority of the population of the necessity of negotiations with FARC and a non-military settlement.

Due to both, agitation of the Uribe camp and ongoing reservations of the citizens, Santos lost the referendum, which was a severe blow to the peace process, before its implementation had started. Another burden was the slow and delayed establishment of camps throughout the country, in which FARC rebels were gathered, before being reintegrated into civil life. Despite serious efforts, up to the end of his term the Santos government was unable to involve the remaining EIn guerilla in the peace treaty, so all in all it remained incomplete. This helps to understand why, in the congressional and presidential elections in 2018, Colombia underwent a political shift to the right. The so far largely unknown Iván Duque, candidate of the Uribe party, won the presidency, with statements among others that the peace process and treaty needed substantial adjustments.

Under his presidency the country has not found peace. FARC dissidents, who did not surrender are fighting with criminal gangs over the control of the profitable trade with cocaine, especially in remote rural regions, where the presence of law enforcement agencies historically ranges between weak and non-existent. Especially in these areas the violence against civil leaders and human rights defenders contributes to high insecurity levels, which causes international

protests, mainly from countries within the European Union. In January 2019, the Eln challenged Duque's authority with an attack on installations of the Colombian army. The president reacted with the cancelation of negotiations with the insurgents, which in turn increased international pressure on him.

German president Steinmeier visited him in February 2019 and urged the continuation of peace talks. In March, a video of a FARC commander caused irritations. He had gone into hiding, while another one had been imprisoned, with a long winding legal dispute about how to apply JEP requirements. The video statement could be interpreted as a regret to have surrendered. That led up to an angry outcry on the political right to stop JEP. In April 2019, German foreign minister Maas was in Bogotá and promised financial support for the peace process. In fact, besides being legally highly complicated, the implementation of the treaty is heavily underfinanced. Worse, the entire peace process is overshadowed by the escalating political crisis in neighboring Venezuela, constituting a risk for Colombia and the entire region.

Millions of refugees have come to Colombia and compete with the Colombians for jobs, food, and housing. While internally, the population shows hostile reactions, the Trump administration has secretly considered the deployment of troops to Colombia for a military intervention. This has shifted the focus to external threats and in the course of this the internal peace issue is losing relevance, at least temporarily.

#### **4. FARC Camp Insights**

To provide some more shades and insights, the author would like to contribute at this point some impressions he collected during an on-site visit of a FARC camp in March 2018, which constituted a fairly unique opportunity of direct contact with rebel forces, their motivations and expectations<sup>2</sup>. The camp was located in the Ituango region in the North of the Colombian State Antioquia, close to the Ituango dam, one of the continent's largest hydropower projects. A fellow journalist, who had interviewed FARC members before had opened the door for an invitation.

The camp, containing several hundred ex-rebels was accessible only by a dirt road connected to the nearest town 50 kilometers away. The chauffeur, a motorcyclist, had to pass several

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<sup>2</sup> Wolfgang Chr. Goede 2018. Friedensprozess in Kolumbien. Der Frieden wird an der Basis gelebt. In: Rundbrief 4/18 des Bund für soziale Verteidigung e.V., S. 5 <https://www.soziale-verteidigung.de/fileadmin/dokumente/rundbriefe/RB184online.pdf> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

police checkpoints. In the close vicinity of the camp, UN blue helmet troops were deployed, to which the rebels had surrendered their weapons and which supervised compliance with the regulations. Right in front of the camp was a unit of the Colombian army, which sent regular patrols through the camp. The atmosphere around and inside the camp was relaxed.

The central building of the installation, a sort of community hall, was decorated with the emblem of the recently founded FARC party and reminded one of the current national election campaign with a FARC presidential candidate. In another public building, former rebels were playing pool. A third was decorated with pictures, phrases and guidelines of the FARC leadership, and very prominently with Che Guevara's famous image. The center of the settlement was surrounded by dozens of makeshift barracks, which served as homes for the residents. Women engaged in washing and taking care of the gardens, men in painting and maintenance work. The camp was clean and well-kept. Patrolling army soldiers and ex-rebels apparently had a friendly relationship.

The author was allowed to move around freely, to talk to everyone and to take photographs. The day-long visit included an interview with the camp chief and former FARC commander. Most of the residents were from the Ituango area and came from peasant families. The region is part of the country's outback, with little official infrastructure in terms of protection and administration. The majority of the interviewees reported that from an early age they and their families had been the target of paramilitary forces and land robbery. They had joined the FARC voluntarily as a means of self-protection and mostly very young without being pressured.

As to their current status, there were complaints that the promised food allowances had not arrived, the lack of internet access and shortage of money because delayed government payments. (Transitional financial help of two million Colombian Pesos per month – equal to 700 Euros and more than three minimum salaries – had aroused the Colombian public and not eased the acceptance of the peace treaty.) There was little optimism that the government would stick to its commitment of vocational training, urgently needed because most of the inhabitants of the camp had spent the major part of their life in the guerilla without any training in civil professions.

As the camp was not fenced in, some ex fighters regularly left to help out in surrounding farms. It was told that some had left already for good and had returned to their villages. This was risky because they were not protected against revenge of old adversaries. On the other hand, they might have speculated to easily escape the complex judicial procedures, as specified in the treaty. Medellín papers had reported on well-known FARC combatants who had been sighted

in local shopping malls. This is only one of many facets to show how difficult an orderly compliance with peace stipulations is. An interesting view related to this issue was offered at the Latin American Conference in Weimar in 2017 by German and Colombian panelists<sup>3</sup>: That denazification after 1945 only managed to punish very few delinquents, whereas the persecutors let go the grand majority, which illustrates the difficulties of large-scale judicial proceedings in difficult political times and insufficient resources.

## 5. CAPAZ Peace Institute's View

In addition to these insights, these on-site interviews shall be complemented with key statements of an interview, which the author conducted with the director of the German Colombian Peace Institute CAPAZ in February 2019<sup>4</sup>. CAPAZ was founded by then foreign minister Frank Walter Steinmeier in 2017 as a German contribution to the unfolding enactment of the peace treaty. It is an independent platform, and predominantly an academic institution, which assesses the process, coordinates peace investigations of both Colombian and German research institutes, and organizes peace seminars for students and researchers in the two partner countries.

“Colombia’s Negative Peace”<sup>5</sup>, as the title of this dossier, stems from CAPAZ director Stefan Peters’ opening statement that luckily “the weapons remain silent, the number of victims is decreasing, and the peace process is underway”, despite many unpleasant developments (as singled out in the aforementioned observations). He then cited the leading peace researcher Johan Galtung who would have called this a “negative peace”. Peters emphasized that “to win the peace will remain a long process” and could easily take decades, “if Colombia does not manage to finally resolve its structural problems”. As an example, he pointed out the obstacles for Colombians to move up the social ladder. He referred to OECD statistics according to which the country’s marginalized populations need 11 generations, which is 300 years, to become middle class citizens. This is why the drug economy is so attractive for so many Colombians. “Glyphosat and other means to destroy coca plantations will not solve the problem”, Peters reiterated.

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<sup>3</sup> Lateinamerikaverein 2017. Zwischen Euphorie und Blues – Kolumbien auf dem Lateinamerikatag 2017. In: Kolumbien Aktuell 104 [https://www.lateinamerikaverein.de/fileadmin/LAV/Veranstaltungen/LAT\\_2017/Follow-up/ka\\_104\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.lateinamerikaverein.de/fileadmin/LAV/Veranstaltungen/LAT_2017/Follow-up/ka_104_1_.pdf) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>4</sup> CAPAZ Instituto Colombo-Alemán para la Paz <https://www.instituto-capaz.org> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>5</sup> Wolfgang Chr. Goede 2019. Interview mit Professor Dr. Stefan Peters. In: BBE Newsletter für Engagement und Partizipation in Europa 3/2019 <https://www.b-b-e.de/fileadmin/inhalte/aktuelles/2019/04/enl-3-2019-goede-interview.pdf> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

In comparison to other insurgents or criminals, negotiations with the FARC were comparatively easy due to its vertical communist hierarchy. Other groups are not accessible and their illegal acts become an end in itself. As to Colombia's so far futile attempts to fight the guerilla with military means, the CAPAZ director responded that "to fight violence with violence is extremely problematic and has produced terrible suffering in the past". That is a heavy burden for the future. Experience teaches: "A military solution does not work in Colombia." Questioned about the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, Peters regrets the lack of funds for searching missing persons. He considers this a major element for the reconciliation between victims and offenders. And, last but not least: The "snail pace of the integral rural reform is a serious jeopardy for the entire peace act".

CAPAZ contributes to peace by bringing together former FARC combatants, security forces and soldiers. "They develop empathy, learn from each other and understand the motivations." This is what the director calls practical "peace education", also as an effective prevention tool. Interestingly, many members of the FARC, paramilitary forces and soldiers who committed crimes belong to the marginal population. Mutual contacts and conversations bridge the gap of ignorance and misunderstanding, "as president Steinmeier pointed out in his 2018 Christmas address", adds Peters, in an effort to come to a more peaceful society.

As a special service, CAPAZ sponsors the publication of a so called "Policy Brief"<sup>6,7</sup>, which regularly assesses the latest developments around peace in Colombia. The first edition of 2019, written by Carlos A. Guevara, a Colombian human rights investigator, dealt with the precarious situation of social leaders in the country. The author claims that between 2016 and 2018, a total of 431 social leaders and activists for human rights were killed in Colombia. One of the reasons is a power vacuum, which the disarmed FARC left. The social leaders are the ones who provide structure and order and thus become the target of the criminal groups, which strive for the control of the drug business. Guevara criticizes the Duque government for new regulations in the implementation of the peace treaty, which have led to "discoordination, disinformation and confusion". He warns that the abandoned peace talks with the Eln could provoke a new round of escalation of the armed conflict and civil war.

Guevara recommends that local authorities such as mayors receive more assistance with protection and prevention programs. Furthermore, social leaders should be given the

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<sup>6</sup> CAPAZ Policy Brief 1-2019 <https://www.instituto-capaz.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/FINAL-Policy-Brief-1-2019-web2.pdf> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>7</sup> CAPAZ-Dossier über die Gewalt an sozialen Führern 2019. In: Kolumbien Aktuell 108 [http://www.dkfev.de/downloads/KA\\_Archiv/ka\\_108\\_plus.pdf](http://www.dkfev.de/downloads/KA_Archiv/ka_108_plus.pdf) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

opportunity to participate much more actively in the peace process. Guevara demands beefed-up investigations and prosecution of offenders against civil leaders. Only half of the murders are cleared up. Considering that social leaders are a major part of the unofficial sector and therefore a backbone of the civil society in Colombia, Guevara recognizes them as a counterpart to criminal gangs and a surrogate to the invisible authorities. What he basically asks for is a Marshall plan for the protection and development of the Colombian civil society as a guarantee to proceed with the peace process. It would have been helpful, if he had defined who are social leaders, what exactly they do, and whom they are affiliated with – but this concretion is unfortunately missing in the entire international discussion about social leadership in Colombia.

## 6. Colombian Experts' Observations

At this stage, knowledgeable observers of Colombia and independent actors in the peace process shall be given a voice to provide further statements and judgements. Yvonne Massoth worked three years for Comundo<sup>8</sup>, the leading Swiss organization in the field of personnel development cooperation. She had been assigned to the Tumaco region at the Colombian Pacific coast right by the Panamerican Highway. This area has been a traditional hotspot for contraband and violence and today is considered one of the frontlines of the continuing conflict. In the Tumaco diocese she engaged in human rights, peace projects and worked with victims and Afro-Colombian communities. Having graduated in Ibero-Romance Culture (*Diplom-Kulturwirtin Iberoromanischer Kulturraum*), Massoth left on the organization's homepage a series of newsletters, in which she impressively documented her everyday challenges in a violent environment, alongside with valuable insights into the life, culture and survival of marginal populations in one of Colombia's remote rural areas. This life is very different from the one in the metropolitan areas such as Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Barranquilla. As a matter of fact, living in the city or in the country is like living in two different Colombias; many city residents never would dare to go to a place like Tumaco. This makes Massoth's work and observations even more valuable. As a contribution to this dossier, she wrote the following testimonial.

*“With the projects I was working in, we could strengthen community leaders in claiming rights for access to health care, education and sanitation, strengthen victims’*

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<sup>8</sup> Comundo: Förderung und Schutz der Menschenrechte  
[https://www.comundo.org/de/unser\\_wirken/weltweit/kolumbien/yvonne\\_massoth.cfm](https://www.comundo.org/de/unser_wirken/weltweit/kolumbien/yvonne_massoth.cfm) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

*organizations, help individual victims in emergency situations, create more bonding between different communities and train them in peace building. Furthermore, we were monitoring the implementation of the peace process and working with ex-combatants on their reincorporation.*

*A general challenge was and still is bringing public entities to grant rights to the population, to assume their duties in the peace process and stop corruption. Tumaco continues facing a humanitarian crisis, but governmental institutions tend to rely on the charity work realized by numerous NGOs and the church instead of investing in social topics themselves, and civil society still is too fragmented to fight corruption adequately. Furthermore, president Duque's policy doesn't look promising; the current government rather seems to turn back the achievements of the peace process and stick to its conservative attitude of investing in militarization and combatting drug trafficking with force.*

*Civil society organizations have to work hand in hand. Only by creating alliances, also internationally, we can prevent a failure of the peace process. Working in networks, also strengthening those in and between the communities is important in order to stop ongoing threats and murders by various armed groups, combined with promoting citizens' own initiative instead of continuing with the traditional "asistencialismo" (charity work which perpetuates dependence). Moreover, cooperation among social organizations avoids the exhaustion of the population and waste of resources. Finally, we should focus more on consciousness-raising and aim to realize integral processes."*

David Graaff<sup>9</sup> is a German resident in Colombia. He holds an MA in Latin American Studies and is a lecturer for International Relations at Colombia's National University in Medellín. His research as a PhD candidate (Catholic University of Eichstätt, Germany) focuses on the Colombian peace process and political ideology of the guerrilla movement. In addition, he works as a freelance journalist for several German media. Here is his assessment:

*"Colombian civil society had high hopes for the peace process, especially in those regions where people had suffered from decades of armed conflict. Hopes that have been disappointed time and again since the agreement was signed. Although the end of hostilities and the logic of war naturally represents an improvement in everyday life (it is not for nothing that a majority in Colombia's conflict regions voted for the peace*

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<sup>9</sup> David Graaff, Journalist Bogotá/Medellín <https://www.torial.com/david.graaff> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

*agreement in the referendum), much of what had been agreed in the peace treaty has still not been implemented, or only partially (coca substitution, distribution of land to small farmers, regional subsidy programs).*

*There are many reasons for this: there is a lack of adequate financing, of political will on the part of the government, and resistance from local, partly armed actors. In any case, this is the biggest problem: the armed conflict continues and, as hoped, there has been no real deepening of democracy, in which civil society actors can move and articulate freely and without fear. Their struggles for social betterment and, in some cases, against corporate interests are often answered with violence, which continues to be a political means in Colombia.”*

A third testimonial comes from a more international perspective. Its author is the UK citizen Mimi Yagoub, a freelance journalist and foreign correspondent in Colombia, who specializes in conflict and crime<sup>10</sup>.

*“At the moment the peace process is facing several institutional, social and financial challenges that are undermining its original goals. While many ex-FARC combatants that are dedicated to the process pursue new walks of life, hundreds have fallen back on what they know best, a clandestine life in arms often intertwined with criminal activity. Ex-combatants are still vulnerable to being seduced by armed actors, especially since the government's commitment to the spirit of the peace deal is continually questioned (a prominent example of this is the president's push to modify certain aspects of the peace courts created by the deal). At the same time, numerous criminal actors who were not involved in the FARC peace process continue to operate in large swathes of the country. Isolated rural and coca farming communities – among the most vulnerable in the country – are seeing delays in the entry of government institutions and security forces aimed at lifting them out of poverty and conflict.*

*When it comes to enhancing these aspects of the peace deal, Colombia's institutions must be more proactive, financed and organized in implementing development projects, increasing security presence, and building access roads in said rural areas. International pressure may push this process along faster. If we're talking about maintaining ex-combatants' faith in the deal, a re-affirmation of the original peace deal by the government and courts would go a long way. Civil society can do relatively*

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<sup>10</sup> Mimi Jagoub <https://latamjournalist.journoportfolio.com> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

*little to protect communities and offer viable alternatives to coca growers without government assistance. However, local social and economic initiatives continue to play an important role in encouraging peace across the country.”*

## **7. Civil Rights Activist’s Assessment**

The voices from the interior are juxtaposed by an exterior one. Alejandro Pacheco is a Colombian who lives in Germany and engages in the Colombian peace process from the European continent. He is in charge of Colombian affairs at Munich’s Oecumenic Bureau of Peace and Justice (*Öku-Büro*)<sup>11</sup>, which acts as an important civil society stakeholder for the entire subcontinent and particularly Colombia’s peace issue. Among others, Pacheco has repeatedly organized demonstrations against the series of murders of social leaders in his native country. In summer 2018, for example, 60 protesters congregated for a sit-down at Munich’s central Odeonsplatz, presented pictures of killed citizens and demanded an end of the assassinations, straightforward investigation of the cases and consequently the swift conviction of delinquents. They continue relentlessly, however, with already 50 assassinated during the first four months of 2019.

Pacheco is highly knowledgeable about the history of violence and conflicts in his country. He studied economics, holds a MA in Consumer Sciences, worked with Colombia’s National Learning Service SENA in the country’s marginalized regions such as the Caribbean Pacific Chocó, right at the forefront of the battles between guerilla, army, paramilitary forces, with unique insights into the mechanics and dynamics of the conflict.

Besides, Pacheco is co-founder of Aluna Minga<sup>12</sup>, a German human rights organization, which serves the needs of the indigenous populations of Latin America and particularly Colombia. It ties directly into the peace process and the commission for truth by informing and educating about this element of the treaty and its legal aspects<sup>13</sup>. Many Colombians who lost family members in the conflict settled in Germany as victims of the armed conflict. The question of

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<sup>11</sup> Ökumenisches Büro für Frieden und Gerechtigkeit e.V. <https://www.oeku-buero.de/kolumbien.html> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Aluna Minga e.V. <https://www.alunaminga.org/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Gewaltsames Verschwindenlassen <http://gewaltsames-verschwindenlassen.de/ueber-uns> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

what happened in their country, the interpretation and where to find the mortal remains of their beloved ones is paramount to Colombian refugees in Germany.

As an observer of the peace process, Pacheco raises doubts that the Duque government wants to proceed with the peace agreement. While it cannot simply pull out, abandon and thus violate the treaty and standing laws, the Bogotá administration does exactly this, but more indirectly, Pacheco claims, by not complying with the agreement, specifically the training program for former combatants, reintegration and restitution of confiscated lands. In some cases, mining companies have established profitable operations in target areas and resist restitution processes and legal pressure, with government officials being lenient about enforcing restitution and the return of the expropriated and often times stolen land, a major offence of Colombia in time and history. All in all, “indigenous communities, small farmers, campesinos, and afro-descendants again are the losers”, Pacheco sums it up, regretfully. In this deficit, Pacheco detects a “vicious circle, which has been at work since the arrival of the Spaniards 500 years ago and the unfolding conquista of the continent”. Until today, the country and its natives are being deprived of their gold, minerals and resources. If governments so far have not been capable of stopping this, because they either are part of this system and profit from the abuse, or have not achieved the political power to end unjust enrichment and thus lay the ground for overall peace, why did Colombia under the Santos government initiate peace negotiations?

Pacheco maintains this was due to European pressure. By his analysis, the European Union along with Germany, Sweden, and Norway as major trade partners of Colombia had put the country on a black list because of continuous human rights violations and the ongoing civil war with atrocious massacres, which were also committed by the army. Trade would only continue, so it was allegedly communicated, if Colombia undertook serious efforts to overcome its fundamental problems. This leads to a key question in this dossier. If the country by means of foreign pressure, after years of negotiating with the guerilla and meanwhile years of implementation of the treaty has not found peace yet, can civil society help and advance this frail and stumbling process?

Principally yes, says Pacheco. But Colombian civil society so far has shown itself to be weak, not very united, and far from speaking with one voice. It would need strong support to become a major actor in the peace proceedings. Since the beginning of violence in the 1940s, in those days between the battling Liberal and Conservative Parties, later in the century between left-wing guerilla units and right-wing politicians, land barons and paramilitaries (established by wealthy land owners and mostly tolerated by the political system), the respect for the life of

political opponents has vanished, observes Pacheco. “The return to a respectful political discourse is a prerequisite to a solid peace and very much a challenge both for the political parties and for civil society”, predicts Pacheco.

Given that the politicians have not been able to achieve this in 70 years, civil society and its representatives may be the only ones to fix this, he argues. To accomplish this, however, a tremendous amount of education is needed in Colombia, since civic engagement has little tradition and is not popular in the country. People rather stick to their quite extended family networks, and engage in religious communities, while charitable engagement is only slowly picking up. In comparison to Germany’s lively civil society landscape, only very few organizations in Colombia formulate civic concerns in public and, even less, enforce them.

Pacheco notes that Germany’s civil society is far more diverse, experienced and experimental, for example in spearheading new economic models, e.g. co-operatives, and in promoting projects with regenerative energies, innovative co-living setups such as three generation houses and many others. To share this with Colombia in a concerted effort could help to strengthen his country’s civil society and to cope more efficiently with the peace process, advance it, monitor and safeguard it. “As a trade partner and beneficiary of valuable imports Germany also has a social responsibility for Colombia’s well-being”, Pacheco reminds the Germans.

## **8. Discussion**

This dossier has attempted to show that peace in Colombia remains highly weak and frail, also in account of too many contradictions, extreme and highly diverse contrasts and unsettled conflicts, which result from the country’s history; that there was and there still is a serious political will and effort to go on with it; and that it will take much more time to achieve more robust and final results. It should be mentioned, however, that despite ongoing violence, the country has become much more pacific, as tourist statistics demonstrate. The country which for many years was avoided by travelers, now receives six million tourists per year. In cities like Bogotá and Medellín, English is becoming a notably present language as in many European capitals; young entrepreneurs from all over the world bring sophisticated start-up projects, which modernize the economy and become usable role models for local business people. Civil society as a complementary as well as correcting force exists and is expanding,

not least due to the growing number of volunteering projects, with young people from abroad engaging in social work and social institutions in Colombia<sup>14, 15, 16</sup>.

The transformation is notable, albeit slow and hesitant. In 2014, when the results of the Havana negotiations were still unforeseeable, the author organized an international conference at the University of Antioquia (UdeA) with local logistic support of Medellín's Humboldt Institute and financing of G+J Commitment/Corporate Volunteering<sup>17</sup>, Hamburg. The topics were peace-making, the role of the civil society and adequate post-conflict strategies and responses. A community organizing and development professional from Chicago<sup>18</sup> pitched methods of community empowerment and in close contact with the participants, their capacities and needs drafted approaches for local civil society<sup>19</sup>. The UdeA post-conflict conference was attended by one hundred participants from the entire scope of social institutions, but alas very little follow-up came out of it. At that time, as feedback showed, for many Colombians and given their rigid societal patterns, the concept was still rather alien.

This is gradually changing, not least alongside support funds and training projects, which the European Union is dedicating to upholstering the peace process. The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD)<sup>20</sup> today trains local leaders including former guerilla combatants in the techniques of democracy and its appliance to addressing community issues, negotiating solutions across party lines, involving citizens and jointly resolving problems. Targets are remote, traditionally violent rural areas, the goal being to overcome polarization and enter into a dialogue about controversies. This, again, is also being pursued in the academic field by

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<sup>14</sup> Wolfgang C. Goede 2013. Der Boom des VolonTourismus. Annäherung an eine umstrittene Engagementform. In: BBE Aktuell 2015 [https://www.b-b-e.de/fileadmin/inhalte/aktuelles/2015/01/annaeherung\\_umstrittene\\_engagementform\\_goede\\_1.pdf](https://www.b-b-e.de/fileadmin/inhalte/aktuelles/2015/01/annaeherung_umstrittene_engagementform_goede_1.pdf) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>15</sup> Wolfgang C. Goede 2014. Der Boom des VolonTourismus. Fallstudie „Hostal la Finca – Cultures United“ in den kolumbianischen Anden. In: Voluntaris 2/2014, S. 126-136 [https://www.b-b-e.de/fileadmin/inhalte/aktuelles/2015/01/fallstudie\\_hostal\\_la\\_finca\\_cultures\\_united%20goede\\_2.pdf](https://www.b-b-e.de/fileadmin/inhalte/aktuelles/2015/01/fallstudie_hostal_la_finca_cultures_united%20goede_2.pdf) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>16</sup> Zivilgesellschaft Info. VolonTourismus. Reisen-Arbeiten-Entwicklungsimpulse stiften <http://www.zg-info.maecenata.eu/volontourismus> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>17</sup> G+J Corporate Volunteering. <http://www.guj.de/en/company/responsibility/cultural-social-activism/corporate-volunteering/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>18</sup> Jim Capraro Community Development <http://capraroconsulting.com/2018/index.php> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang C. Goede 2015. Where Technology meets Social Sciences. In: European Union of Science Journalists' Associations EUSJA <http://www.eusja.org/where-technology-meets-social-sciences/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy / Colombia <https://colombia.nimd.org/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

CAPAZ and in the practical field by Comundo and other development aid organizations, which emphasize: The peace treaty must be realized in everyday-life, not only in the political framework, and especially and mainly in high-risk neighborhoods and areas.

The international community needs to face the fact that peace has many layers and that the whole societal fabric is part of and interwoven with peace, first and foremost science and technology, the overall theory and philosophy of research and how it fits into international relations, especially between the global North and South. In the interview mentioned and broadly quoted above, CAPAZ director Peters expressed the view that we need much more “transdisciplinary” scientific endeavors to achieve peace. What he meant was that it is not solely a question of peace research, but of introducing a democratic culture, to include science and technology as drivers of modern civilization. And who could promote this more efficiently than civil society?

## **9. Transdisciplinarity**

Peace research, science as a whole and especially its relationship with disrupting new technologies are in transition. Technical Universities in Germany have realized that technology as a pure and therefore isolated field of study fails to empower graduates with knowledge about the society and ethics in general. Updated curricula take this deficit into account and offer a new curriculum called “Technology in Science”, that teaches sociology, philosophy, political science. This is to avoid what even the academic world calls “Fachidioten” (professional idiots), highly specialized, but only one-dimensional experts. While pioneers of German higher and academic education such as Alexander von Humboldt demanded a multi-dimensional training in the acquisition of knowledge and the most broad-based thinking, this humanistic approach was narrowed down over the past decades to extremely small turfs, which miss bridges to bordering fields, and do not raise questions of human relevance and future compatibility. In other words, our academic education has radically been split up, atomized, on the whole amputated. Very few people are trained to raise holistic questions as to the overall purpose of specific research issues. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, the physicist and Club of Rome co-president, sees this deterioration as one of the reasons why our planet earth is in such a deplorable state with climate change, litter pollution, mass extinction of insects, birds, species of all sorts. He believes that our age of enlightenment with its formerly high values and principles has derailed, and calls for a “new age of enlightenment”<sup>21</sup>. Eckart von Hirschhausen,

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<sup>21</sup> Deutschlandfunk Kultur 2018. “Wir brauchen eine neue Aufklärung” [https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/50-jahre-club-of-rome-wir-brauchen-eine-neue-aufklaerung.1008.de.html?dram:article\\_id=415017](https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/50-jahre-club-of-rome-wir-brauchen-eine-neue-aufklaerung.1008.de.html?dram:article_id=415017) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

a well-known German medical doctor, cabaret artist and staunch critic, seconds his judgement with the comment: “Humans have become the cancer of this planet.”<sup>22</sup>

All this also applies to Colombia and threatens the peace process from an angle, which has hardly been addressed so far. Economy, growth and consumption first, before sustainability and conservation of nature has become Colombia’s dogma too, as an import of Western science, technology, and civilization. As a consequence, rainforests and the biodiversity are sharply diminishing, with biodiversity being the treasure chest of the country; climate change with droughts and inundations are on the increase; metropolitan areas like Bogotá and Medellín suffer from a drastically dropping air quality, due to steady increases of fossil-based traffic.

This opens a remarkable and equally stunning insight into the mechanics of the partnership of old economy and old elites. Colombia with its geographic location right above the equator could thrive on de-centralized solar energy, which could slingshot the country into new wealth, including in the far-far-away pockets, which altogether could trigger new economic models and eventually make Colombia compatible with the Global North and beyond. Instead, it hinges on coal and oil and, to top it off, moves forward into fracking, with closed elites defending ancient technological and economic monopolies from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Hydropower seemingly goes out on more adequate energy strategies, but with mega-projects comparable to China’s Three Gorges Dam and an avalanche of unwanted side-effects, Colombia seems to be moving farther backwards. The country is caught in the past and obsolete thinking, not only politically, alongside with conservative elites around the globe.

But there is a revolt against this calcification. One of Germany’s foremost science theorists, Peter Finke of Bielefeld University, one of the few academics who dared to oppose dogmatic schools of thought during his career, said good-bye to the current era of science and research at a lecture held on his home campus in May 2019<sup>23</sup>. Because, in Finke’s mind, science is co-responsible for the losses and developments described above, the old school gives rise to the mounting “polarization between rich and poor, developed and little developed, winners and

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<sup>22</sup> Eckhart von Hirschhausen in German political talk show “maybrit illner”, March 28, 2019 (<https://www.zdf.de/politik/maybrit-illner/jugend-demonstriert-politik-ignoriert-sendung-video-vom-28-maerz-2019-100.html>). The snippet of the quote can be viewed on the Twitter page of the national TV station: <https://twitter.com/zdfheute/status/1111516882459332608> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Universität Bielefeld 2019. Prof. Dr. Peter Finke: Abschied von einem Zeitalter. Kann die Wissenschaft wieder zur Hoffnungsträgerin werden? <https://50jahre.uni-bielefeld.de/event/prof-dr-peter-finke-abschied-von-einem-zeitalter-kann-die-wissenschaft-wieder-zur-hoffnungstraegerin-werden/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

losers". He observes that as the "provider of ideas, science must shoulder part of the responsibility".

Scientists must not only evaluate technical consequences, but all consequences of what they introduce to the world. Finke welcomes Pope Francis' encyclical "Laudato Si", but criticizes him for having overseen one important thought in his conclusions, namely "to demand an essential change in the principles of science". Only then we can be hopeful to overcome the era of destruction and start reconstruction.

In a practical sense, Finke compares the sciences with thousands of disciplines to an extended mountainous area with peaks and valleys. In this landscape, everything is intimately related to everything and no part can be separated. He argues that interdisciplinarity as a descriptive term is not sufficient, but that we should rather introduce *transdisciplinarity* for the "collaboration of economists and ecologists, natural scientists, humanities, cultural studies, hermeneuticists with engineers and social researchers".

Finke expects civil society to be a major actor to initiate this big transformation. It will lead the modern age, initiated by the English philosopher Francis Bacon 400 years ago, into a new stage of science, civilization and human evolution. In particular, the Bielefeld scholar singles out the leading role of amateur and lay scientists in this transformation. In his latest book, he has described their historic role in science and their unique position as change-makers<sup>24</sup>.

Finke points out that the Berlin Union of German Scientists (Vereinigung Deutscher Wissenschaftler VDW) has already implemented steps into this direction by having founded a "civil societal platform"<sup>25</sup>, on which scientists meet civil society leaders for collaboration and bilateral projects. VWD was founded in the 1950's when nuclear scientists opposed the armament of Germany with nuclear weapons and reminded scientists of their ethical and political responsibility, that science is intimately connected to the political system and needs to define its position in political and societal issues. Moreover, VWD is affiliated with Pugwash, an international organization, which deals with questions of science, technology, weapons and peace as an entity. So VWD is very well suited as a frontrunner in this transformation. In respect to the overlaying question of civil war and peace in Colombia, this may show and underline that peace is a highly complex question, which is related to many other disciplines and aspects, especially in a country like Colombia. A peace treaty which has not taken these

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Finke 2018. Lob der Laien. Eine Ermunterung zum Selberforschen. oekom München.

<sup>25</sup> Zivilgesellschaftliche Plattform Forschungswende <https://forschungswende.de/> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

aspects into consideration and which is implemented without an overall guidance and inclusion of these factors, will face a bumpy road. Despite many efforts, peace-making proceeding without a transdisciplinary scope, is exactly what is currently happening in Colombia, and it is not the fault of the Colombians.

In the international sphere, this view provides for a slow and probably painful reform, against vested interests of many economic and political players. Whether civil society will be the agenda-setter in this transformation remains to be seen. In both Colombia and Germany, the independent citizen movement yet has to go a long way. However, the theoretical framework, as laid out by the quoted German scholars, may serve as a blueprint for navigation.

## **10. Synopsis and Perspective**

The editorial work on this dossier coincides with the 70th anniversary of the German constitution (Grundgesetz), which defines the separation of powers and the necessary checks and balances. Essentials are the guarantee of civil liberties, human rights, freedom of press, science and the arts, and freedom of expression. This all allows for a very energetic and active civil society, which has been unfolding since the 1970s. However, this does not happen automatically, but needs mentors. The late politician Hildegard Hamm-Brücher was a powerful defender of the young German democracy and became one of the most prominent advocates of civil society in the country, its philosophy and implementation.

The Alliance for the Reform of Democracy (Bündnis zur Erneuerung der Demokratie, BED), of which Hamm-Brücher had become a patron, drafted proposals how to establish civil society principles in Germany<sup>26,27</sup>. At an accountability session with legislators from the Munich region in Berlin's Reichstag (Parliament), BED proposed a parliamentary chamber with representatives of civil society. They were to offer assessments and recommendations in important political issues to government, opposition, political parties, media and the public. As expected, legislators did not pick this up, but detected an unwanted competition and threat to their authorities in such a measure.

However, if the concept of civil society is to be advanced and introduced to the international realm with suitable instruments to promote peace in a globalized and therefore interdependent

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<sup>26</sup> Eine Welt Netz. Bündnis zur Erneuerung der Demokratie beim Netzwerk Gemeinsinn. [http://eineweltnetz.org/bed\\_bundnis\\_zur\\_erneuerung\\_der\\_demokrati306536/](http://eineweltnetz.org/bed_bundnis_zur_erneuerung_der_demokrati306536/) (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

<sup>27</sup> Forum Bildungspolitik <http://www.forum-bildungspolitik.de/mitglieder/bed.html> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).

world, it is time to act. After the countries of the Global South had successfully fought for the political independence, they adopted many principles of Europe. Now it is the old continent's turn to help to reframe them. Civil society in its international dimension can act as a very useful catalyst with many-fold tools.

On the occasion of the 70<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Grundgesetz on May 23, 2019, President Frank-Walter Steinmeier encouraged the citizens to get involved and to interfere: our constitution "allows to criticize even the most powerful"<sup>28</sup>. This is a firm basis for the prospective work of civil society leaders, especially in peace-keeping missions in the international field. With this reinforced identity in a globalized, highly interrelated world embedded in a transdisciplinary scientific framework, an indigenous civil society could become a major stakeholder in a country like Colombia, while a country like Germany could be a strong partner in a mutual team.

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<sup>28</sup> Der Bundespräsident <https://www.bundespraesident.de/SharedDocs/Reden/DE/Frank-Walter-Steinmeier/Reden/2019/05/190523-Grundgesetz-Kaffeetafel-70-Jahre.html> (retrieving date 27 May 2019).



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