

Psycho-social Intervention Characteristics in the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme as a Peace Construction Scene in Colombia*

[English Version]

Características de la intervención psicosocial en el Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio como escenario de construcción de paz en Colombia

Características da intervenção psicossocial no Programa de Desenvolvimento e Paz do Magdalena Medio como cenário de construção da paz na Colômbia

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Abstract

Objective: the article seeks to analyze the psychosocial intervention characteristics of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme (PDPMM) founded in 1995 and highlight it as an experience developed from grassroots groups,

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revealing manners of citizen participation and social organization. **Methodology:** the research was structured under a qualitative approach, using the content analysis method, through a documentary matrix instrument. This methodological process yielded an analysis of three moments: first, the characterization of the Program foundation; second, the theoretical perspective of the psychosocial and, third, the analysis of the characteristics of psychosocial intervention of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme (PDPMM). **Results:** it was found that one of the main elements of the PDPMM was to define itself from its beginnings as a social process in permanent construction, changing, dynamic and subject to a recomposition of itself. On the other hand, it was evidenced that it is vitally important to know and validate the experiences of peacebuilding in Colombia, in this particular case the PDPMM, which proposes, from a participatory methodology, an alternative to assume and live a territory, thinking about the regional and assign a new meaning to the processes generated with the actors of civil society. **Conclusions:** it is concluded that with the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme, the community processes strengthened elements such as, participation, the political subject, the social fabric, and the construction of the public for the sake of collective well-being.

Keywords: Peace and Development Programme; Magdalena Medio; Methodology, Psychosocial Intervention; Peacebuilding.

Resumen

Objetivo: el artículo busca analizar las características de intervención psicosocial del Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (PDPMM) fundado en 1995 y resaltarlo como una experiencia gestada desde los grupos de base, develando las formas de participación ciudadana y de organización social. **Metodología:** la investigación se estructuró bajo un enfoque cualitativo, empleando el método de análisis de contenido, a través del instrumento de la matriz documental. Este proceso metodológico arrojó un análisis en tres momentos: el primero, la caracterización de la fundación del Programa; el segundo, la perspectiva teórica de lo psicosocial y, el tercero, el análisis de las características de intervención psicosocial del Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio (PDPMM). **Resultados:** se encontró que uno de los elementos principales del PDPMM fue definirse desde sus inicios como un proceso social en permanente construcción, cambiante, dinámico y sujeto a una

recomposición de sí mismo. Por otro lado, se evidenció que es de vital importancia conocer y validar las experiencias de construcción de paz en Colombia, en este caso particular el PDPMM, que propone desde una metodología participativa, una alternativa para asumir y vivir un territorio, pensando lo regional y resignificando los procesos generados con los actores de la sociedad civil. **Conclusiones:** se concluye que con el Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio los procesos comunitarios fortalecieron la participación, el sujeto político, el tejido social y la construcción de lo público en aras de un bienestar colectivo.

Palabras-clave: Programa de Desarrollo y Paz; Magdalena Medio; Metodología; Intervención psicosocial; Construcción de paz.

Resumo

Objetivo: o artigo busca analisar as características de intervenção psicossocial do Programa de Desenvolvimento e Paz do Magdalena Médio (PDPMM) fundado em 1995 e destacá-lo como uma experiência desenvolvida a partir dos grupos de base, revelando as formas de participação cidadã e organização social. **Metodologia:** a pesquisa foi estruturada sob uma abordagem qualitativa, utilizando o método de análise de conteúdo, através do instrumento da matriz documental. Esse processo metodológico rendeu uma análise em três momentos: o primeiro, a caracterização da fundação do Programa; a segunda, a perspectiva teórica do psicossocial e, em terceiro lugar, a análise das características de intervenção psicossocial do Programa de Desenvolvimento e Paz do Magdalena Medio (PDPMM). **Resultados:** verificou-se que um dos principais elementos do PDPMM deveria ser definido desde o início como um processo social em constante construção, mudança, dinâmica e sujeita a uma recomposição de si mesmo. Por outro lado, mostrou-se que é de vital importância conhecer e validar as experiências de construção da paz na Colômbia, neste caso específico o PDPMM, que propõe a partir de uma metodologia participativa, uma alternativa para assumir e viver um território, pensando no regional e resignando os processos gerados com os atores da sociedade civil. **Conclusões:** conclui que com o Programa de Desenvolvimento e Paz do Magdalena Medio os processos comunitários fortaleceram objetos tais como a participação, o tema político, o tecido social e a construção do público em prol do bem-estar coletivo.

Palavras-chave: Programa de Desenvolvimento e Paz; Magdalena Medio; Metodologia; Intervenção Psicossocial; Construção da paz.

Introduction

This article addresses the psychosocial characteristics underlying the intervention of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme (PDPMM) that was founded in 1995 and considered the first peace laboratory in Colombia. These characteristics are also recognized because they manage to convene the community, public, private, religious and academic entities around the community transformation from the economic, social, political, environmental and cultural development.

In the current political situation of the post-peace agreement in Colombia, it is pertinent to recognize the multiple trajectories of peace-building processes in communities that, amid complex socio-political conditions, generate a commitment to rebuilding the social fabric, assuming as agents mobilizing local and regional decisions and articulating community and institutional interests. Therefore, the purpose of this article is framed in recognizing the psychosocial interventions in contexts of an armed conflict that manages to articulate with national and international, public and private institutions, making a contribution to peace-building processes and, in turn, positioning itself as a means to strengthen and problematize the realities in contexts violated by violence.

The analysis seeks to answer the question: what are the characteristics of psychosocial intervention in the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme? It would help to recognize the importance of psychosocial interventions as a means to strengthen and transform the realities in territories affected by violence. To address this question, the main objective was the analysis of the characteristics of psychosocial intervention underlying the PDPMM proposal. In order to fulfill this objective, it was necessary to propose the following specific objectives: identify the foundations of the Program and describe the characteristics of psychosocial intervention that underlie its methodology during its creation.

Context of Magdalena Medio from the Geographical Point of View, Organizations, Social Movements and Political Violence

The Magdalena Medio region is located between the Eastern and Central Cordillera, in the departments of Antioquia, Bolívar, Boyacá, Cesar and Santander and, to a lesser extent, in Caldas, Cundinamarca and Tolima. For its strate-

gic geography of Andean cities, it is considered a corridor to the Caribbean, Venezuela and the valleys of the South, allowing regional and interdepartmental development. In addition, it is recognized for its natural riches such as gold, oil, fauna, flora and water sources, characteristics that allowed for the establishment of an extractive economy, giving rise to the first settlements, which generated an excessive environmental use, creating scenarios of continuous dispute and inequity for the area (Observatory of Integral Peace, 2014).

The geopolitical importance of the Magdalena Medio region has made it one of the main focuses of sociopolitical violence. This scenario was unable to meet the basic needs of all migrants and villagers, thus shaping the first social protests that used the absence of the State to resolve conflicts and seek social welfare.

The above, configured a territory with acute social, political, economic and environmental conflicts, giving rise to the settlement of guerrilla movements of the time such as the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN) (National Liberation Army), *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC) (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) in the 60s, M-19 movements and the *Ejército Popular de Liberación* (EPL) (Popular Liberation Army) in the 70s, drug trafficking groups in the 80s and the emergence of the paramilitaries in the 90s, making Magdalena Medio one of the most violent regions in Colombia. Such situations, for years, have directly affected the population, violating their human rights and affecting the social and community work processes of social leaders and organizations, trade union movements, among others.

In the 1990s, several civil society initiatives were present in Magdalena Medio, giving an account of the assemblage of communities in their capacities to recognize and understand the conflict, as well as to work collaboratively with non-governmental organizations, national political movements and Catholic churches. Among the organizations present in this dynamic are those of the inhabitants, which are characterized by being informal groupings for the distribution of the workspace and associative forms of production, in which the communication relationships are horizontal, which implies the organization and distribution of the territory through agreements. This type of base organization of miners, fishermen or farmers depends on values such as equity, solidarity, word value and purpose unit (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2008, p. 99). [Own translation]

Likewise, there are organizations for the claimant struggle that identify as movements aimed at defending the possession of the land, demanding respect for life and improving its conditions. An example of this type of grouping in the region is the Peasant Bureau of Exodus, which in 1998 mobilized thousands of peasants to denounce paramilitary onslaught and human rights violations by

the State (UNDP, 2008, p. 99). There are also organizations for direct assistance in which collective actions provide targeted care to particularly vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, head-of-household mothers, male and female children, youth populations, among others, based on regional or national funding and initiatives that, while fulfilling a complementary role, sometimes cover State responsibilities.

For this territory, the history of social movements and organizations shows a significant, diverse and solid dynamic that has managed through its collective interests to generate actions that promote other realities from interaction of actors both public and private. The presence of the *Pastoral Social de la Iglesia Católica*, *la Corporación Regional de Derechos Humanos* (CREDHOS) (Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights), *la Organización Femenina Popular de Barrancabermeja* (Popular Women's Organization of Barrancabermeja), *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (ACVC) (Association of Peasant Workers of Carare), *Asociación Campesina del Valle del Río Cimitarra* (ACVC) (Peasant Association of the Cimitarra *Valle del Río Cimitarra*), *Federación Agrominera del Sur de Bolívar* (FEDEAGROMISBOL (Agrominera Federation of Southern Bolívar) and *Unión Sindical Obrera* (USO) (Workers' Union) (UNDP, 2008, p.17) is highlighted.

After recognizing the characteristics of the territory of Magdalena Medio and highlighting the tensions that have historically engulfed it, it is necessary to understand the initial foundations on which the Development and Peace Program was built, recognizing its lines of intervention against human rights, social and productive processes as the scenario of psychosocial intervention on which this research was carried out.

Emergence of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme

In Magdalena Medio in Colombia, Jesuit leaders such as Priest Francisco de Roux gambled on building a more equitable, just and rights-guaranteed society. Thus, on October 17, 1995, *Consortio Centro de investigación y Educación Popular-Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País* (CINEP-SEAP) (Consortium Centre for Research and Education for Popular Research and Education-Economic Society of Friends of the Country) was established to carry out regional diagnoses with the Diocese of Barrancabermeja and proposed the creation of the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme (PDPMM), as an instrument capable to insert into the life of the territory and to generate dynamics in favor of development and peace (National Network of Regional Development and Peace Programmes) [Redprodepaz], 2016).

This initiative recognized the potentialities of communities and the guarantee of dignity for all the people. After a diagnosis of the De Roux region (1999), the program set as goals that: a) Economic development must be in line with an improvement in dignity and quality of life, b) Ecological, economic and social sustainability as central elements of the strategy must be propoled, c) Participatory democracy and public space consolidation must be built (p. 20).

The deep analysis that underscored this route was based on two questions: the first, how is it possible that a region as rich as Magdalena Medio (its inhabitants, oil, gold mines, biodiversity) can exist with municipalities and villages where poverty reaches very high levels? And the second, how is it possible for a cheerful, hard-working, aspiring people to experience such a violent situation? Therefore, among the guiding criteria that prioritized the actions and projects of PDPMM were expressed the following: "Life first" respect for human dignity, the construction of regions among all people, development of sustainable peace, solidarity with victims and vulnerable populations, recognition and appreciation of the differentiation and promotion of social and public subject (Vargas *et al.*, 2011, p. 5). [Own translation]

In terms of Colombian reality, peacebuilding became a field of participation for many actors with multiple experiences and understandings who have strengthened an epistemic framework from which realities are involved in peace and transitional scenarios. However, the particular and contextual ways of surviving in the midst of armed conflict can broaden the view of how complex it is to enunciate and make peace an experience, a view that is taken from now on as actions aimed primarily at enabling political and democratic participation. It provides justice for those responsible for the facts and establishes reconciliation supports from structural changes that establish non-repetition guarantees (Rodríguez, 2017).

Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme Strategic Axes in Colombia

PDPMM fosters values such as peace, life, productivity, acceptance of difference, solidarity and aims to strengthen capacities in its inhabitants such as partnership, organizational creation, decision-making, among others. Throughout its history it has oriented its work on three strategic axes¹, PDPMM promotes values such as those that interactive and inter-woven, are interdependent and integral in the territory based on the development of actions with communities, organizations and people in the region. They are: 1. Human Rights, Dialogue

1. This link expands the information <http://www.pdpmm.org.co/index.php/el-programa>

and Peacebuilding, 2. Social, Cultural and Democratic Governance Processes, 3. Productive and environmental processes for Equity and Sustainable Development.

PDPMM positioned as the first new and differential regional process in which, beyond political and cultural movements, growing groups of inhabitants of the territory has moved toward peace since the protection of life within its complex political and social reality, (De Roux, 1999, p. 15). [Own translation]. This regional proposal was consolidated as the first Peace Laboratory in Colombia, through a methodological process flexible and adaptable to territorial needs. It reported what happened as a pool of experiences, meanings and dynamics.

Within this context, the interventions made in Colombia to accompany the armed conflict victim populations are framed both from state institutions, and from grassroots organizations. It impacts the population groups involved differently but, at the same time, mobilizes the creation of reconciliation spaces. Therefore, the interventions that have been made must be rooted in forms of grouping and dialogue without separating them from individual unraveling that form and demand new production cores of that social subjectivity at the institutional level, that is, within the family, school, labor organization and community (González Rey, 2004, p. 24). [Own translation]

In this sense, it is necessary to highlight that over the past three decades the reference frameworks and interpretation of peacebuilding in the country have been strengthened in different sectors, making peace laboratories visible as their own contextual response and process to violence to their person and territories.

In this regard Barreto (2015), in the article titled *El Programa de Desarrollo y Paz del Magdalena Medio, ¿Un modelo de construcción de paz para el postconflicto en Colombia?*, recognizes that the PDPMM "is configured as a consolidated and valid, positive peace-building model at the regional level, from which various lessons and 'good practices' can be extracted for the construction of a sustainable and lasting peace in Colombia" (p. 462). [Own translation]

From this perspective, agencies with local and regional stakes are shown as a construction that transits, surpasses difficulties on alternatives of transformation that guarantee life in the territories. This makes the searches that go beyond the simple absence of conflict visible, it rescues daily life, particularities, strategies and alliances between subjects, organizations and localities as a significant area to problematize this conjunctural scenario in our reality.

Another contribution by Saavedra (2006) in the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme *y la Red Prodepaz* article shows how PDPMM has sought to establish links and actions based on complex reading of actors, interests, conflicts, identities, and differences, from critical positioning and intentions. It has allowed the building of synergies between public and private

sectors as it reconfigures and highlights the porosity that represents institutionality and expands the subjects' public positioning. They are readings that invite understandings, positioning and methodologies that have meant PDPMM is a construction that for decades has sought to reconfigure the lines of social and political intervention in vulnerable contexts.

Now in a particular way, it is reviewed from where the theoretical perspective of the psychosocial is assumed as the basis for this research. It recognizes the impact that psychosocial interventions have as gambles to thinking of the relationship of the individual and the collective in community transformation.

Psychosocial Theoretical Perspective

Social, cultural and political changes that emerge in today's societies lead to creating new ways of taking on and addressing challenges, conflicts and possibilities, something that cannot be seen by adapting European or American models of intervention to intervene in Latin American social phenomena. Therefore, it is necessary to implement contextualized social interventions to allow for the creation of new realities from and for a specific community.

The importance of the discussion around these psychosocial aspects must lead to the recognition of a category in the middle of an academic tradition, which enunciates the multiple possibilities of analysis in which the description only transcends the individual and social matters, since the human condition is not only resolved from this reduction but also affected by power structures, both endogenously and exogenously. The human being must be analyzed from the psychological point of view but linked to its socio-historical and contextual reality, since it is not necessary to see it in a single dimension; being a social character, a person is immersed in a symbolic interaction: individual, family-group and community (Corporación Juan Bosco, 2007).

The psychosocial perspective aims to understand and intervene in reality without reducing it to mutually exclusive psychic or social processes. In the contributions of Díaz and Díaz (2015), an approach to the actual person is suggested, to detail the individual and group characteristics of a specific context, allowing for the comprehensive addressing of possible alternatives for change (p. 63). [Own translation]

Public institutions consider the psychosocial perspective as "a way of understanding the responses and behaviors of people in a specific cultural, political, economic, religious and social context" (Bello, 2004, p. 192). [Own translation] The key is how to understand these processes that emerge and are in

motion, which is why they are a new condition of reality, given that it addresses both individual subjectivities and collective identities.

Human beings are created with others and from others, in search of social, communicative and symbolic skills, which implies the emergence of their own personal subjectivity and the construction or reconstruction of the community (Carmona, 2009, p. 53). [Own translation] For his part, Villa (2012) affirms that talking about “the psychosocial implies, therefore, a position that crosses not only the theoretical and the intervention itself, but an ontological, ethical-political, epistemological and methodological place” (p. 353). [Own translation]

Thus, the psychosocial perspective is a way of analyzing social problems and phenomena, having as its object the interactions that occur in a social environment. Although no particular discipline has been dedicated to making a rigorous study of this category. Some Latin American intellectuals agree that it is not possible to speak of the human being without taking into account this context, this being a symbolic and physical space, which creates meanings in the subjects that inhabit it, developing competencies and skills that recognize the diversity of scenarios and thoughts, which configure and rebuild the social fabric; the latter only occurs through personal and collective experiences and in everyday relationships.

Recognizing the psychosocial perspective, it is necessary to account for these three Latin American theories: community social psychology, critical social psychology, and liberation psychology, which have allowed for the creation of approaches on which psychosocial intervention is assumed to problematize the realities, subjects and forms of institutional intervention.

Theoretical Perspective of the Relationship Between Community Social Psychology, Critical Psychology and Liberation Psychology

According to Montero (2004a), “what to do, how to do it and psychological thinking developed in the Latin American social field at the end of the 20th century, and so far in the 21st century, have been configured as an alternative and innovative response to the needs of the context, making their contributions to the multiple changes of thoughts, gestated before the crises of the traditional models in the field of Social Sciences” (p. 17). [Own translation] Within these fields, there are Community Social Psychology, Liberation Psychology and Critical Social Psychology, currents of knowledge that have relationships, similarities and differences among themselves, although they maintain their interest in the study of the sociocultural dynamics of the Latin American continent where they have assumed their identity and roots.

Community psychology was defined in its beginnings as the study of psychosocial factors that allow for the development, promotion and maintenance of the control and power that individuals can exercise over their natural and social environment, to solve problems that afflict them and achieve changes in those environments (Montero, 1984, p. 390). In this, participation is configured from the mobilization of communities, groups or people in their actions, in their recognition as social characters that reconstruct their particular realities.

For its part, the critical current is assumed in a political discourse that, from the conscious analysis of positivist exercises, shows the socioeconomic conditions and their effect on the field of science and the ways of assuming social phenomena. Likewise, it seeks to generate reflection and commitment to the other, realizing the complexity that realities imply and generating possibilities for change.

Criticism subverts the way of seeing things; it dislodges the mechanisms of power that sustain established positions and opens new perspectives to knowledge. It is part of the complexity of the world, usually too difficult to accept (Montero 2004a, p. 19). [Own translation]. Its importance lies in the fact that it is a tool to find different ways of assuming the social; prioritizing the diversity of social characters and the relationship between the phenomena and the context in which they develop, taking the complexity of said construction scenario and inviting its study from a holistic perspective.

For its part, liberation psychology defines its actions when working with the victims of oppression; these being the subjects who have been excluded from social goods and public decision-making. Liberation is, then, the re-signification of the capacities and potentialities that these subjects have and that have been denied in historical, cultural and social frameworks of power and segregation, assuming them as active subjects in their transfer to other realities. For Martin Baró (1986), “the function of psychology would not be, therefore, to predict and control behavior, much less to try to offer easy solutions to the dilemmas of existence, but rather to “liberate” the human being, giving them greater autonomy and real possibilities of choice, overcoming alienated patterns of behavior” (Dobles, 2009, p. 7). [Own translation]

These three trends shape a particular path of conducting psychology, expressing their valuable findings in the complexity and dynamism of the social, demonstrating that the social fabrics that are built in a community, transform the environment of both the intervention subjects and the role played by the interventions of professionals.

This research highlights some elements of analysis on how a context is transformed from the interactions between grassroots organizations, public institutions, academia and the Catholic Church, in the midst of a historically vio-

lated context and in which they confront ideals, particular interests and intervention methodologies to signify the construction of the collective as a model of regional development.

Methodology

This research was structured under a qualitative approach that, as stated by Rodríguez, Gil and García (1996), “studies reality in a context as it happens, taking as a central axis the meanings and senses that are constructed through relationships between people” (p.10). [Own translation]. Content analysis was used as a method, which from the perspective of Abela (2002) “is defined as the interpretation of texts, whether they are written ... or recorded differently where there may be all kinds of data records (...) based on the reading (textual or visual) as an instrument for collecting information” (p. 2). [Own translation]

For this content analysis, a document analysis matrix was used as an instrument that consists of, according to Finol and Nava (1999), organizing the conceptual data necessary for the analysis, from which categories and subcategories are derived that support the theoretical discussion.

The methodological process consists of three stages and they are broken down into seven steps, namely as follows:

Stage I. Identification of Documentary Sources

Step 1: Virtual Bibliographic Consultations.

Virtual and face-to-face bibliographic consultations were carried out, that yielded referred documents and systematizations. A great variety were found such as: books 5, web pages 6, articles 12, systematizations 5, management and evaluation reports 5; this made it possible to make a selection of documents relevant to the investigation, among which several documents can be mentioned, such as the “Central document for diagnosis, conclusions and recommendations, Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme, PDPMM” (De Roux, 1996), “The methodological process of the PDPMM” (Katz, 1999b). "The Magdalena Medio in the midst of conflict and hope" (De Roux, 1996), "Routes and experiences of our people. Systematization of experiences in the processes of the settlers of Magdalena Medio” (UNDP, 2008), “The construction of the public in the current scenario of Magdalena Medio” (Katz, 1999a), “The projects of the PDPMM, a laboratory of peace” (Moncayo, 1999).

Step 2: Library Search.

A direct search was necessary in the libraries of the Banco de la República and Biblioteca Pública Román Correa Mejía in the city of Pereira, the Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP) and the Redprodepaz (Bogotá), which have been systematizing and accompanying the peacebuilding processes in Colombia.

Step 3: CINEP-REPRODEPAZ Focus.

An approach was formulated using CINEP and Redprodepaz virtual catalogs, in the search for access to vital foundational texts to identify the bases, methodologies and results of the PDPMM.

Stage II. Elaboration of Instruments and Data Collection

Step 4: Review of Texts with an In-depth Look.

It allowed for the recognition of the discourses of the community, professionals, as well as public and private institutions that participated in the Program construction.

Step 5: Elaboration of Documentary Analysis Matrix.

To systematize the information, a document analysis matrix structured in seven columns was elaborated (type of text, text title, author, year, ideas of social intervention from PDPMM, characteristic ideas psychosocial intervention, emerging categories).

Step 6: Analysis of Texts and Emerging Categories.

The in-depth reading allowed the convergence of the theoretical references assumed in the research with the empirical findings from the analysis of the texts. From this analysis, categories and subcategories that aim at positioning and enunciating the characteristics of the psychosocial intervention found in the PDPMM emerged. A table that allows us to observe the categories and subcategories, which were grouped based on the four sections of the analysis of this research, is shown below.

Table 1. Categories and Subcategories that Emerge from This Research

CATEGORÍA	SUBCATEGORÍAS
Community intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socio-political conflict - Participatory diagnosis - Citizen strengthening (political subject)
Local and regional construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Subregional project strategies - Community participation - Social fabric
Psychosocial intervention in the PDPMM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutional strengthening - Construction of the public - Community transformation

Source: Author's

Stage III. Information Analysis

Step 7: Information Interpretation.

The process that was carried out, as a situated exercise, allowed for dialogue between the specificity generated in the interventions of the years of existence of the PDPMM, the conceptual readings and the agencies of the investigating subjects. This relationship generated the analysis and theoretical discussion. With all this, contributing to the creation of meanings and senses in the construction of peace from the psychosocial perspective was sought. The aim was to achieve that the information not only be collected, but that it also allow for the creation and querying of places of enunciation which are mobilized in this reality (Díaz, González-Rey and Arias, 2017).

The next theoretical discussion will focus on the characteristics of psycho-social intervention that underlie the Development and Peace Program. Such characteristics will be addressed through three lines of analysis that integrate the categories and subcategories.

Results

Community Intervention

Magdalena Medio is a region historically affected by the armed conflict, in which different insurgent groups with particular interests have imposed their presence (via illicit drugs, mining extraction, control of strategic corridors). They have negatively impacted communities with attacks, kidnappings, displacements, homicides, and infiltrations, among others; this has increased the levels of poverty and exclusion, preventing the development of community processes with social justice. However, the Program was consolidated in its beginnings as "a commitment from civil society, the territory and its inhabitants; despite their limitations, they have managed to convene historically opposed and excluded sectors to put their interests in the public agenda" (Guerrero et al., 2011, p. 14). [Own translation]

Given this context, the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme constitutes a Humanitarian Space (HS) in Magdalena Medio, since, as a social process, it has declared autonomy from the actors of the armed conflict, with the purpose of remaining in its territory and forging a scenario of common welfare and peace building. This HS is supported by International Humanitarian Law (IHL) that protects the non-combatant population in designated areas to safeguard it from the effects of war or internal armed conflicts.

From a psychosocial approach, the fact that communities, over time, make organizational decisions and make their weaknesses and strengths visible by understanding the conflict to take advantage of the support of governmental and non-governmental organizations is a strategic step in which to think about how dynamic and contextual interventions should be. The idea is not about removing responsibilities from the State, but rather recognizing its role in articulation with the rights of populations. In this sense, Vargas (2010) makes reference to the fact that "civil society strengthens human rights, disseminates them, re-signifies the issue of citizenship, that is, the inhabitants as subjects of rights summon armed groups, reaching agreements humanitarian, local and conjunctural" (p. 11). [Own translation]

Such aspects enable a construction mediated by the interests of all sectors of society, in order to create spaces for local and regional development; with that in mind, intervening in multi-problematic contexts implies a commitment to social problems and to particular subjects where it is necessary to take risks and mediate in different realities, since there are many social actors that are present in the same territory. Thence, the construction of citizenship is a challenge, as it

seeks to mobilize new subjectivities to create processes of justice, equity, healthy coexistence and peace.

In this research, participation is taken as a key element for community intervention, highlighting its political effect in relation to the formation of citizens for the strengthening of civil society and through this, an empowerment is generated for the construction of the political subject. According to Montero (2004a), “community participation is an organized, collective, free, inclusive process in which there are a variety of actors, activities and degrees of commitment that are guided by shared values and objectives, in which constitution, community and individual transformations are produced” (p. 109) [Own translation].

In this sense, when participating in said processes, all the actors are included, recognizing its internal and external agents; for this reason, it is taken as a point of departure the PDPMM scenario as a process of collective participation that reveals the common efforts established under a comprehensive perspective that included its inhabitants, on the basis of the motto that makes reference to the protection of life and regional development. “The work was devised from the family, the farm, the countryside and the organizations, integrating and sharing points of view with history and their memories, in order to support the configuration of the collective project” (UNDP, 2008, p. 84). [Own translation]

However, the foregoing is marked by tensions, disputed knowledge and individual interests, which configure various representations of what is considered collective. It also allows for the understanding that psychosocial intervention is not a perfect action, but a dynamic one that includes agreements and disagreements, seen as an opportunity to be redirected again.

Meanwhile, the PDPMM diagnostic process included more than two thousand people and different institutions that were involved in different ways, as well as a significant group of organizations such as: the *Coordinadora Regional de Derechos Humanos Regional CREDHOS* (Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights), the *Organización Femenina Popular OFP* (Popular Women's Organization), the *Coordinadora Popular de Barrancabermeja* (Popular Coordinator of Barrancabermeja), the Chambers of Commerce, the Trade Union Committee, the *Uso Regional y Nacional* (Regional and National Use), the Fishermen Associations, the Petroleum Port Management Group, the Ecopetrol External Relations Team, *Asociación de Campesinos de la Cuenca del Río Cimitarra*, the *Asociación de Frijoleros de Santa Rosa ASOCALIMA* (Association of Beans of Santa Rosa ASOCALIMA), the *Centro CLEBER de Simití*, CORMAGDALENA (Regional Autonomous Corporation of the Río Grande de la Magdalena), FUNDESMAG (Foundation for the Development of Magdalena Medio), the local universities INUPAZ (University Institute of Peace), UCC (Universidad Cooperativa of Colombia) and UIS (Universidad Industrial of Santander), the Peace Brigade and

the International Red Cross, the *Pastoral Social de la Diócesis y el Servicio Jesuita de Desplazados* (Social Pastoral of the Diocese and the Jesuit Refugee Service).

The diagnosis was carried out with the inhabitants between 1995 and 1996 in different municipalities of the region. The aim was to make visible the individual and collective experiences, difficulties and strengths of the territory, in order to consolidate a flexible and adjustable methodological approach. According to de Roux (1999) “the methodological process of the Program accounts for some fundamental variables to think about integral development: region, settlement, culture, rural and urban economy, oil, institutions, local politics, education and environment” (p. 19). [Own translation]. From a psychosocial perspective, the diverse interactions between residents, associations and government institutions not only account for common objectives, but also for places of mediation, which reveal that times and spaces are essential to reach community agreements and not welfare decisions in psychosocial intervention.

This gave way to the Program objective that emphasized the coexistence of citizens for a culture of peace that would lay the foundations for the construction of public space, where no one is excluded, in the words of De Roux (1999),

The aim was to set up a sustainable economy, developed and controlled by the inhabitants, peasant organizations and local entrepreneurs, which would make the quality of life in the region the first objective of productive activity, and by a State and a society that would forge the social and natural capital indispensable for the coexistence and the initiatives of the groups (p. 20) [Own translation].

This underscores the importance of building bridges of work and cooperation between the State, institutions and academic unions, since it is precisely the processes generated by civil society in its struggle for a dignified life that build and transform the practices exercised in its territories. In the midst of the socio-political situation in which the Program was conceived, it was based on the needs of the community to prioritize the victims of the armed conflict toward the empowerment of children, youth, women, and communities, as fundamental social and political actors for the strengthening of citizens.

The community processes of the PDPMM are understood as a community process that emphasizes the construction of the collective, where the base groups are mobilized that, in articulation with other public and private institutions, surpass the welfare and momentary practices to which some Colombian communities are accustomed and outlined. The approach to the Program shows how the processes of community intervention require time and space; in this way, since 1995, a cultural, socio-political and economic transformation is being built not only under a government plan but as a regional project to forge territories of peace.

Thus, the methodological process presents an exercise that particularizes and positions the municipality as the first planning scenario, from participation and agreement, but that is systematically included in a regional dynamic projected to a collective future, as will be seen in the following section.

Local and Regional Construction

Assuming and sustaining an integrating methodological process in the broad context of the Magdalena Medio region was always one of the Program's main challenges, so it was considered necessary to work under decentralized but linked logics, thus constituting a regional meeting point in Barrancabermeja and six territorial delegations, representing the sub-regions, made up of the 29 participating municipalities.

The creation of contextualized proposals in each sub-region was guided by an integrative logic for the Magdalena Medio, which sought institutional support and legitimacy through municipal pacts. In the midst of their development and as a result of their permanent evaluation, it was demonstrated that these sub-regional projects, initially constructed, did not fit the reality of the assessment carried out, but rather proposals within the institutional framework established by academic experts and that did not evidence a social construction for regional development, since they had to reflect the ideas of the inhabitants; according to De Roux (1999), "it had to be something proposed by the people themselves and in coherence with their socio-political dynamics, something that they presented to the larger society and the State, to external or internal financing" (p. 24) [own translation].

This led to the abandonment of the sub-regional projects and a proposal of regional character and association of municipalities, which would give the Program the status of a development model. These proposals, created from May 1997 to May 1998, constituted shared visions about the possibilities to ensure coexistence and the overcoming of poverty in a sustainable way; therefore, and as future references, they were projected out to ten years seeking sustainability and relevance for the contexts and their realities, supported by social, collective and humanitarian considerations.

This aspect is fundamental, because it also allows us to understand how professionals who carry out psychosocial interventions must have an ethical political position, which implies reflecting on the objectives established from the institutional framework (plan, program or project) in order to mitigate the action with damage that it may generate and, from the contextual practices, to identify links and actors who become guides to mobilize actions created by and for themselves.

In the social transformation, the participation of the people that conform a community is an indispensable element, because they are the ones that must lead, execute and evaluate the impacts, with the accompaniment of the psychosocial professionals, as De Roux (1999) mentions "the participative element in the PDPMM, makes the aspiration formulated as a possible future and as a commitment of people, groups and institutions, go out from the inhabitants and from the beginning involve the people in its maturation and execution" (p. 24) [own translation].

Thus, from a psychosocial intervention perspective, three actions are considered that make psychosocial intervention possible. The first is the reading of the context, in which it is necessary to participate in order to recognize the dynamics that characterize it and give it meaning. The second, is the joint creation of strategies with the community, generating possibilities of change from collective participation, leaving capacities installed in the contexts. The third is the generation of institutional bridges, providing access to government services as guarantors and promoters of citizen and public rights. Thus, those who intervene have the task of seeing themselves as a subject in permanent formation, where the subject-matter relationship will provide the possibility of generating a spiral learning process that allows critical awareness as political subjects that transform their realities and strengthen the social fabric.

The construction of the local to the regional gives account of a complex and dynamic exercise, which gave solidity to the concrete efforts of municipalities and sub-regions, joining efforts to build a socially, culturally and politically inclusive region. In the field of Social Psychology, these efforts are assumed as an opening for its political resignification and for its understanding from an interdisciplinary perspective, since these construction scenarios demonstrate the creation, not only of an organizational framework for the benefit of all, but also the appropriation of discourses and alternative practices that dignify life.

These community initiatives mobilize collective resources, through participation for the achievement of objectives, from the methodological process of the PDPMM that wishes to impact, according to Katz (1999a), in "the construction of the social fabric, in the measure that it promotes a basis of consensus among the inhabitants, around the definition of a future that responds in an equitable manner to the needs and interests present in the life of the region" (p. 77) [own translation].

The proposed methodology of the PDPMM makes visible exercises that seek to transform the counterproductive dynamics and propose points of negotiation with the actors in the region, assuming the difference as a potential element for the consolidation of dynamics that contribute to integral development. For this reason, below we highlight some strategic contributions in the

methodological construction of the Program, making visible its psychosocial intervention approach and that are a gamble for territorial and institutional strengthening, human and economic development in the way of rebuilding the social fabric.

Psychosocial Intervention in PDPMM

In its founding years, the PDPMM proposed a model of social intervention that would respond to two possible scenarios for achieving integral development, according to Katz (1999a) the first, the institutional strengthening of the State from the active participation of civil society; and the second, an integral human and economic development in which the knowledge, interests and life experiences of the inhabitants are recognized (p. 77). Comprehensiveness also implies economic development aimed at sustainable construction, which recognizes the contributions of the productive practices of the people, as mentioned by Vargas (2010),

The proposal seeks to demonstrate that it is possible for a peasant enterprise to maintain food security, protect and reproduce cultural traditions, roots in the land and peasant organization and, at the same time, acquire the capacity to link to the world of the market, creating development alternatives to the extractive and enclave model (village economy, food security, peasant farm projects) (p. 6) [own translation].

Although the importance of economic productivity for the region is realized, community social capital is prioritized as a transversal element to think about participatory and equitable processes at individual and collective levels. In this sense, Montero (1984) points out, "that some psychosocial factors make visible the power that individuals have to create solutions to the difficulties of their contexts" (p. 390). Thus, those who assume the possibilities of change also establish a commitment to their contextual realities, giving greater validity to collective participation and organization so that it is sustainable and relevant over time. Moncayo (1999) states that,

The PDPMM has made its greatest investment in the development of social capital. Learning by doing means that inhabitants identify their problems from the beginning, they suggest solutions, take on challenges, establish commitments, carry out actions, design and apply the instruments to evaluate and adjust procedures (p. 90). [Own translation].

It is worth mentioning the making of a public sphere as a setting where social ties are strengthened and alternatives are thought for the achievement of a dignified peace to guarantee livable regions, where communities can recognize

their strengths and invest on reducing socioeconomic inequalities. In this regard Katz (1999b) states that “the PDPMM processes result in a model of the making of the public in which the individual is ratified as a privileged historical subject, as a form of territorial organization” (p. 98). [Own translation] From this theoretical perspective, the development of a collective social consciousness led to the emergence of new positions of the inhabitants concerning political, economic, social and cultural decisions, and thus they became actors who are capable of creating a regional movement for peace in the midst of conflicts and successes.

A characteristic aspect in the Program process is the permanent relationship with public institutions seeking to construct lasting relationships between the society and the State and co-responsible in the defense of rights. Thus, the proposals had to be technically feasible and politically possible and involve the social powers in their negotiation. Permanent relationships with their ruptures and repairs on the proposed strategies make the collective aspect not only a harmonious place, but a place of challenges, setbacks, and intentional relationships, which do not always include all the individuals living in the territory.

Community strengthening has been imbued with the reconstruction of story, memory, the ability to listen, dialogue, negotiation, management, and the mediation of conflicts and interests that allow the making of a collective life project. “Strengthening emphasizes the collective aspect, the liberating character, the control and centered power on the community and on its organized members as social actors who are aware of their reality and its changes.” (Montero, 2003, pp. 69-70). [Own translation]

PDPMM comprised four approaches of psychosocial intervention 1. Individual dimension 2. From the individual dimension to collective dimension. 3. The collective individuals recognizing themselves as social actors. 4. The making of the political subject to the extent that there is a collective will to exercise power (UNDP, 2008). This intervention process has its origin, on the one hand, in the human nature of individual subjects and, on the other, in the collective conditions: social, historical, political and economic that compose their context. This shows that the processes of the Program surpassed the state exclusion for many years, arriving at the self-management of a regional proposal, with guiding principles such as organization, participation, empowerment and agreement.

From a psychosocial intervention approach, the aforementioned conditions demand an accompaniment of repair and construction of a peace scenario from and for the community. This commitment implies that the psychosocial work recognizes particular characteristics of the subjects and, at the same time, their collective psychic, physical and social impacts. It is important to recognize that

communities have a relationship between state institutions with diverse interests, although it is paramount the visibility of grassroots organizations that have a better understanding of social reality. In accordance with the contributions of Baró (1986) “it is not a matter of us thinking for them, that we transmit our scheme to them or that we solve their problems; it is about our thinking and theorizing with and from them” (p. 297). [Own translation]

From the psychosocial intervention perspective, the theories are built from the reflected practice, recognizing the psychosocial intervention itself as an approach to the subjects in their individual, and collective capacities as well as their historical context, in which social, cultural, political and economic dynamics are arranged to create participatory actions aimed at reflecting on and mobilizing the needs of the communities.

Finally, subjects are understood as capable and when interacting with their peers and other actors can foster processes of change, since the community is dynamic and requires people to steer their development toward the collective well-being. This, to a large extent, can be achieved if they are assumed as political subjects, capable of understanding reality for a social transformation.

Conclusions

Through approaching the Magdalena Medio Peace and Development Programme, some key elements of the psychosocial intervention were highlighted, starting from its founding archives and some academic voices that participated in the making of the community. This revealed that the founding methodology of the Program is framed in integrality, insofar as it includes the forms of economic, political and social exclusion of Magdalena Medio, linking the knowledge and interests of each of the areas where this reality is important.

In this way, some psychosocial characteristics were evidenced that emerge within the proposal and that were developed in the midst of a context of armed conflict; thus, understanding that community processes should strengthen the participation, the political subject, the social fabric and the making of the public for the sake of collective interests. The PDPMM can be defined from its distinctive features as a social process in constant construction, changing, dynamic and subjected to be recomposed.

The importance of the relationship of the Program with public and private institutions was reflected in the strengthening of the local and regional administration, as it led the residents to think about their context with respect to an economic and social planning and resulting in the mobilization of the citizen participation and the negotiation of internal and external interests as the

greatest challenge. The claim of the population toward the weak presence of the State, led to agreements between different unions to develop solid structures that would help to minimize different social problems, in addition, it managed an idea of belonging to a political system and a social group.

The conclusion is that it is of utmost importance to know and validate the experiences of peace building in Colombia, in this particular case the PDPMM that proposes, from a participatory methodology, an alternative to assume and live in a territory, thinking about the regional and redefining the processes generated from the different actors of civil society. For this reason, in the current political situation in the country, all peacebuilding experiences must be made visible and protected through state mechanisms that strengthen and guarantee development in accordance with the struggles that have occurred for years.

This approach to the PDPMM in its founding years was novel because, this psychosocial intervention methodology is recognized as a useful contribution to the epistemic peace-building framework through which the country has gone. In addition, because it is an investment that from its complexities requires it be read from an interdisciplinary perspective, which is a major contribution to understanding the different ways in which violence has permeated the territories and their inhabitants, accounting for the different places of enunciation of those who have lived it and who can be thought today as political subjects. This would then serve to rescue both practical and theoretical matters of reflection to strengthen the field of psychosocial intervention in Colombia.

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