La Mesa de Juventud-

A platform for active citizenship and community building
among the Colombian youth?

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to explore how a newly founded Youth Platform in Colombia, called *La Mesa de Juventud*, could affect the youth community in promoting and capacitating organizational skills, youth citizenship rights and youth influence in public policy making. The study emanates from the region of northern Cauca situated in the South Western part of Colombia which is an area where youth are especially exposed to social exclusion and marginalization. The central questions and theoretical framing of the investigation derive from the conceptual understanding of *youth organizing* looking at three levels of impact; the individual level, community level, and societal level.

The methods used to realize this case-study have been of qualitative character including semi-structured interviews, field observations and participatory observations. Additionally, a comprehensive documentation review was conducted consulting both primary and secondary sources such as law and policy documents as well as theoretical literature concerning youth civic engagement, and youth organizing.

The main results from the investigation highlighted the challenges of the Youth Platform to achieve the processes and outcomes of the three levels of youth organizing analyzed in the study. A main point concerning the specific context of the case illuminated the need of a broader inclusion and understanding of the youth culture, taking into consideration the different ethnic and cultural identities.

Keywords: youth organizing, youth platform, law 1622, youth civic engagement, community development, youth development, institutional change, northern Cauca, Colombia,

Resumen

El objetivo de la tesis es explorar cómo la plataforma juvenil *La Mesa de Juventud*, recién fundada en Colombia, puede afectar la comunidad juvenil en la promoción y capacitación de habilidades organizativas, los derechos ciudadanías y la influencia juvenil en las políticas públicas. El estudio proviene de la región del norte del Cauca ubicada en la parte sur occidental de Colombia, la cual es una área donde los y las jóvenes están especialmente expuestos a la exclusión social y la marginalizacion. Las preguntas centrales que han guiado esta investigación se derivan de la comprensión conceptual de la *organización juvenil* observando tres niveles de impacto; el nivel individual, el nivel comunitario, el nivel social.

Los métodos utilizados para realizar este estudio de caso han sido de carácter cualitativo, con entrevistas semi-estructuradas, observaciones de campo y observaciones participativas. Además se ha hecho, una revisión de documentación exhaustiva que se llevó a cabo consultando fuentes primarias y secundarias, tales como documentos de derecho y políticas publicas, así como literatura teórica sobre la participación ciudadana juvenil, y la organización juvenil.

Los resultados principales de la investigación iluminan los desafíos de la Plataforma Juvenil en lograr los procesos y resultados de los tres niveles de organización juvenil analizados en este estudio. Un resultado principal con respeto al contexto específico del caso fue la necesidad de una mayor inclusión de la cultura juvenil, tomando en cuenta las diferentes identidades étnicas y culturales.

Palabras claves: organización juvenil, mesa de juventud, ley 1622, participación juvenil, desarrollo comunidad, desarrollo juvenil, cambio institucional, Cauca Norte, Colombia,

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List of Abbreviations

ACIN - Association of Indigenous Leaders in North of Cauca - (*Asociación de Cabildos Indígenas de Norte de Cauca)*

DFID - Department for International Development

DYP - Departmental Youth Platform *(Mesa Departamental de Juventud)*

FARC-EP - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army *(Fuerzas Armados Revolucionarios de Colombia - Ejercito del Pueblo)*

FCYO - The Funder's Collaborative on Youth Organizing

IOM - International Organization for Migration

MDP - Municipal Development Plan of Santender de Quilichao 2016-2019

MYC - Municipal Youth Council *(Consejo Municipal de Juventud)*

PYD - Positive Youth Development

SENA - National Service of Learning *(Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje)*

SQ - Santender de Quilichao

SPD - Socio-Political Development

UNDP - United Nations Development Program

YP - Municipal Youth Platform of Santender de Quilichao *(Mesa Municipal de Juventud)*

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1. Introduction

Democracy is the only legitimate form of government today, even though a consensus of its meaning does not exist as it is continuously under debate and reconceptualization (Kiilakoski & Gretchen 2014:100-102). Although the scope of democracy has many different dimensions one inherent principle is *"rule of the people",* in other words the rule of the citizens.

The important question is then; who are counted as citizens that are capable to participate in the ruling?

The scope of who are counted as citizens has widened during the last century and one group who has been highlighted in the last decades is the group of youth.

Youth participation and engagement in civic matters has for a long time been evaluated as a predictor for future adult civic engagement, however a new consensus assumes that young people are competent citizens and should be seen as assets rather than problems in society (World Bank 2006:167-170; DFID 2010:7-8). Moreover, the value of youth civic engagement has been recognized not only as an important citizenship right but also as crucial for the economic and social development of communities and nation-states (Kassimir & Flanagan 2010:92).

Emanating from the field of youth participation and youth civic engagement this case study will focus on a newly established Youth Platform (YP) called *La Mesa de Juventud* in the region of northern Cauca, situated in the South Western part of Colombia[1]. The aim of the YP is to coordinate youth initiatives on local and departmental levels and to capacitate those in organizational skills as well as inform the youth of their citizenship rights, which will enable them to participate in public policy making (Law 1622, article 62). This national youth policy was established in Colombia in April 2013 and is in process of being institutionalized throughout the country, however its progress depends on the resources and institutional capacity in the different municipalities and departments. The rural regions are those lagging behind in this process due to several structural reasons where the internal conflict, which has imprinted the country for the last 50 years, plays a significant role (GMH, 2013; Coordinator Municipal Youth Platform Santender de Quilichao [2]). The growing field of research in youth civic engagement and youth participation (Sherrod et al. 2010) do not reflect all contexts.

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[1]See appendix 1 for map of the region and demographical data
[2] See Appendix 3 and 5 for participants and interview guide

In rural contexts of Latin America there is a lack of studies on youth civic engagement in general, which is explained by Zapata ((2008) in Jurado and Tobasura, 2012:67) as due to the absence of a recognized concept of youth until very recently.

The lack of research on youth civic engagement and participation in rural contexts of Latin America makes the case of northern Cauca relevant both in terms of informing the research field as well as to evaluating the policy implications of the newly established YP.

1.1 Purpose and research questions

In relation to the aim of the YP and its functions according to law 1622, the purpose of this study is to explore how the newly established YP could affect the youth community of northern Cauca reflecting on its *youth organizing* capacities.

Youth Organizing is defined by The Funder's Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO)(2009) as *"an innovative youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy, and assists them in employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities."*

The definition above describes youth organizing as a strategy that empowers youth participants on a personal level, as well as a strategy of community organizing with the aim to create institutional and social change for the whole community. Hence the processes and outcomes of youth organizing could be connected to personal *youth development*, *community development* and a broader societal development such as *institutional change*.

The main research question is the following:

How is the newly formed Youth Platform "Mesa de Juventud" affecting youth organizing in the youth community of northern Cauca?

The sub questions that will guide the analysis are based on the three core elements tied to the conceptual understanding of youth organizing used in this study which are; *youth development*, *community development* and *institutional change*.

Sub questions:
- How could the youth leaders' personal development be affected by the Youth Platform? (youth development)

- How does the Youth Platform succeed in mobilizing the different youth community organizations and initiatives in the region? (community development)
- How is the Youth Platform affecting youth influence in public policy making? (institutional change)

The overall aim with this qualitative study is to illuminate the discrepancies when comparing existing research on youth organizing with the issues raised in the specific case of northern Cauca.

Similar theoretical frameworks highlighting different levels of impact within youth organizing has been investigated by Christens and Dolan (2011) as well as by Kirshner and Ginwright (2012) (see chapter 3.2). However, their studies are mainly focusing on grass-root youth organizing with connections to civil society or private institutions, while my case are looking at the grass root-public relationship, and in what way that relationship could foster youth organizing through the three dimensions. Another interesting angle of this case is the multiethnic and rural context of northern Cauca, considering the lack of youth studies in rural Latin America which Zapata ((2008) in Jurado and Tobasura, 2012:67) claim to be due to the absence of a recognized youth concept. Hence, this study could also shed light on the conceptual understanding of youth and youth participation in the specific rural and ethnic context of northern Cauca.

1.2 Demarcations

There are several dimensions of youth civic engagement and participation that are not being brought up in this thesis as the field stretches among several areas and disciplines. As the focus in this case study lies on youth community organizations and the Youth Platform, the area of *youth organizing* will be the central concept within the larger theoretical field of youth civic engagement. However, as discussed in chapter 3, the aspect of political capital and influence in decision making will be discussed in relation to youth organizing as it is relevant to my case of youth participation in public policy.

Regarding the youth community organizations included in this thesis, all of them are *out-of-school* organizations; hence youth organizing connected to educational institutions are not included due to its different character and dynamics. The relation between educational institutions and youth organizing is an important and a large field that needs to be studied separately. Another demarcation is the theoretical literature on youth civic engagement and youth organizing used as part of the analytical framework in this thesis, which is overwhelmingly constructed within a western context as most of the research has been done

in Europe and the USA. That limitation I have turned into an advantage as I have the aim to use the existing theories and compare them to my empirical findings in order to inform the theoretical gap within the Colombian rural context of youth organizing and in a larger perspective youth civic engagement.

Finally, the new establishment of the Youth Platform in Cauca and all over Colombia has delimited the access to earlier research and information about its implications and results. This can be seen as a limitation but also as an imperative to realize this study. These limitations will be discussed more in depth in the final chapter regarding their possible impacts on my findings and what consequences that could have for my results.

1.3 Disposition

The following background sections will give an overview of the contextual setting of the case starting off with the conflict context and what implications it has for the youth situation in northern Cauca. Thereafter follows a description of the function of the Youth Platform and its connection to Law 1622 as it is crucial in order to understand the case. After the background section a theoretical framework is presented consisting of a literature review of the concepts used in the study and an overview of relevant theories connected to those concepts. Thereafter follows the methodology, which will present the research design, sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity and reliability, ethical considerations and limitations. Subsequently, the analysis and discussion take place emanating from my findings with the help of literature and the theoretical framework. The conclusion will answer the main research question and provide suggestions for future research and policy implications.

2. Background
2.1 Youth in the post-conflict context of Northern Cauca

A central theme in all social life of northern Cauca is the internal armed conflict that has imprinted the society for decades (GMH, 2103:258). The conflict has contributed to weak public institutions and a weak civil society which has affected the progress of an organized youth community which also stresses the importance of a policy reform like the Youth Platform. The peace negotiations between the Government of Colombia and one of the largest guerrilla movements FARC-EP have been going on since 2012 and are now entering a historical stage where a final peace agreement was signed the 23rd of June 2016 (SIG[3]).

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[3] Government Information System - Sistema Informativo del Gobierno - SIG
http://es.presidencia.gov.co/noticia/160623-Comunicado-Conjunto-No-76

In spite of this progressive advancement of a final cease fire and a peace agreement between the two parts on official level the uncertainty remains whether a fruitful post-conflict development is possible for the people living in the afflicted territories. One of these afflicted areas is the northern regions of Cauca where there are now 78.640 victims registered by the Victims Unit, most of them victims of forced displacement (MDP:239)[4]. Considering the marginalized situation of youth in Northern Cauca entering a fragile stage of a post-conflict environment, previous experiences in Latin America such as Guatemala (Kurtenbach 2014), and El Salvador (ERIC et al. 2004:253-255) indicates a need for strong institutional support and targeting of youth as they are in the risk zone of falling back into violence. The relation between youth and violence in post-conflict societies has been well documented and investigated in other regions of the world as well, like Somalia, Rwanda and Cambodia (Coletta & Cullen 2000). Most research found on the role of youth in post-conflict societies is focusing on youth as victims or possible perpetrators where the common risk factors are identified as connected to socio-economic factors such as lack of education, and lack of opportunities to income generation (Mclean & Fraser, 2009; OID 2013). The socio-economic perspective of the youth situation can be reflected as well in the development programs targeting youth in the region of Cauca, as the governmental, civil society and international agencies are primarily focusing on these socio-economic factors such as income generation and educational programs (SENA; IOM[5]; IOM, 2015).

However, there seems to be a gap in research regarding youth as active peace agents and community builders in their societies. This could be tied to what Kemper (2005:4) calls a socio-political approach in her article about youth in war-to-peace transitions, where she argues for the importance of integrating young people into social structures where participation is the key. This study will not concentrate explicitly on the war-to-peace transition or the post-conflict development as such; it will rather be an important background to my study in order to understand the findings as well as a strong imperative of conducting the study from a broader socio-political development perspective.

The following chapter will explain the functions of the Youth Platform and the processes behind its establishment which is important in order to understand the case.

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[4] Municipal Development Plan of Santender de Quilichao 2016-2019
[5] See Appendix 2 and 6 for expert participants and interview guideline

2.2 The rise of youth participation and the establishment of Law 1622

The initiating process of creating the Youth Platforms[6] in Colombia started in 2010, driven and coordinated among civil society actors such as NGOs, international cooperation, academia, and youth councils among others (RJA, 2016:28). The objective was to create a space more dynamic than the Youth Councils where youth initiatives and organizations could mobilize together and articulate their agenda towards policy makers (Coordinator of YP[7]). This process of formulating a new youth policy was legalized in April 29, 2013 through Law 1622 that was enacted by the Government of Colombia. The law is addressing youth organizing not only as training in political participation but also emphasizing the diversity of expressions of youth participation and the right of its legitimacy and autonomy. With this youth policy a new governmental body was established through the Presidential Programme of the National System of Youth or *"ColombiaJoven"* which has the responsibility of ensuring the accomplishment of the law throughout the country (ColombiaJoven[8]).

The definition and function of the Youth Platforms are stipulated in law 1622, article 62:

1.   Serve as an entity of consultancy to the Youth Councils, on municipal, local and departmental levels.

2.   Inspire/motivate the structure of the organizing processes, practices and spaces of youth participation; consider the diverse forms of expression, with the aim to enable them to exercise an effective agency to defend their collective interests.

3.   Participate in the design and development of local, municipal and district, departmental and national agendas of youth.

4.   Carry out oversight and social control of the implementation of the local, municipal and territorial agendas of youth.

The four paragraphs stipulate how the functions of the Youth Platform should be of consultative character, promoting organizing processes and spaces for diverse forms of youth participatory expressions, promoting an effective agency of the youth participants, participating in the design and implementation of territorial agendas concerning youth. Hence, the three dimensions of youth organizing are also incorporated in law 1622 regarding the functions and objective of the Youth Platform. In Cauca the municipal youth platforms were

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[6] See Appendix 7 for organogram of Youth Platform
[7] See Appendix 3 for participants
[8] http://wsp.presidencia.gov.co/ColombiaJoven/elprograma/Paginas/elprograma.aspx

established in 2014 and the departmental youth platform was established in September 2015 in-officially but legalized in December 2015 through Decree 2775.

My case study will emanate from the Municipal Youth Platform of Santender de Quilichao[9] which is the only functioning Youth Platform in the northern region of Cauca today. Hereafter when referring to the Municipal Youth Platform of Santender de Quilichao only the term *Youth Platform* or abbreviation of *YP* will be used. When referring to another Youth platform the full name will be outlined.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual framework

This chapter will begin with by a brief discussion of some of the complexities of how to define youth in the specific context of Cauca. Thereafter follows a literature review regarding the concept of youth organizing which is the central theoretical thrust in this study. By analyzing the youth organizing concept in relation to my study three key elements are identified which are youth development, community development and institutional change which will be discussed in relation to relevant theories and according to my case.

From the theoretical discussion of these concepts, an analytical framework of youth organizing will be defined to help me analyze the empirical findings of the Youth Platforms' effects on the wider youth community of northern Cauca.

3.1 Defining Youth

A central concept that needs to be clarified is the understanding of *youth* in the specific context of the case of northern Cauca. The literature expresses the complexity of defining youth as it is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood which all depends on socio-cultural norms (Kemper 2005; Sherrod et al. 2010; Worldbank 2006). The UN[10] has defined youth as a person between 15-24 years but the exact age-span looks different in the different member states. In Colombia the age-span defining youth goes from 14-28 years (Law 1622) which represents a vast group of people. Except the broad age span a challenging aspect when trying to find a common definition of youth in the region of Cauca is the cultural and ethnic diversity. In the indigenous community of NASA[11] the informants revealed that there is no concept such as youth with a need of special rights or requirements, first you are considered a child and at the age of 14 you are an adult with adult responsibilities (NASA

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[9] See appendix 1 for more information about Santender de Quilichao

[10] http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf

[11] See appendix 1 for more information of NASA

youth leader, IOM)[12]. Thus, in some communities you are expected to take care of your own home and family while in other communities you are still considered a child. This study emanates from the legal definition of youth in Colombia which ranges from 14-28 years which is a group of people tied to several attributes and identities. Different attributes such as ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and the rural/urban dynamic put some youth groups in a more marginalized and exposed situation since they are are facing more obstacles when participating and organizing. The Youth Platforms in northern Cauca have the role to mobilize and strengthen the youth network through organizing around the collective interests of youth, taking into consideration the heterogeneous identities that the youth represents. This is a challenge that will be elevated in the analysis when looking at the capacity of the youth platform to mobilize the youth initiatives around a shared youth identity which is part of the youth organizing concept.

3.2 Youth organizing

The central theoretical angle in my study has been the concept of youth organizing looking at the relationship between the Youth Platform and the youth community organizations and what possible effects of youth organizing this newly established platform could have on the wider youth community of Cauca.

A widely cited definition of youth organizing used by many researchers today is the one provided by FCYO (2009): "*an innovative youth development and social justice strategy that trains young people in community organizing and advocacy, and assists them in employing these skills to alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change in their communities.*" This overarching definition could be understood as a process driven by a *social justice strategy* that empowers youth on an *individual level* through youth development as well as on a *community level* through community organizing and additionally on *a wider societal level* by *creating or exercising institutional change* in their communities.

Youth organizing hence consist of both community organizing and youth development which stretch among several disciplines such as sociology, developmental and educational psychology, social work, and political science (Christens and Speer, 2015; Christens & Kirshner, 2011; Karakos 2015). The interdisciplinary dimensions reveal its complexity but could also make it a dynamic concept which is useful when studying social issues highlighting different angles such as in the case of northern Cauca.

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[12] See appendix 2, 4, and 6 for participants and interview guides

Christens and Speer (2015:193) describe community organizing as "an umbrella term for a field of practice in which residents collaboratively investigate and take collective action regarding social issues of mutual concern". There are hence similar elements to the definition of youth organizing but where the latter have a more integrated approach to social change combining issue-based organizing with leadership development and cultural expressions (Christens and Kirshner 2011:28-29; Marquez 2005:21;Hosang 2003:11-12), which can be related to the youth development element. The positive relation between youth development and cultural expressions is also manifested by Larson et al. (2006:850) where they investigate different types of youth organizing activities and how it positively affect the personal youth development. Woodson (in Best 2007:16) emphasize the role of art in community building especially related to youth as they are often denied a voice in other public areas. An important aspect when defining youth organizing is also the aspect of *autonomy*, stressing the need of youth leading and mobilizing themselves around issues they have chosen themselves, in comparison to an adult-organization giving youth pre-selected issues and organizational structure (Kirshner and Ginwright 2012; Delgado & Staples, 2007; Torres, 2004:50-54).

Another feature that is prescribed specifically to youth organizing is the focus on local issues concerning their immediate environment, although those are often connected to a broader socio-political context such as socio-economic justice and anti-discrimination (Christens & Dolan 2011:529; Christens and Kirshner 2011:29;Marquez, 2005). The local engagement by youth are also highlighted by Marquez (2005) in his study of youth organizations and civic engagement in Medellin and Bogota, where most youth tended to organize around local issues and also participated in the local elections more than in the national ones. What is typical for youth organizing expressed by several authors is the social justice strategy that the organizing issue is deriving from, where marginalized youth such as youth from ethnic minorities and those from low-income households are most prominent (Christens and Speer, 2015:199; Christens and Kirshner 2011:28-29;Kirshner and Ginwright 2012:289). In relation to the social justice strategy the process of youth organizing is also seen as an alternative for those youth who are excluded from other institutional platforms of participation where they can express their thoughts, opinions and concerns (Flanagan et al.2010:287-290). Based on the core elements and features of youth organizing its connection to civil society are clear with the community organizing and youth development features.

However, in the case of the Youth Platform a third dimension is included, namely the institutional change through participation in public policy which includes the dimension of political capital which will be incorporated into the concept of youth organizing as a tool for

"exercising the institutional change in the communities". Earlier studies on youth participation in public policy in Colombia refer to the Municipal Youth Council (MYC) in Medellin and Bogota which worked as a "school for formations and for further training in real political participation" (Marquez, 2005:55). Hence, the MYC was seen more as a civic educational tool for future civic engagement and not as a changemaker for youth to take part in decision making processes. The study of Marquez (2005:23,48) found a low interest and participation in the MYC by youth which was explained by the traditional political system of Colombia which the MYC was replicating including clientelism, corruption and not representing the youth in general. It could also be explained by the formal and "adult" structure of participation and politics that was promoted by the organizational structure of the MYC (Márquez V.2005:21; Valencia & Montoya 2010:20-21). Diagnostics and questionnaires done in Medellin also show a high prevalence of youth participation in the cultural domain but a low interest to participate in political formal settings. According to Márquez (2005:41, 21) this could be understood as the cultural setting being more informal, less institutionalized into an "adult" structure and that youth want to participate but not within the spaces that is formulated and defined by adults. This could be related back to the question of autonomy and the wider scope of how to work with social change where cultural activities are emphasized.

The conclusion of his study regarding the MYC was a reform to create a more dynamic dialogue between institutionalism and youth initiatives in order to give space for youth innovation and creativity within the institutional structure of the MYC (Marquez 2005:25).

Relating back to the definition of FCYO (2009) and characteristics of youth organizing described above, three different levels of impact are identified as individual, community, and societal. Researchers who have used a similar theoretical framework analyzing the effects of youth organizing are Kirshner and Ginwritght (2012) and Christens and Dolan (2011). Kirshner and Ginwright (2012) are highlighting the developmental context of Latino and afro American youth in the US looking at what effect youth organizing could have on these groups emanating from individual, community and societal development dimensions. Christens and Dolan (2011:531) have a similar theoretical framework conducting a case-study of a faith based youth network in California called ICUC, analyzing its effect of youth development, community development and social change through youth organizing. Their results points at a positive relation between youth organizing and the three levels of impact, where Christens and Dolan (2011:540-544) emphasize a strong interrelation between the three dimensions and hence the multilevel impact that youth organizing provides. Kirshner and Ginwright (2012:

291-292) especially emphasize the socio-political development empowering marginalized youth.

The following part will discuss the three key elements identified framed as *youth development*, *community development*, and *institutional change* in relation to relevant theories applicable to youth organizing and to the case-study of northern Cauca.

3.3 Youth development

The conceptual understanding of youth development is based on a broad field of research where a prominent theory is the positive youth development (PYD) emphasizing the strengths and positive qualities of adolescents and youth, seeing them as assets to be developed (Bowers et al. 2010:721). Another theory sharing the same emphasis on the importance of developing capabilities among youth is the Socio-political development theory (SPD), although this approach focuses more on the political context of youth development (Watts et al. 2003) while the PYD emphasizes the individual and psychosocial conceptions. Another difference between the PYD and the SPD approach is the acknowledgement of cultural and political aspects that impede the equal opportunity for youth to develop positive capabilities (Karakos 2015:33). Here the PYD emanates from a more universalistic perspective assuming that all youth have the same potential to develop, not taking into account the external oppressive mechanisms in society (Ginwright and Cammarrotta, 2003:83). In contrast the SPD approach highlights the oppressive cultural and political aspects that shape one's status in society. Through the SPD process these oppressive mechanisms are discovered and finally counteracted by the marginalized groups in society (Watts et al. 2003:185). The conceptual understanding of youth development in relation to the study stresses the socio-political domain as the contextual situation of youth in northern Cauca being related to social exclusion and marginalization. A specific youth development outcome tied to the socio-political approach is the academic development (Kirshner and Ginwritght 2012:290) where studies done on a youth organizing projects, showed an increase of a deepened engagement in school by the participants and an increased agency as they acquired awareness of social inequality structures in society and realized how education could help them encounter that social injustice (Christens and Kirchner 2011:31). Kirshner and Ginwright (2012:290) also emphasize the civic development as an individual level outcome from youth organizing, particularly addressing the increased sense of agency in relation to political awareness.

3.4 Community development

Community development according to the conceptual framing of youth organizing mentioned earlier could be related to the community organizing features such as taking *"..collective action regarding social issues of mutual concern"* (Speer and Christens 2015:193). This collective action and organizing around a mutual concern could also be related to the strengthening of social capital drawing on Putnam's (1993:36) definition *"features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit".* Community development could hence be seen as a process of strengthening social relations through collective action for the benefit of the whole community. Collective action and relationship building are hence incorporated within the concept of community development framed according to the definition of youth organizing. An interesting critique regarding the combination of social action and community development in community organizing is lifted by Robert Fisher and Eric Shragge (2000:6) who claim that the community development strategy is focusing too much on consensus building among actors to achieve improved social conditions. Instead, they mean one should focus more on the *causes* of the social problems which can only be achieved by "organizing people to pressure government or private bodies" (ibid:1-2). The tension between social action and community development could be an interesting point to reflect upon when analyzing the role of the Youth Platform, as the objective is to build up a strong youth community around shared interests and values and at the same time mobilizing for social change through building alliances with policy makers. This leads into the third element of youth organizing that will be framed as institutional change and could be understood as the third level of youth organizing which is the institutional change on societal level.

3.5 Institutional Change

One of the key features regarding youth organizing is the aim to *alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change* (Funders Collaborative on Youth organizing 2009). This can be related to one of the main functions of the Youth Platform which is to mobilize youth initiatives to participate in public policy making in accordance with law 1622 which is the responsibility of the local government to fulfill. The institutional change is hence linked to a broader scope of the institutional-grass root relationship that the Youth Platform represents in order to employ youth participation in decision making processes.

A relevant theoretical approach to this conceptual understanding could be *youth civic engagement* where youth organize around issues with the aim to create institutional change which could be seen as part of a larger democratic process goal. There are divided opinions

about the definition and what should be included in the concept civic engagement but one of the main elements seems to be the issue of public concern, whether you engage individually or collectively, the issue should concern the wellbeing of the whole communities in some meaning (Van Benshoten, 2001; Diller, 2001) in Adler & Goggin 2005:237-238; UNDP[13]; McIntosh & Youniss, 2010). To create institutional change through youth civic engagement the youth need access to mediate institutions where they can enact their citizenship (Kassimir & Flanagan, 2010:105). This mediate institution is exemplified as being civil society or private corporations as the government often fails to deliver these spaces for youth to exercise their citizenship rights (ibid). In this case-study the Youth Platform represents both the civil society movement through the youth community organizations as well as the government institution through the coordinator of the Youth Platform who is contracted by the local administration. An interesting categorizing of youth civic engagement in relation to youth organizing is the analysis done by Checkoway & Aldana (2013:1894), where they categorize two different forms of youth civic engagement as *grass root organizing* and *citizen participation*. Both categories are included in their definition of civic engagement which is described as *"a process in which people take collective action to address issues of public concern"*. The two different categories they tie to different types of orientation to power (ibid:1897). The *citizen participant* perspective believes in the power of established institutions and the impact from within the system, while the *grass-root organizing* perspective believes that power derives from groups outside the institutional power structures (ibid). They identify grass-root organizing as community organizations with the basic strategy of social and political action, while the citizen participation is identified as operating through formal means within political and governmental institutions.

The institutional change element of youth organizing could be understood within a larger dimension of societal change and civic engagement where the youth platform might be seen as a kind of mediating institution where grass root organizing and citizen participation meet. This institutional-grass root partnership could be related to what Zeldin et al. (2008:7) and Larson et al. (2005:58-59) refer to as an adult-youth partnership which build upon an organizational culture of partnership where youth and adults are meant to learn from each other.

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http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democraticgovernance/focus_areas/topics_civic_engagement.html

However, the issue is what actual influence the youth have through this adult-youth partnership. Farthing (2012:82-83) means that participation without influence loses its objective and could instead foster disempowerment by youth as they have to adapt to adult society structures. This is also reflected by Marqez' (2005) study on the youth councils in Medellin and Bogota and why they did not succeed in mobilizing the youth.

The three levels of youth organizing processes and outcomes discussed in the sections above highlighting the individual level, community level and societal level will now be synthesized into an analytical framework in accordance with my case to help me present my results.

3.6 Model of Analysis

To conceptualize youth organizing according to the purpose of this study the three elements of youth development, community development and institutional change will be used as an analytical framework to answer my research questions highlighting three levels of how youth organizing could impact the youth community of Northern Cauca.

The *Youth development* perspective will emanate from a Socio-political development approach, emphasizing the individual components of civic development and academic development through increased sense of agency (Kirshner and Ginwright 2012; Watts et al. 2003). To analyze the collective impact on the youth community and the social relations among the youth the concept of c*ommunity development* will be employed emanating from the theoretical approach of social capital through organizing. A third dimension of youth organizing looking at the wider societal dimension will be employed by the *institutional change* element deriving from the theoretical approach of youth civic engagement and youth-adult partnership reflecting upon the grass root-institutional relationship between youth leaders and policymakers through the Youth Platform.

The complexity of these three dimensions become even more complex as they are all interrelated, hence the empirical findings analyzed from these three dimensions will eventually be consolidated in the conclusion in order to answer the main research question.

How is the newly formed Youth Platform "Mesa de Juventud" affecting youth organizing in the youth community of northern Cauca?

Before presenting the results, the following chapter will describe the methods undertaken when realizing this qualitative study.

4 Methodology

4.1 Design of the study

In accordance with the aim and research question the investigation is designed as a case-study of youth organizing looking at the role of the newly formed Youth Platform whether it could be an efficient tool for mobilizing the youth organizing initiatives in the region of northern Cauca of Colombia. The case-study is framed first of all in affiliation with the vulnerable situation of youth in the region looking at the policy implications of the Youth Platform regarding its function of *organizing* of the youth community on local and departmental levels. To apprehend what role the Youth Platform could play in this process of mobilizing the youth organizing initiatives and mediate the interests of the youth community towards policy makers, a qualitative inquiry has been undertaken targeting youth leaders representing community organizations and the Youth Platform as well as institutions working for and with youth in the region.

The empirical material has been collected through interviews, field observations and documentation review taking into consideration the perspectives of youth leaders in the community, youth leaders' part of the Youth Platforms and representatives from development agencies and educational institutions working with and for youth.

Regarding the theoretical approach to my study I have identified the relation between theory and the study neither being all deductive nor inductive as the research procedure has not been outlined by a linear process of testing or generating theory. The research process of my case-study has been more close to what Rule and John (2015:7) call a *dialogical model*. The relation between existing research on youth organizing to the empirical case of northern Cauca has been of an interactive nature informing and reconstructing one another. This interactive or *dialogical* process has helped me as researcher to obtain a deeper contextual and analytical understanding of the concept of youth organizing as well as developed a deeper theoretical understanding of the specific case of Cauca which could inform existing theory of youth organizing within that specific context. As Rule and John (2015:7) put it "this dialogical model between theory and case can generate more possibilities and insights about both the case and the theory".

4.2 Sampling Sources

The procedure of sampling the sources was first of all bound to my research topic and the theoretical framing of my case which was tied to the concept of youth civic engagement and

youth organizing, hence conducting a purposive sampling (Bryman 2012:418). The two main sources in my study are youth community organizations and the newly founded institution of a Youth Platform, both entities representing spaces and arenas where youth exercise their civic engagement in form of organizing themselves around social issues experienced in their communities.

The illustration below displays the institutional connections between the different entities where the Youth Platform is the bridging link between the youth community and the policy makers who in turn are interlinked with the institutions working with and for youth. The arrows in the diagram show the interrelation between the different entities regarding giving and receiving resources such as informative, financial, institutional inputs. The arrows in red show the link where this analysis will focus which is the relationship between the Youth Platform and the youth community organizations as they represent the interest group and the main imperative for the existence of the YP. However, the role of local policy makers will be discussed due to their influential role to impact the youth community in the process of youth organizing.

Created by Paint X

The institutions and development agencies selected as expert informants in the study were the National Service of Learning (SENA) and International Organization for Migration (IOM). SENA is a public institution working with educational and vocational training programs for youth conducting many projects in the rural regions of Cauca. IOM is an inter-governmental organization with field offices in Cauca working with several development projects targeting youth in the region. Additionally the Coordinator of the Committee of Coffee Growers has been consulted as expert informants as they are working with projects specifically targeting rural youth in northern and central Cauca.

Regarding policy makers the sources emanate from a participatory observation session during a workshop and seminar held by the secretary of the Municipal Council of Santender de Quilichao.[14]

The sampling of the youth leaders was done in a purposive way to the extent it was possible (Bryman 2012:418), where I sought representatives from different municipalities of Northern Cauca representing the different ethnic and rural groups in the region. However, the sampling was also dependent on my gate-keeper who is the former coordinator of the Youth Platform in Cauca and the contacts he had in the different municipalities. Further limitations regarding the sampling will be presented in the section *4.7 limitations*.

4.3 Data Collection

The process of the data collection has had a multi-facetted approach which is typical in a case study according to Creswell (2007:75) as there are several dimensions that need to be covered in order to understand the context of the case. A great part of the data was obtained through qualitative inquiry including 7 semi-structured participant interviews, 4 of them representing community youth organizations from three different municipalities, and 3 of them representing the municipal youth platform of Santender de Quilichao[15]. Moreover, 7 semi-structured expert interviews[16] were conducted and 3 sessions of direct and participatory observations whereof one included both youth leaders and policy makers. Additionally a comprehensive documentation review was conducted, *see section 4.3.3*.

Although my presumption of social research is that all results and findings are subjective in terms of my interpretation as a researcher, the different angles of these sources could help me to create a more comprehensive view and hopefully strengthen the quality of my findings.

4.3.1 Semi structured interviews

There were two kinds of interviews conducted; *expert* interviews and *participant* interviews, both semi-structured interviews which provided flexibility and openness when exploring different perspectives of the interviewees (Bryman, 2012:12) where many new ideas and angles to my research appeared through these open-ended conversations. The expert interviews were conducted with the aim to get a broader overview of the context in Northern Cauca and the challenges facing youth in the region based on the "expert knowledge" provided by representatives from SENA, IOM, and the Committee of Coffee Growers. What

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[14] See Appendix 4 for workshops and observations

[15] See Appendix 3 for a full list of youth participants and contextual background

[16] See Appendix 2 for a full list of expert participants

is counted as "expert knowledge" could be debated, it could depend on the researchers' judgement as an expert often is ascribed his or her attribute by virtue of the role as informant (Walter 1994:271 in Meuser & Nagel, 2009:18). To distinguish expert knowledge from common sense knowledge and every day knowledge, Meuser and Nagel (2009:18) define it as an individual that the researcher assumes possesses knowledge "..that is not accessible to anybody in the field of action." The expert interviews in my case study were informative and gave a perspective from state authorities, development agencies and civil society which work with youth development issues.

The Youth Platform and the youth leaders from the organizations were treated as *participant interviews* as they themselves represent the research object; *the youth community of northern Cauca.* The expert and participant interviews were conducted differently due to the purpose of the interview as well as the different relationship between me as researcher and the interviewee. The expert interviews were all held in an office environment under formal conditions and our relationship was clearly outlined as a student researcher and an expert informant.

In comparison, the youth participant interviews were held in local cafes or in a central park of Santender de Quilichao as I wanted to create a relaxed and safe environment where the youth participants felt comfortable. One exception was the interview with a youth leader from the indigenous community NASA who received me in their local of the Association of Indigenous Leaders of Northern Cauca (ACIN). That interview was also the most challenging as I did not manage to build up the same rapport as with the other youth participants. Afterwards I realized it was a miscalculation of me not taking enough consideration how the relationship between me and the youth member would be affected by our different cultural understandings of our roles as researcher and youth participant.

The methods of recording the interviews have been conducted through both tape-recording and by taking field notes. In some cases tape-recording was not suitable due to the specific situation and the location where the interview took place between me and the participant. This could eventually be a limitation of the information received. However, I consider the relationship between me and the participants even more important in order to obtain as much representative information as possible.

4.3.2 *Participatory Observation*

The qualitative data used in the study also derives from observations, both direct observations and participatory observation. I had the opportunity to attend several meetings with youth leaders and the coordinator of the YP where they discussed different strategies of how to

engage more youth initiatives in the platform and also how to receive more funding for implementing their events and meetings. During these meetings I was invited to take part in the discussions where I could ask questions to the whole group which resulted in a mixed method approach including both participating and observing (DeWalt, K, & DeWalt, B 2011:2). Additionally I had the opportunity to attend a whole-day seminar and workshop held by the Secretary of the Municipal Council of Santender de Quilichao together with the coordinator of the YP. To this meeting youth leaders from all over the region were invited to participate in developing strategies to the new Development Plan of Santender de Qulichao (MDP) that was to be finalized in June 2016. During the workshop I conducted observations, both passive and participatory that gave me an outside perspective of the (power) relations between community youth leaders, the youth platform members and the policy makers.

The strategies discussed during the seminar stretched from several themes including health issues, education, employment, environment, human rights, political participation, and the post-conflict situation. All these themes were discussed and analyzed by the youth leaders sitting in groups and mapping out challenges and opportunities and how to mainstream a youth perspective within those issues. All together this event gave me very rich data as it emanated from different angles through observation and participation.

4.3.3 Documentation Review

An important source in this case study is the legal documents of Law 1622 and Decree No. 2775 where the citizenship rights of youth are stipulated as well as the state authorities' responsibility to support the Youth Platform. Another important policy document is the MDP that was adopted 13th of June 2016 and describes the social, economic and political plans for the next 4 years. The final document of the MDP will be used as a complementing source to the field observations as it is the final result of that workshop and illuminates the youth influence in policy making which is part of my research question. Except these policy documents I have conducted a comprehensive theoretical literature review regarding youth civic engagement, youth participation in public policy, youth organizing and youth in post conflict settings. I have also consulted project reports and documents received from IOM.

4.4 Coding the material

As the material collected is a mixture of interviews, field notes from observations and review of documents, the process of analyzing the material has been divided into different stages in order to give as transparent, valid and detailed an account as possible. Creswell (2007:152)

calls the process of coding a process of "describing, classifying and interpreting" which is overall describing the process undertaken in my study.

In the coding process the three components of material have first been analyzed separately in relation to the case and then I have tried to link them together, not necessarily with the purpose to strengthen some assumptions but more as a way of giving the case a more nuanced description.

First of all the expert and participant interviews were divided to be coded separately where the expert interviews were treated as informative which I used in the broader contextual understanding of my case regarding the situation of youth in the area, but also reflecting upon their view of the youth platform and how they were working with youth inclusion and participation within their projects. The participant interviews were treated as the raw-material for the analysis where I transcribed the interviews after themes based on the research questions as well as the theoretical framing of youth organizing. The field notes from the observations were coded differently as the material was thicker and the field notes had both a descriptive and reflective component as I used a scheme that was divided into descriptive and reflective content. Hence through the reflective content the analyzing process began immediately during the observation sessions. To start with the analysis as soon as possible is something that is advised by researchers when recording and analyzing especially field notes (Silverman, 2013:231-232). During the coding process my theoretical angle was more focused and subsequently much of the material both from the interviews and field notes was taken away. The observation field notes were valuable as they gave an "outside" perspective of the issues raised by the youth during the interviews, which gave the empirical material more nuance.

The policy documents helped me to frame the theoretical angle as well as give the study relevance from a policy perspective as these documents are the foundation for the Youth Platforms' legitimacy. Hence, law 1622 has been used as a frame of reference throughout the whole study considering the functions of the Youth Platform and how well those are delivered.

Lastly, all quotes have been translated from Spanish to English as well as paragraphs and articles used from Law 1622.

4.5 Reliability and Validity

The triangulation of sources used in this thesis could be seen as a kind of validation strategy (Creswell, 2007:227) with the purpose to shed light on the case from different angles. A thick description of the process of sampling, and data collection will also support some of the

validation criteria (ibid). Another validation criterion could be the direct interaction with the participants and informants of the study both in terms of interviews and observation as I speak the language and did not have use of an interpreter. The language I consider a key to realize this study as I interacted with youth participants not only through interviews but also during observations and participatory observations where I had to build up a relationship where I was trusted and accepted. Reflecting on my positionality was an important aspect in all steps of the research and I tried to prepare myself by reflecting on the power relation between me as a researcher and the participant depending on age, gender, profession and socio-economic and cultural background. This was a crucial point especially as I interacted with young people where the question of authority and representation became evident when reflecting upon my social position in relation to theirs. I felt my position had some advantages in order to have immediate access to the research setting as the language and my cultural background of being a Latin American helped me much as well as being young and student interested in social issues which they could identify with. In spite of my advantages I am also aware of my position of being a student from a privileged background in this particular context and that relation will hence reflect my research.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

As the subjects treated in this study did not involve much of socially, culturally or politically sensitive matters I did not experience many situations of ethical dilemmas where I could intrude on the personal integrity of a participant. However, every time I use someone of my participants' or informants' opinions and words there is an ethical issue of doing as fair a representation as possible which lean back on the validity and reliability criteria discussed above. Regarding reflexivity (England, 1994:80) this became even more crucial as I came to know some of the participants on a personal level and have to reflect on that when representing them in my study in order to avoid personal bias.

To be as transparent as possible I will also send the finalized thesis to all the participants and informants in my study for them to read if they please.

4.7 Limitations

The scope of limitation can be drawn to several dimensions of this study, first of all the representativeness of the youth leaders can be questioned, especially those representing different municipalities or ethnic communities of Northern Cauca. This limitation is both connected to the scope of the research with its financial and time restraints, as well as due to the contextual setting of Northern Cauca. The financial and time restraints made the scope of

the research delimited regarding sampling and data collection as I had no possibility to identify and involve more participants in the study. The contextual setting is also a scope of limitation as I could not easily travel to the different municipalities outside Santender de Quilichao due to bad infrastructure but mostly due to security issues. This was also a limitation in the other end where not many of the youth participants attending the meetings of the YP in Santender de Quilichao were representing the surrounding municipalities. This limitation is hence linked to my sampling method of the participants outside SQ, those who were accessible and could travel from their communities to SQ were those who participated in the study. Another limitation connected to the representation of the youth leaders is regarding age and gender where most of my participants are males and over 20 years, which also could be seen in light of the structural problem of transportation and security as younger adolescents and girls may not be given the permission to travel on the same conditions as young men part of my study.

The limitation regarding representation of age and ethnicity will be discussed further in the conclusion as it is part of my results. However, the gender dimension will not be discussed as I do not have enough data for drawing any conclusions about that.

5. Findings and analysis

The issues raised by the youth leaders representing both the Platform and the youth community organizations in interviews, as well as during field observations, will be presented and analyzed according to my research question related to the three different levels of youth organizing identified as *youth development, community development* and *institutional change.* The three sub-questions will be guiding the analysis leading to the concluding remarks and a discussion of the main research question. Additionally article 62 paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 in law 1622, articulating the functions and aim of the youth platform will be part of the analytical framework.

Sub question 1:

How is the youth leaders' personal development affected by the Youth Platform?

5.1 Socialization of law 1622

To answer the first sub question in relation to the theoretical angle of youth development, the sociopolitical development approach will be analyzed in relation to the socialization of law 1622, looking at the academic and civic development aspects (Kirshner and Ginwright 2012).

Socialization in this context means awareness rising and the process of understanding and being able to act upon the rights prescribed in law 1622.

The main objective of the Youth Platform (YP) is to strengthen the organizational skills of the youth initiatives in the region and their capacity to influence public policy (law 1622, article 62, paragraph 2, 3, 4). In order to achieve that goal the YP needs to reach out to the youth community and socialize law 1622, so young people become aware of their rights, which will give them the opportunity and capacity to take part in decision making processes through the Youth Platform. The awareness of law 1622 was expressed as crucial by two participants engaged in the YP in order to succeed in mobilizing the youth and make them motivated to organize.

"The awareness of law 1622 and the youth citizenship rights is crucial for encouraging youth to engage in civic matters. If they know they can actually make change through organizing themselves, I think a lot more youth should engage in our platform." *(Coordinator YP, female, 25)*

"The awareness of law 1622 and the Youth Platform will help to mobilize the youth in our region as they will realize their capacity to impact their communities and their own lives" *(YP representative, Male, 27)*

These two quotes are highlighting the linkage between socialization of law 1622 and the motivation to organize as the youth become empowered by the awareness of their citizenship rights and how to make social change. It could be interpreted as part of the civic development where the youth develop political awareness which could lead to increased confidence to participate in civic matters (Kirshner & Ginwright 2012; Watts et al. 2003).

Two other participants expressed an increase of their self-confidence directly in relation to the youth platform and law 1622:

"Since I got involved in the youth platform I feel much more confident about my role as a youth leader… I know my rights now to take part in community issues. *(Youth leader Santender de Quilichao, Male, 24)*

"I feel it gives me a voice where the politicians have to listen since we now have a law backing us up as citizens and allowing us to participate…" *(Youth leader Buenos Aires, Male, 23)*

Both quotes express an increase in agency. The first quote is directly related to civic development, as he has attained awareness about his rights and now is able to act upon them, which has strengthened his confidence in leadership and a sense of agency to engage in community issues (Christens and Dolan 2011:239). The other participant expresses increased confidence, as the youth policy has given him a legitimate voice, which the politicians and adult institutional structure must listen to. This could be reflected upon as part of a socio-political development outcome, where awareness of one's rights and how to use them in order to fight social injustice strengthens a person's self-confidence (Watts. R et al. 2003).

Another substantial component in socio-political development, which is tied to youth organizing is the deepened understanding of the importance of education or what Kirshner and Ginwright (2012:291) call academic development, wherein young people learn how to use academic tools to challenge discrimination and alter power relations.

During conversations about education 6 out of 7 participants were emphasizing its importance, foremost for their future employment. There was also a wish for continuing their university studies.

"I would like to continue my studies and do a post-graduate in political science…or something like that…I would also like to study abroad" *(Youth leader Buenos Aires, Male, 23).*

Another participant expressed the importance of education in relation to altering social conditions in their communities but also highlighting the point of a social status generated by a university degree and its importance for one's job opportunities.

"Higher education is the key to succeeding to make any social change…without a degree you will not have a job..and no one will listen to you" *(Youth leader Caloto, Male, 24).*

"In all jobs you need to prove you have a university certificate..if you do not have a university degree you cannot get a good job, for example I want to work with ICBF and for that I need a University certificate in social work, it doesn't matter if I have worked with children and social issues my whole life." *(Youth leader Caloto, Male, 24)*

In the conversations about important outcomes of education, the future employment was emphasized as well as the value of learning about one's society and how one could change it. The youth leaders were also expressing they wanted to continue with post-graduate studies.

The pattern of post graduate ambitions could be reflected by studies done by Shah ((2011) in Kirshner and Ginwright 2012:291), where he finds that post graduate ambitions were much more common among youth organizing participants than in general. However, the connection between a deepened engagement in university studies and the socialization of law 1622 was not clearly found in this case as the academic development could be explained by other factors such as the fact that the participants were already enrolled in university studies. The participants were also involved in youth organizing before the law 1622 came into force which makes the specific connection between law 1622 and academic development quite weak.

This assumption was further strengthened by the youth leader from the municipality of Buenos Aires who describes how the motivation to start with university studies was increasing among the youth members involved in his organization.

"…since 2006 when our organization started, the institutionalization process has been improved, many of the youth involved in the organization have started their university studies, they are prepared and want to move forward." *(Youth leader Buenos Aires, Male, 23)*

But at the same time the participant also revealed that most of the youth members in his organization were not active in their local Youth Platform in Buenos Aires, as they are not aware of the YP nor of the law 1622.

"The youth who are participating in our meetings and workshops do not really know what the youth platform is or the legal framework of 1622..." (*Youth leader, Buenos Aires, Male, 23*)

Reflecting upon the connection between the socialization of law 1622 and the socio-political development, the civic development aspect could be interpreted from the two participants who directly addressed the awareness of their citizenship rights and the Youth Platform as part of their increased self-esteem and confidence as youth leaders. Two participants also revealed the importance of the awareness of law 1622 in order to become motivated to organize and take part in civic matters. However, the link between the academic development and socialization of law 1622 was not clearly discovered. Many of the participants expressed an

ambition and engagement in education where all of them expressed they wanted to continue with a post-graduate course. One of the youth leaders was talking about the engagement in university studies by the members of his organization but almost none of the members knew about its existence. Hence, even though the pattern of academic development could be found in my sample the connection to the awareness of law 1622 was absent.

One participant not mentioning a wish for post graduate studies nor a connection to law 1622 was the representative from the indigenous community of NASA whose relationship to the YP will be discussed in next chapter.

The following chapter will discuss the Youth Platform's capacity to mobilize different youth initiatives in the region and represent a diverse youth community. The theoretical angle of community development linked to community organizing and social capital will be analyzed in relation to three key issues that were identified during the interviews and reunions with the youth leaders, namely the issue of a shared youth identity, different forms of participation, and the link between mobilization, security and financial constraints.

Sub question 2:
How does the Youth Platform succeed in mobilizing the different youth community organizations and initiatives in the region?

5.2 A shared youth identity?

One of the main features of youth organizing is the community organizing attributes such as *"collective action regarding social issues of mutual concern"* (Speer and Christens 2015). This assumes a collective interest generally based on a shared social identity, which in youth organizing often is related to marginalized youth in society such as ethnic minorities (Kirschner and Ginwritgh 2012; more).

According to law 1622, article 62, paragraph 2, describing the Youth Platform's function the aim is to *"enable the youth to exercise an effective agency to defend their collective interests"*.

The objective of the YP is hence to mobilize the different youth identities around a collective interest, which is tied to the ability of youth to exercise agency to defend that common interest.

In the case of northern Cauca the complexity of finding a common youth identity and shared interest can be related to the diverse ethnic and cultural communities, where minority groups

of afro-Colombians and Indigenous people have been living separately for a long time with different customs and norms (IOM, SENA see appendix 2,6).

However, observations taken during the YP reunions with the youth leaders revealed a rhetoric where the participants always spoke as "we the youth" and never "we the Afro-Colombian youth" or "we the Caloto youth". There was never a division expressed between the youth communities during the meetings with the YP and a common interest in organizing for exercising influence towards the policy makers was clearly noticed.

Nonetheless, the connection between youth organizing and ethnic minorities was not applicable to the northern Cauca case as the indigenous community NASA was not participating at all in the YP.

In an interview with a youth leader representing NASA regarding their relation to the YP, the participant expressed they had no interest in being part of it since the youth of NASA did not identify with the youth culture expressed by law 1622.

"The youth platform doesn't have a differential approach in their articulation..we have our own culture where youth always have been engaged in the struggle for social justice and recognition of our rights as a community. We are working together as a community, and the youth have always been part of that community." *(Youth leader, NASA, Male, 26)*

The differential approach is expressed as one of the main principles of framing youth identity in law 1622, highlighting the territorial and cultural identity (law 1622, article 3, paragraph 2). The differential approach *"enfoque diferencial"* is a term used frequently in policy documents, law 1622 and by the youth participants when talking about important principles when mobilizing youth. The term was coined in relation to the victims of the armed conflict in Colombia when analyzing different risk factors the population was facing, taking into account gender, socio-economic background, disability, age, ethnicity, and cultural identity.[17]

The NASA youth leader did not feel that his culture had been incorporated in the youth law and neither represented by the Youth Platform.

"We were not included when the law 1622 was written, so how can there be a differential approach in the Youth Platform? I think the youth platform is a good thing but it does not represent the NASA culture" *(Youth leader, NASA, Male, 26)*

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[17] Ministry of Health Colombia

The conceptual understanding of youth as a separate interest group seemed to be differently perceived by the NASA participant as well. However, they had many community projects and strategies to target young boys and girls whom are being exposed to forced recruitment to the armed groups in the area.

"We don't have a separate notion of youth in our culture, first you are a child and then you are an adult with adult responsibilities. We have a lot of projects to protect and to prevent young people and children to get involved for example in the guerilla and other armed groups, and we have survived as a community because we keep together". *(Youth leader, NASA, Male, 26)*

The NASA participant expresses a strong social community network and it was clear the participant identified as a NASA community member rather than a *youth* community member of northern Cauca. The absence of the NASA community in the YP became evident during the workshop and meeting of the MDP, which was an important event of participation in the planning process of the policy document.
The coordinator of the YP thought the indigenous NASA were not participating in the MDP meeting since they are taking part in the planning process through their community council.

"they are participating in the planning process of this policy document but with their own council representing the NASA people" *(YP coordinator, female, 25)*

The failure of including the NASA youth in the Youth Platform the coordinator explains as a non-interest of the NASA community due to their already strong community organizing.

"they are very well organized and have a lot of influence in the Council of Santender de Quilichao so they don't feel they have any need of the Youth Platform…" *(ibid)*

The exclusion of the NASA community in the youth organizing process of northern Cauca does not fit with the theories of how marginalized youth such as ethnic minorities often are the main source of the youth organizing (Kirschner and Ginwright 2012; Speers and Christens 2015). The cultural and ethnic identity within the youth culture of Northern Cauca is hence something that needs more investigation, especially regarding the NASA community.
The cultural and ethnic identity was emphasized by the other youth participants as well when talking about community development and the importance of connection to one's community:

"I think that the historical roots are essential to highlight in order to strengthen the ethnic and cultural identity within the group of youth so they will feel more connected to their community" *(Youth leader Santender de Quilichao, Male, 24)*

"In our community the music and dance are very important because it's part of our history and identity, many youth who are leaving their communities to search for better futures in the cities are losing their connection to their community and then they are easy targets for drug trafficking" *(Youth leader, Buenos Aires, Male 23)*

The importance of the awareness of one's historical roots expressed by two of the youth participants was supported by the statements of the Coordinator of the Education and Capacitation program of the Coffee Growers Association of Cauca as well, who emphasized the need of a "differential approach" in the curricula of the rural schools.

"The education in the rural communities must adapt more to the livelihoods and culture in the rural areas. To prevent drop outs and youth leaving the rural communities the education must include a differential approach…" *(Coordinator of the Education and Capacitation program of the Coffee Growers Association of Cauca)*

The differential approach is highlighted by several participants in the study when talking about inclusion and referring mostly to the different ethnic communities in the region.

In relation to the differential approach and the issue of racial discrimination an interesting observation was taken during the workshop of the MDP when discussing the themes of human rights and post-conflict development. The observation was the absence of a discussion of racial discrimination which was surprising since other forms of discrimination were recognized and lifted by the youth participants.

According to the literature of youth organizing one of the main features of the social justice strategy in youth organizing is the issue of racial justice (Hosang 2003:9; Christens & Kirshner 2011:29). The absence of the subject could be interpreted as if there is no tension experienced among the youth group who is a mix of Afro-Colombian youth and mestizo youth. However, it could also be interpreted that the subject is too sensitive to discuss.

The fact that the YP has succeeded to mobilize youth leaders from Caloto and Buenos Aires including Afro-Colombian and rural communities could be seen as a step toward a unifying youth community across ethnic and cultural borders. The unified interest and discussions

observed during the meetings also strengthens that assumption. Important to note however is the absence of the NASA community in the YP which can be understood as the differential approach being insufficient in the YP mobilization strategy.

Another observation during the meetings and also reflecting upon the participants in my study was that the youth leaders participating were all above 18 years. This should also be considered when reflecting upon the inclusion and exclusion mechanisms within the Youth Platform regarding its capacity to mobilize the broad youth community. The exclusion of the NASA community and the younger adolescents makes the unified youth identity framed and supported by the YP quite limited.

Next section will continue the discussion of the exclusion and inclusion mechanisms of the YP and how to include a broader youth representation through alternative forms of participation.

5.3 Different forms of Participation

Considering the inclusion and exclusion mechanisms of the YP and how to include different ages of youth in the organizing process, different types of participation were raised by the youth leaders.

As outlined in article 62 paragraph 2 in law 1622 the Youth Platform should *"consider the diverse forms of expression, with the aim of enabling youth to exercise an effective agency to defend their collective interests"*.

The low presence of younger participants in the YP meetings was discussed with the youth leaders and when asking about how to include and motivate a broader youth community into the YP, the importance of cultural expressions was highlighted.

One aspect raised was how the cultural expressions could work as a mobilizing method, where younger people more easily could identify with the activities and meetings around a shared interest such as art, music or other cultural activities.

"I think there are other alternative meetings that can attract more youth engagement that do not need a political color and that is what we are doing in our organization, people who meet with a common interest in dance, arts, singing or whatever other interests they have." *(Youth leader, Caloto, Male, 24)*

This kind of activities already existed in Buenos Aires where the social network of youth was strong in form of cultural expressions even though there is little political awareness.

"There are different types of participation that can promote youth community engagement, in our communities, especially in the balsa zone, there is a strong social network with youth initiatives like dance groups, artistic groups but these groups don't have any political incidence that's what is missing..." *(Youth leader, Buenos Aires, Male, 23)*

In Santender de Quilichao the participant gave an example of how they worked with a peace project within his organization last year and how they incorporated cultural expressions in order to mediate a heavy subject into something that the youth could identify with.

"Last year we worked with a project called "the construction of peace" which was focusing on the role of youth within the present context of post conflict. My role was to reach out to the youth with this theme but through means which they could identify with and using a more easy language through our activities like folclore dancing, music and other cultural events." *(Youth leader, SQ, Male, 24)*

This form of mobilizing youth through cultural means, Woodson (in Best 2007:16) calls *"community based art"* where she means that *"art is a way of knowing"* that allows a group to express their interests, thoughts and concerns through creative ways. Using art as a community building means is efficient according to her as it strengthens social relations across differences and promotes a democratic dialogue, especially among groups that are denied a voice in other public areas.

The participants all expressed a need of using alternative methods such as cultural activities in order to engage youth in organizing.

Even though a strong social network in the youth community was expressed by a participant from Buenos Aires the political awareness was missing in the youth organizations, which could be related to the weak Youth Platforms in the municipalities of Caloto and Buenos Aires which will be discussed further in chapter 5.5.

Another issue linked to the YPs capacity to mobilize the youth community was the deficiency of coordination and communication between the municipalities which was related to security, infrastructure and financial support from the administration.

5.4 Mobilization and Security

A problem that was raised during a meeting session with the YP and youth leaders from Caloto and Buenos Aires was the bad infrastructure and security issues which aggravated the

mobilization of the rural youth. The meetings and reunions held by the YP in Santender de Quilichao are not easily accessed by those living in remote areas of the region. Security issues is a problem in several parts of the areas north east of Santender de Quilichao and Caloto, where especially youth under the age of 18 are not given permission by parents to travel (YP reunion[18]). The financial issue was another problem raised, as the events and reunions coordinated by YP are not receiving enough budget from the administration to host the youth participants with food and housing, which is necessary as the events are often a whole day and the travel distance could be a whole day due to poor roads.

"Each department and each municipality decides how to relocate the financial resources according to their political agenda that's why the institutional capacity of the youth platforms looks very different in different departments and municipalities." *(representative YP, male, 27)*

The budget was an issue that restrained the YP's capacity to mobilize the rural youth as they did not have the financial means to host the youth participants coming from remote areas. The YP participant also highlighted the difference in institutional strength among the YPs in the region.
When asked what kind of solutions they saw to this problem, some were suggesting that a more developed communication system should be established between the municipal YPs so they could coordinate their big events and share their experiences and lessons with each other. Optimism about this communication system was expressed by the Coordinator of YP as the Departmental Youth Platform recently was established and legalized, which aim is to coordinate the different local youth platforms in the department of Cauca with the help of several actors.

"Through the Departmental Youth Platform I think the coordination and communication between the different municipalities will improve a lot since we now have other actors to support us as well as the academy, SENA and different civil society organizations." *(Coordinator YP, female, 25)*

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[18] See Appendix 3 of YP reunions

Relating back to the low participation of younger participants from the surrounding municipalities in the YP meetings, those structural problems of security and infrastructure could be a contributing factor.

The financial part was also considered a major problem where responsibility lies on the administration and local governors.

These structural barriers are hence restricting the most marginalized youth to engage in the YP and are also restricting the capacity of the YP to mobilize youth initiatives in the region and between municipalities, which is affecting the community development of building social relations and a strong network between youth initiatives in the rural regions.

To encounter these structural barriers the Youth Platform needs more institutional and financial resources which is tied to their influence in the policy making processes of their communities. The next section will discuss how the Youth Platform is affecting youth influence in public policy making and its role as a mediating institution for youth to exercise their citizenship rights.

Sub question 3:

How is the Youth Platform affecting youth influence in public policy making?

5.5 Participation and real influence

One of the key features regarding youth organizing is the aim to *alter power relations and create meaningful institutional change* (Funders Collaborative on Youth organizing 2009). Studies regarding youth influence and institutional change are connected to mediate institutions where civil society and private corporations have been playing an important role giving youth a space to exercise their impact (Kassimir & Flanagan 2010). Zeldin et al. (2008:7-9) also refer to a similar mediate institution through an adult-youth partnership, that could strengthen youth influence on an institutional level as the partnership between youth and adults develops new attitudes and skills where power and responsibility are equally distributed.

The YP consists of representatives from the youth community who are emanating from civil society movements, but at the same time the coordinator of the platform is contracted by the local administration, which makes it a kind of youth-adult partnership or grass root-public partnership. The question is how influential the youth platform is in public policy for real and how well the youth-adult partnership is working out in practice.

One aspect raised by the youth participants was the political will and the institutional weakness where the municipalities of Buenos Aires and Caloto did not have a functioning youth platform as prescribed in law 1622.

"…the municipal youth platform was put together by the administration but is not function in practice as the organizational structure of the platform is too weak" (Youth leader, Buenos Aires, Male, 23)

"There was a girl last year working at the administration unit in our municipality to coordinate with the youth platform but she was contracted for 1 year and when she left her position there was no real transfer of information so the monitoring and follow up processes do not work efficiently". (Youth leader, Caloto, Male, 24)

The fact that the YP in Santender de Quilichao is the only functioning platform at the moment reveals the big difference in organization and support from the local government between Santender de Quilichao and Caloto and Buenos Aires.

When talking about what real influence the participants experienced through the YP the representatives from the YP in Santender de Quilichao had a positive view as they saw progress of the local government's engagement to include them in public policy. The participants from Caloto and Buenos Aires were more skeptical as their municipal youth platform was too weak or did not even exist due to the deficient support from the local government (YP reunion SQ[19]).

The youth-adult partnership could be reflected in the workshop and seminar regarding the MDP where youth leaders were participating in developing strategies for the policy document. The consultative role of the Youth Platform in municipal and territorial agendas concerning youth is articulated in law 1622, article 62, paragraph 3 and 4, where this event could be seen as a progress of the responsibility by the local administration, or perhaps even a step toward an adult-youth partnership.

However, some of the youth participants were critical to the absence of the Mayor on this important event, which they claimed was reflected in his engagement of youth issues.

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[19] See Appendix 4 for workshops and meetings

"The absence of the Mayor says something about his priority concerning us in this policy document…" *(YP representative, female, 23)*

At the end of the workshop when all strategies and plans developed and presented by the youth leaders had been collected and handed in to the Secretary of Planning I asked some of the participants how much they thought would be incorporated into the final policy document.

"I hope a lot of what we discussed here today, they see that we have a lot of knowledge about our community and the problems we face, we are the ones knowing how to deal with those" *(Youth leader Santender de Quilichao, 24)*

"I think a lot of it will be incorporated since they actually did an effort to organize this event and asked us for our opinions and experiences about how to improve the conditions in the municipality..."(*Coordinator YP, female, 25)*

Even though the Mayor was absent during this event it somehow reveals the legitimacy of the Youth Platform and the government's responsibility to include the YP.

A proof of the influence of the YP in the Municipal Development Plan was revealed in the finalized policy document released the 13th of June 2016. The YP had their own chapter were the strategies discussed by the youth leaders during the workshop where fully incorporated (MDP:245-254)[20].

The adult-youth partnership and the YP's real influence in policy making could be seen as positive, if those strategies in the MDP actually are implemented in reality. Another issue raised in relation to the youth-adult, grass root-public relationship was the one of autonomy.

5.6 Youth-Adult Partnership and Autonomy

The issue of autonomy is clearly outlined in law 1622, stipulated as the first principle in article 4, paragraph 1, describing the principles of how to interpret the law. In article 61 the procedure of how to establish the municipal YPs is described, where the aim is proclaiming the autonomous role of the platforms. The role of autonomy in youth organizing is a key aspect regarding the organizing structure and the issues that the youth identify themselves,

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[20] See Municipal Development Plan http://santanderdequilichao-cauca.gov.co/apc-aa-files/37613233376437623132643538343537/acuerdo-010-de-2016-adopta-el-plan-de-desarrollo-2016-2019-santander-de-quilichao-compromiso-de-todos_4.pdf

which is also tied to the motivation for youth to organize and their personal development of leadership (Marquez 2005; Larson et al. 2005).

The autonomous role of the youth platform was elevated by several youth leaders who claimed that the platform was not autonomous as they are too dependent on the administration and local governors.

"In order for us to get a budget for our project ideas we need to get permission from the local administration and those requirements depend a lot on the people sitting in the administration at the moment". *(YP youth leader, female, 23*)

One of the main issues brought up regarding the deficiency of autonomy was the role of the coordinator of the YP who was contracted by the administration.

"For example Sara[21] must play with the rules constructed by the administration as they are her employer and have the power to give the job to someone else that follows their agenda"(*YP youth leader, Male 27)*

Considering the dependency relationship between the coordinator of the YP and the administration the youth-adult partnership could be questioned since there is no equal power distribution between the youth-adult structures.

In spite of this "weakness" of the adult-youth partnership the municipal coordinator is also the direct link to the administration to push for inclusion of youth and the fulfillment of law 1622 towards the policy makers.

In order *"to create institutional change in their communities.",* which is the third dimension of youth organizing one could understand the structure of the YP as both a mediate institution giving the youth space and tools to practice their citizenship, but also a restriction of their autonomy as they are dependent on the administration which is contracting the municipal coordinator.

The trade-off of autonomy could be interpreted partly as an adult-youth partnership or grass root-citizen participant relationship (Checkoway and Aldana, 2013) providing youth a channel to take part in decision making processes, where the planning process of the Development Plan could be seen as an example of that. It could also be interpreted as a community

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[21] A pseudonym - Coordinator of YP

development strategy of building alliances between civil society and the government (Christens and Speer, 2015; Shragge & Fisher, 2000).

The main tensions raised by the participants regarding their real influence in the YP were the autonomy and dependency issue as well as the issue of inclusion and representation of the youth community.

"I think the Youth Platform is a good means and strategy to construct youth politics, but how the strategy is used and the form of leadership is a problem..the platform is representing a certain sector but not everybody's interest.." *(Youth leader Caloto, Male, 23)*

This quote summarizes the main points identified when analyzing how the YP is affecting youth organizing in the wider youth community of northern Cauca, which has been discussed in this chapter by highlighting the three levels of youth development, community development and institutional change. Next chapter will summarize the findings from the three levels of analysis presented in this inquiry and consolidate them in order to see how the different levels are interplaying and are related to the main research question. The final section will discuss future research and policy implications in relation to my study.

6. Concluding remarks and discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore how the newly formed youth platform *La Mesa de Juventud* could affect the youth community of Northern Cauca with regard to its obligations stipulated in law 1622 by using a theoretical frame of youth organizing. By analyzing the processes and effects of the Youth Platform from three different levels of youth organizing the aim was to capture an overall picture of the wider impact of the Youth Platform on the youth community of northern Cauca.

The first sub question considering the first level of youth organizing, or the *personal development* of the youth participants in relation to the socialization of law 1622, was analyzed through the socio-political development approach. The main findings were pointing at different directions regarding the academic and civic development aspects, where the civic development could be linked more directly to the socialization of law 1622 while there was no clear connection between the academic development and the awareness of law 1622. Even though there was a pattern of academic development among the sample it could not be

connected directly to the YP or socialization of law 1622 as the youth participants already were engaged in youth organizing before the establishment of the YP.

Hence, the youth development impact from the YP according to a socio-political development approach could partly be understood from my sample looking at the civic development aspect. The new establishment of the YP could delimit the reliability of the results regarding the youth development impact since it is too soon to evaluate. Nonetheless it has given an insight of how socio-political development is manifested in this specific case and it is also relevant when looking at how the three dimensions are interplaying discussed further down.

The second level of youth organizing is considering the *community development* aspect answering the sub question of the YP's capacity to mobilize different youth initiatives and organizations in the region. An overall finding throughout the analysis of the three subsections considering a youth identity, different forms of participation, and security and infrastructural obstacles, was the issue of *inclusion and representation*. The typical feature of youth organizing where the main participants are ethnic minorities and marginalized youth (Kirshner and Ginwright 2012; Christens and Speer 2015; Flanagan et al. 2011) was not clearly reflected in the case of northern Cauca where the younger youth and indigenous communities were not participating at the same level as older male youth. One main finding was the importance to enhance a differential approach when mobilizing the youth community which could be achieved by involving more cultural expressions in the youth organizing processes led by the YP. Cultural expressions such as art and music could engage a younger group of participants as well as strengthen the social network between youth communities. The exclusion of the NASA community could also be connected to a different understanding of a youth culture and the role of youth participation since they actively choose to not participate in the platform. Hence, the issue of representation and inclusion where some youth groups were more included in the YP than others could be tied to both cultural and structural factors.

The third level of youth organizing framed as *institutional change* was answering the sub question of the YP's capacity to affect youth influence in public policy making. The overall main finding was a tension identified within the organizational structure of the YP regarding the issue of autonomy and the adult-youth partnership. The participants experienced they were too dependent on the administration regarding the institutional and financial support since the coordinator is contracted by the administration. The adult-youth partnership or grass root-public partnership could be understood as a weakness of the YP's autonomy since the power relation is unequally distributed. However, it is also a permanent link to the policy makers

which could be understood as a strategic link as the YP then could affect policy makers from "outside" the institutional structures as well as "within" the system.

The balance between autonomy and an alliance with the administration could be debated, although the fact that the strategies constructed by the youth leaders were included in the MDP policy document indicates the YP's legitimacy within the administration. Subsequently, the development plan could be seen as a step toward an institutional change where the YP was part of the planning process of real policy making.

When consolidating the three dimensions of youth organizing one can see how the different levels are interplaying in several directions. The personal development of the youth is connected to the community development dimension and how the YP is able to coordinate and mobilize the different youth initiatives in the region, which in turn depends on the YP's capacity to exercise institutional change.

One key aspect that could be connected to both the individual and community levels was the cultural dimension of alternative forms of participation. It was expressed being a method of mobilizing youth of different ages and backgrounds, hence strengthening the social capital as well as strengthening the ethnic and cultural identity among the youth which was expressed important in order to feel connected to one's community. Using cultural expressions when mobilizing youth in the communities could then both strengthen the cultural identity, as well as work as means to build social relations among youth which contributes to the community development (Woodson in Best 2007:16). The connection between youth organizing and the cultural domain was also revealed in the study by Marquez (2005) where he recognizes an increase in youth participation in cultural activities as it provides a more dynamic structure than the adult-structured organization of the youth councils. The link between the first and third levels of youth organizing could be reflected in the civic development where youth capacitated with their citizenship rights were expressing how their self-esteem as youth leaders had increased.

The structural barriers that hindered some groups more than others to participate and hence hindered the community development and indirectly also the personal development for the youth affected, could be linked to the institutional capacity of the YP. With an increased influence in policy making the youth would have the power to affect the structural obstacles of financial and infrastructural reason which could improve the community development as well as the individual development by socializing law 1622.

6.1 Further research and policy implications

The new establishment of the YP has delimited the access to earlier studies of its implications and results, where the studies on a similar experience and context were studies focusing on the youth councils in the two largest cities of Colombia, Bogota and Medellin (Marqez 2005; Valencia & Montoya 2010;Torres 2004;Abdad 2002). Other research where similar analyses had been done regarding different levels of impact on youth organizing were mainly focusing on grass root youth organizing (Christens and Dolan, 2011; Kirshner and Ginwright, 2012). The studies found on a youth-adult partnership perspective and the mediate institutions were also connected to civil society or private institutions (Kassimir & Flanagan 2010; Zeldin et al. 2008).

This study are considering the three levels of youth organizing impact as well as the youth-adult partnership perspective, but the partnership is different in that sense that it is a grass root-public partnership. This study could hence shed light on the youth organizing mechanisms within the context of a partnership between youth civil society and public institutions.

In the specific context of northern Cauca considering the multiple cultural and ethnic youth identities, this study also illuminate the complexity of framing an institutional body as the YP to represent the youth community where some youth identities are not included.

The very evident exclusion of the indigenous community of NASA within the YP highlights the need for further research of the youth concept and its role within the NASA community. This also strengthen the claim by Zapata ((2008) in Jurado and Tobasura, 2012:67) regarding the very new recognition of the youth concept in rural Latin America which makes it a fairly unexplored field of research. To further investigate how the youth culture are understood in the different ethnic and cultural communities could lead to a broader conceptual understanding of youth and hence contribute to the broader field of studies on youth and youth participation.

Looking at the policy implications of the Youth Platform and its progress, an evaluation of the youth organizing capacity should be employed as well as a follow up of the implementation of the Development Plan concerning the youth strategies. Since the YP is only coordinated on departmental and local levels a comparative study of the youth platforms in different departments should be employed in order to receive feedback and lessons learned from each other and it could also broaden the youth network.

Considering the peace agreement established in Colombia the 23rd of June this year, a long process of post-conflict recovery are to begin. In afflicted areas such as northern Cauca where

youth are identified as a specifically vulnerable group the policy implications for a strong Youth Platform is even more important.

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Appendix 1

Map and demographics of northern Cauca

Department of Cauca

Case study municipalities: Buenos Aires, Santender de Quilichao, and Caloto

Sources: http://www.sogeocol.edu.co/cauca.htm

Santender de Quilichao: 93.545 habitants

Buenos Aires: 22.804 habitants[22]

Caloto: 17.443 habitants[23]

NASA: 18074 habitants

The Indigenous NASA is situated in the reserves of de Munchique los Tigres, Guadualito, Canoas, La Concepción and Nasa kiweTehw Cxhab. These reserves are all situated around and within the municipality of Santender de Quilichao.

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[22] http://www.municipios.com.co/cauca/buenos-aires
[23] http://caloto-cauca.gov.co/apc-aa-files/6138643439633566356134383373633338/Rango_de_edades.pdf

Appendix 2

Semi structured Interviews - Expert Interviews

Organization	Representative	Where	Time & Date	Comment
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	- Manager of strategy and planning *(Migration and Rurality)* - Program Coordinator *(Migrations and Human Rights)* - Program Coordinator *(Migration and Childhood)* - Manager of Differential Approach and Reporting Specialist *(Victims Institutional Strengthening Program)*	At the head quarter of IOM in Bogota, Colombia	- November 2, 2015 2pm-3pm - November 10, 2015 3pm-3.30pm - November 19, 2015 10am-10.45am - December 6, 2015 4pm-4.30pm	Informative, no audio recording, no citations Informative, no audio recording, no citations Informative, audio recorded, citations may be used Informative, no audio recording, no citations
Servicio Nacional de Aprendizaje (SENA) National Service of Learning	- Coordinator of the municipalities in the North of Cauca - Central coordinator of the Department of Cauca	At their offices in: -Santender de Quilichao - Popayan	- October 15, 2015 10am-11-am - February 26, 2016 11am-12am	Informative and audio recorded, citations may be used Informative and audio recorded, citations may be used
The Departmental Association of Coffe Growers of Cauca	- Coordinator of the Education and Capacitation program	At the field office of IOM in Popayan, Cauca	- October 16, 2015 15pm-16pm	Informative, field notes, citations may be used

Appendix 3

Semi structured Interviews - Participant Interviews

Participant	Gender Ethnicity Age	Education	Place of Interview	Time and Date
Youth Leader part of the YP From Santender de Quilichao	Male Mestizo 27 years	Have a bachelor degree in communication and engineering Former coordinator of the YP	At a cafe in Santender de Quilichao At a park outside the Mayor's office building	October 14, 2015 16pm-17pm February 18, 2016 5pm-6pm
Coordinator of the YP From Santender de Quilichao	Female Mestizo 25 years	Have a bachelor degree in Social work and political science	At the Mayor's office in Santender de Quilichao At a resturant in Santender de Quilichao	October 14, 2015 15pm-16pm February 3, 2016 4pm-5pm
Youth Leader part of the YP From Santender de Quilichao	Female Mestizo 23 years	Studying political science at the University of Cali	Outside the municipality building of Santender de Quilichao during a workshop event	March 5, 2016 3pm-3.30pm
Youth representative of the Indigenous Community NASA part of the Association of Indigenous Leaders of Northern Cauca (ACIN)	Male Indigenous NASA 26 years	No formal university degree	At the office of ACIN in Santender de Quilichao	October 14, 2015 3pm-3.30pm

Participant	Gender Ethnicity Age	Education	Place of Interview	Time and Date
Youth leader from the organization "Tengo ganas" working with communication and also dance and music From Santender de Quilichao	Male Afro-colombian 24 years	Bachelor degree in Social Work	Cafe in Santender de Quilichao	March 10, 2016 6pm-6.45.pm
Youth Leader from the organization "Miremos" working with cultural expressions such as dance and art From the municipality of Buenos Aires	Male Afro-Colombia n 23 years	Studying social work at the University of Cauca	Cafe in Santender de Quilichao	March 20, 2016 2pm-3pm
Youth Leader from the organization "Fundacion creativos" working with cultural expressions such as music, dance and art From the municipality of Caloto	Male Mestizo 24 years	Mestizo Studying Social Work at the University of Jamondi	Outside the municipality building of Santender de Quilichao during a workshop event	March 5, 2016 6 pm-6.30pm

Appendix 4

Meetings and Observations

Description of Activity and Date	Employed Methods	Obtained Data
Reunion with the municipal youth platform and youth leaders representing the Municipalities of North of Cauca March 11, 2016 2pm-4pm	- Observation - Participatory observation	- Representation of the youth community (ethnicity, gender, age) - Inclusion and exclusion mechanisms during discussions (group dynamic) - What themes were discussed and lifted more than others
Workshop led by the municipal authorities of North of Cauca and the municipal Coordinator of the Youth Council regarding the formulation of the Departmental Development Plan with youth leaders from the region invited to take part. March 5, 2016 2pm-6pm	- Participative observation - Observation	- Representation of the youth community (ethnicity, gender, age) - Inclusion and exclusion mechanisms during discussions (group dynamic) - What themes were discussed and lifted more than others - What were the (power) relation between, youth leaders, youth platform members, policy makers
Reunion with the municipal youth platform and youth leaders representing the Municipalities of North of Cauca february 10, 2016 10am-12pm	- Observation	- Representation of the youth community (ethnicity, gender, age) - Inclusion and exclusion mechanisms during discussions (group dynamic) - What themes were discussed and lifted more than others

Appendix 5

Interview Guide with Youth Leaders and YP representatives

Introducing myself and the research I am doing

Swedish master student, interested in youth civic engagement and specifically the case of North of Cauca since I have been doing an internship with IOM who has several projects in the area where youth are one target group.

How this interview will be used:

- Anonymity - their real names won't be used

- The thesis will be read by my peers and professors and will be available online

Setting questions:

▪ Name

▪ Age

Interview questions Youth leaders:

1. Could you tell me about your organization and its objectives?

- When and why did you join this organization?

- How many members do you have? Representation: how many girls/boys?

- How are you engaging the youth to participate in your organization?

- What kind of activities do you have in your organization?

2. What is your perception of youth participation? What kinds of participation are you thinking of and why are they important?

- What is participation meaning to you except the participation of politics?

- Can you tell me about your community? What are the challenges and prospects for the youth?

- How is your organization representing the youth community? How can you work more inclusively when involving youth in your organization?

3. How is the relation between you and the youth platform in your municipality?

- Do you (your organization) have support from the youth platform regarding capacitation in law 1622?

- What is the relation/communication look like between the Youth platforms in the different municipalities?

- Do you think the Youth Platform is important for mobilizing the youth in Northern Cauca? Why and How?

- Do you think there are other alternative meetings than formal ones that can draw/engage more youth to participate? What kind of meetings or platforms could that be?

- How many meetings are the YP organizing per month/year? Are you attending them all?

- What do you think about the autonomy of the youth platform? Do you have autonomy in the process of creating your agenda?

- How is the youth platform representing the youth community?

- Do you feel part of the decision making process of the youth platform? In what way?

4. Does your organization have any support from other institutions than the administration like international and public institutions working with youth projects in the region?

5. Could you tell me about your personal experience of how you got involved in the organization and in the Youth Platfrom?
- What was the driving force that motivated you to engage in social issues?

- Did you got support from school or was it out of school institutions (family, friends) that motivated you?

- What do you think is the driving force and incentives for youth to engage in their community and participate in youth community organizations?

- Are you working/studying? What?

- What are your future plans?

Interview questions YP representatives:

1. Could you tell me about the YP and its objectives?

- When and why did you join the YP? What is your role within the YP?

- How many youth leaders are involved in the YP? Representation: how many girls/boys?

- How are you mobilizing the youth in your community?

- What kind of activities do you organize?

- How are you motivating youth to engage in the YP and come to the meetings?

2. What is your perception of the concept of youth participation? What kinds of participation are you thinking of and why are they important?

- What is participation meaning to you except the participation of politics?

- Is the YP representing the youth community? Are all interests and social groups represented? How can you work more inclusively when involving youth in the YP?

3. How is the relation between the YP and the youth organizations in your municipality and in northern Cauca?

- What strategies do you use to capacitate the youth community with law 1622? Do you have support from the administration? What is the challenges/prospects according to you?

- Do you think the Youth Platform is important for mobilizing the youth in Northern Cauca? Why and How?

- Do you think there is other alternative meetings than formal ones that can draw/engage more youth to participate? What kind of meetings or platforms could that be?

- What is the relation/communication look like between the Youth platforms in the different municipalities?

- What do you think about the autonomy of the youth platform? Do you have autonomy in the process of creating your agenda?

- Do you feel part of the decision making process in the municipality? In what way?

4. Do the YP have any support from other institutions than the administration like international and public institutions working with youth projects in the region?

5. Could you tell me about your personal experience of how you got involved in the YP?

- What was the driving force that motivated you to engage in social issues?

- Did you receive support from school or was it out of school institutions (family, friends) that motivated you?

- What is the driving force and incentives for youth to engage in their community and participate in youth community organizations?

- Are you working/studying? What?

- What are your future plans?

Appendix 6

Interview Guide with SENA, IOM and The Association of Coffee Growers

Introducing myself and the research I am doing

Swedish master student, interested in youth civic engagement and specifically the case of North of Cauca since I have been doing an internship with IOM who has several projects in the area where youth are one target group.

How this interview will be used:

- Anonymity - their real names won't be used

- The thesis will be read by my peers and professors and will be available online

Interview questions:

1. Could you tell me about how your program is working with youth in the area of northern Cauca? Strategies? Methods used?

2. Could you tell me about the situation of youth in the region? Challenges? Causes? Effects?

3. What is your view of youth participation? What kind of activities are you supporting when working with youth participation?

4. What do you know about the Youth Citizenship Act and act law 1622? What do you know about *La Mesa de Juventud* and its role of strengthening youth organization?

5. What do you think is the most important aspect when developing a strategy to involve rural youth in comparison with youth in an urban context? How are you working with a differential approach?

6. What are your achievements regarding the methodologies you have used in your project to include youth? Examples?

Appendix 7

Organogram Youth Platform