Youth public policy in Colombia: genesis and regional policy communities

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Abstract

This article analyzes key elements in the genesis and establishment of the Youth Public Policy (Política Pública de Juventud [PPJ]) in Colombia, particularly observing its conformation at the regional level through the concept of public policy communities, which implies an interdependent players' network process, i.e. producers of ideas and images about youth. The establishment of public policy is argued for as a historical process of debates, negotiations, and resistance, regarding the images or representations produced on youth, appropriated by a set of active policy communities in various scenarios. The proposal unfolds in 3 parts: a) the main theoretical guidelines that structure the concept of public policy community; b) the background of the relation between youth and State, and its materialization in the PPJ at the national level; and c) the identification of regional scenarios and players belonging to youth public policy communities, highlighting the decentralization process and the autonomous youth's local organization processes. This article is a theoretical research outcome, which puts into dialogue the conceptual making and the state of the art surveyed in general, local, and first-level documentary sources obtained from players who took part in the making of the PPJ in the Department of Cundinamarca, Colombia.

Key words : public policy community; youth public policy; region; decentralization; local youth organizations.

Política pública de juventud en Colombia: génesis y comunidades de política regionales

Resumen

Este artículo analiza los elementos claves en la génesis y formación de la Política Pública de Juventud (PPJ) en Colombia, en particular observando su conformación en el plano regional a través del concepto de comunidades de política pública, que implica un proceso de red actores interdependientes, es decir, productores de ideas e imágenes sobre la juventud. Se defiende la formación de la política pública como un proceso histórico de debates, negociaciones y resistencias, a propósito de las imágenes o representaciones producidas sobre la juventud, apropiadas por un conjunto de comunidades de política activas en diferentes escenarios. Se desarrolla la propuesta en 3 partes: a) los lineamientos teóricos principales que estructuran el concepto de comunidad de política pública; b) los antecedentes de la relación juventud y Estado, y su materialización en la PPJ en el ámbito nacional; y c) la identificación de los escenarios y actores regionales de las comunidades de política pública de juventud, destacando el proceso de descentralización y los procesos de organización local juvenil autónoma. Este artículo es un resultado de investigación de carácter teórico, que pone en diálogo la construcción conceptual y el estado del arte levantado a partir de fuentes documentales generales, locales y de primer nivel tomadas de actores que participaron en la construcción de la PPJ del Departamento de Cundinamarca, en Colombia.

Palabras clave comunidad de política pública; política pública de juventud; región; descentralización; organizaciones juveniles locales.

Política pública de juventude na Colômbia: gênese e comunidades de políticas regionais

Resumo

Este artigo analisa os elementos-chave na gênese e formação da Política Pública de Juventude (Política Pública de Juventud [PPJ]) na Colômbia, observando particularmente sua conformação no nível regional por meio do conceito de comunidades de política pública, que implica um processo em rede de atores interdependentes, ou seja, produtores de ideias e imagens acerca da juventude. A formação da política pública é discutida como um processo histórico de debates, negociações e resistências, em relação às imagens ou representações produzidas acerca da juventude, apropriadas por um conjunto de comunidades de política ativas em cenários diversos. A proposta se desdobra em 3 partes: a) as principais diretrizes teóricas que estruturam o conceito de comunidade de política pública; b) os antecedentes da relação entre juventude e Estado e sua materialização no PPJ em nível nacional; e c) a identificação dos cenários e atores regionais pertencentes às comunidades de política pública de juventude, destacando o processo de descentralização e os processos de organização local juvenil autônoma. Este artigo é um resultado de pesquisa teórica, que coloca em diálogo a elaboração conceitual e o estado da arte levantado em fontes documentais gerais, locais e de primeiro nível, obtidas junto a atores que participaram da criação da PPJ do Departamento de Cundinamarca, na Colômbia.

Palavras-chave comunidade de política pública; política pública de juventude; região; descentralização; organizações juvenis locais.

Politique publique de jeunesse en Colombie: genèse et communautés politiques régionales

Résumé

Cet article analyse les éléments clés de la genèse et de la formation de la Politique Publique de la Jeunesse (Política Pública de Juventud [PPJ]) en Colombie, notant en particulier sa conformation au niveau régional à travers le concept de communautés de politique publique, ce qui implique un processus de réseau d'acteurs interdépendants, c'est-à-dire producteurs d'idées et d'images sur la jeunesse. La formation des politiques publiques est défendue comme un processus historique de débats, de négociations et de résistances, concernant les images ou représentations produites sur la jeunesse, s'approprié par un ensemble de communautés politiques actives dans différents scénarios. La proposition est divisée en 3 parties: a) les principales lignes directrices théoriques qui structurent le concept de communauté des politiques publiques; b) les antécédents de la relation entre la jeunesse et l'État et sa matérialisation dans le PPJ au niveau national; et c) l'identification des scénarios et acteurs régionaux appartenant aux communautés de politique publique de la jeunesse, en mettant en évidence le processus de décentralisation et les processus d'organisation locale autonome de la jeunesse. Cet article est le résultat d'une recherche théorique, qui rassemble l'élaboration conceptuelle et l'état de l'art soulevé dans les sources documentaires générales, locales et de premier niveau, obtenues auprès des acteurs qui ont participé à la création du PPJ du Département de Cundinamarca, Colombie.

Mots-clés communauté de politique publique; politique publique de jeunesse; région; décentralisation; organisations locales de jeunesse.

Youth is a promise that every generation fails to keep.

(Nicolás Gómez Dávila, 2002, Escolio 294)

Introduction

Political or social research on the processes of creating or establishing youth public policies in Latin America is still in arrears of resuming the relations and tensions inherent to this phenomenon at the regional or local level. It persists as a field unexplored in literature, both in youth studies and in public policy analyses (F. Acosta, 2015; Castillo García, Ospina Serna, Alvarado, & Botero, 2010; Rodríguez, 2004; Romero, García, Rodríguez, Tobón-García, & Aguilar, 2015; Sarmiento, 2004).

The regional or local level has been on the sidelines when it comes to youth public policy processes, since the same notion of public policy tends to be interchangeably associated with the status of a central and hierarchical nation-State. However, the literature on public policy at the regional or local levels – or at the intermediate level, as some analysts name it (González & Jaramillo, 1996) – has found a significant place in the public action debate (Jolly, 2002, 2005).

For the purposes of this piece of writing, we see the regional and local spheres as homologable concepts, which allude to a "specific dimension of the social" (Arocena, 2002, p. 8, our translation) that offers other realities different from the global encompassing ones. Thus, for this specific social dimension, different but related to the global one, we propose the concept of *public policy communities,* which allows us to trace the phenomena of generating and establishing the Youth Public Policy (Política Pública de Juventud [PPJ]) in Colombia from a specific spectrum, which goes beyond the national level or what is promoted by the central State focus, without neglecting its influence and effects. When emphasis is placed on the processes of public policy communities, it is highlighted, first of all, that youth becomes a socially relevant issue and, therefore, it occupies a place on the State agenda, not by merely institutional initiatives, but by the interaction and mobilization of social and cultural groups of different orders. Second, that it is a part of a rather general network of players, who produce or reproduce an image or social representation of youth in order to structure or resist public interventions.

Thus, this article analyzes the key elements in the genesis and establishment of the PPJ in Colombia, particularly observing its conformation at the regional level through the concept of public policy communities, which implies a network process of interdependent players, i.e. producers of ideas and images about youth. The article is a theoretical and contextual research outcome from the project "La Política Pública de Juventud y el Acceso a Medios de Comunicación en Jóvenes como Causa de Desarrollo Local. Indagación del Caso del Municipio de Sibaté, Cundinamarca," approved by the Research College of the Higher School of Public Administration (Escuela Superior de Administración Pública [ESAP])[1] . The theoretical construct and the state of the art are discussed through theoretical, local material, and first-level sources obtained from players who took part in the construction of the PPJ in the Department of Cundinamarca, in Colombia. The method adopted in the research was the case study of the department at stake, in which semi-structured interviews were conducted, whose testimonies are shown herein to dialogue with the theoretical and documentary sources.

To fulfill this objective, the proposal unfolds in 3 parts: a) the main theoretical guidelines that structure the concept of public policy community; b) the background of the relation between youth and State, and its materialization in the PPJ at the national level; and c) the identification of the regional scenarios and players of the youth public policy communities in Colombia, highlighting the process of decentralization and the processes of autonomous local youth organization. Finally, conclusions of the analysis are offered.

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1   The research project was approved by the Resolución No. 0402/2013 of the ESAP, running in two phases: from 2014 to 2015; then from 2016 to 2017. It relied in its first phase on the participation of researchers Ana Gil Grandett and Maffy Espitia.

Public policy in community policy processes: theoretical notes for understanding it

Public policy communities mean a concept linked to approaches to public policy analysis whose theorizing assume the central role of the concepts of player, social ideas or representations (discourses), and networks, at the time of addressing the formulation, planning, and implementation of a public action or, in the words of Pierre Müller (2006, p. 113, our translation), of undertaking "actions in the real world."

These approaches have interconnected a whole series of analysis that has increasingly gained resonance in various subject matters devoted to studying public action. There are at least two epistemic groups that from different interdisciplinary viewpoints work on the relations between ideas and public policies. On the one hand, the research associated with *critical discourse studies,* disseminated throughout the world by authors like Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, o Norman Fairclough and, above all, adopted and resignified in Latin America by researchers committed to updating new approaches to Latin American realities.

The studies conducted by Adriana Bolívar (2015), Neyla Pardo Abril (2016), María Laura Pardo (1996), and Viviane Resende (2017), among other outstanding researchers, have woven and contributed to an epistemological disruption through the study of multiple discourses that stabilize or deepen social infringements or violations; discursive practices proposed in the mass media, public documents, laws, and, among other sources, public policies.

Secondly, in the *policy analysis* field itself, a series of investigative processes that dialogue in the so-called *cognitive approach to policy* (Sanabria-González et al., 2016) or the *cognitive dimension of public policies* (Puello-Socarrás, 2007). In this theoretical and methodological framework, in order to establish qualitative critiques and challenges to traditional institutionalist approaches and the rational choice that political science brought to public policy analysis, approaches whose central concern is public policy as a cultural fact are proposed (Parsons, 2009), which translates into moving the analytical focuses to the role that ideas, discourses, or cognitive frameworks as a whole play in the formulation and application of public actions.

At least 3 theoretical approaches proposed by discussing a central concept of a cognitive nature stand out: a) the *policy paradigms,* developed by Peter Hall and resignified by Yves Surel; b) the *referentials (référentiels*, in French), whose main representatives are Pierre Müller and Bruno Jobert; and c) the *policy advocacy coalitions,* developed by Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith (Puello-Socarrás, 2007; Sanabria-González et al., 2016)[2] .

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2   These approaches can be added with others from the same perspective, such as Emery Roe's narrative policy analysis; Maarten Hajer's deliberative policy analysis; or Helen Ingram, Anne L. Schneider, and Peter deLeon's social construction of target populations.

Some of the approaches are taken up again, particularly the theoretical proposal of Pierre Müller (2006, 2009) and Bruno Jobert (2004), used in the research process which this article is derived from, and this stands out due to the relation existing between the concepts of ideas or referentials – for making the routes of public policy – and the concept of policy communities, as one of the instances that constitute and mobilize these ideas, which stabilize and reproduce a discourse on a sector or population that pose a social issue for the groups or the State.

As initially stated, there are at least 3 key concepts in the cognitive policy approach proposals: a) players; b) ideas; and c) networks. Prioritizing these categories gives rise to another understanding of public action and, so, of general political relations in a society; i.e. public policy is more than political-bureaucratic model types (Parsons, 2009), or better yet, it is insisted that this is not reducible to: a) legal standards; b) plans, programs, and projects; or c) rulers' decisions (Lozano, 2008).

The players existing in the proposal of P. Müller (2006, 2009) are the key (individual or collective) agents, located and diversified, in public policy making. They are those who devise the strategies, mobilize resources, and account for the election types, but in this framework they do not constitute the concept that best represents what the public policy process involves. The complexity of this process is not explainable through mere players' interaction and their preferences – even more so when bearing in mind that many of them are not overt or stable – or by means of their roles in hierarchies related to the distribution of various powers. By taking this approach, it is key to recognize players' interaction, especially extra-State players, or extra-legal phenomena, which marks precise boundaries from the traditional viewpoint, where the dominant players who take their actions on a political stage were those considered as the core of public policies.

From this perspective, a rather balanced process for the analysis of public policy processes – or at least open to acknowledge the contradictions of public action processes – is the focus on the stabilized senses of certain social realities on which a public intervention is structured and operates, i.e. firstly grasping how the formulation, planning, and action is defined by the building of a social representation of the world, "an image of reality on which someone wants to intervene" (Müller, 2006, p. 115, our translation).

This proposal do justify the discourses of diverse origin as inherent to public policies; i.e. overtly admitting their contradictions and ambiguities, a corollary that contradicts rationalist approaches to *policy analysis* (Jobert, 2004; Misoczky, 2001). This theoretical framework stops at the cognitive or ideological universe of the players who participate in public policies, i.e. in the representations made by discursive groups that various players belonging to sectors or populations in a society construct [3].

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[3]   The circulation and reinforcement of certain social representations often build legal discourses that aim to depict a social behavior as universal, thus creating stereotypes that are taken for granted on a daily basis (Pardo Abril, 2016).

These discourses are framed at perception levels that build not only a vision type; they also involve groups of resistance, complaining players, or audiences feeding the ideas that oppose the hegemonic representation of a certain phenomenon (Lozano, 2007; Pardo Abril, 2016). For instance, the studies by Neyla Pardo Abril (2012) on discriminatory ways how the media and the State have represented and interpreted poverty, or those by Fabián Acosta and Liliana Galindo (2010), which explain how the social moratorium in Colombia, in terms of a human time to move, defer, or postpone – to identity building – i.e. a prism to read the youth phenomenon, ideologically inverted this conception to see it as a time of technical productivity, selfish choices, and non-procrastination, i.e. a concept *inconstruction.*

In this sense, the set of images that the contending players build are the starting points to turn a social issue into a public issue – given a certain ideological atmosphere, in the words of Jobert (2004) – and, at this point, "compare their solutions and define their action proposals" (Müller, 2006, p. 115, our translation); these discursively produced images constitute what the authors name as *referential.* This process of negotiation, but also of pugnacity (Lozano, 2007), takes place as long as there is a network of players, a relevant metaphor for analyzing policy establishment as a whole and representational constructs on a particular basis. Thus, we come to this third concept, which subsumes 2 rather specific reticular instances as meeting places for players: a) the forums; and b) policy communities (Smith, 1993)[4] .

Networks allow us to better give rise to interaction types where horizontal exchanges predominate (Müller, 2006; Smith, 1993), appreciating various relation types, formal and informal, totally opposed to traditional internal organizational behaviors (Parsons, 2009). Now, it is in the interactional field of networks that both diagnoses and solutions incorporating political programs are produced; such policy meaning processes are distributed into the lattice framework, where, as things connect to each other, common identities emerge and commitments are agreed, the forums are set as the early negotiation areas in which the 'recipes' later put in the policies show up (Puello-Socarrás, 2007; Sanabria-González et al., 2016).

The next instance consists in the public policy communities, where repertoires on a sector or population unfold, either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic. According to P. Müller (2006, pp. 100-101, our translation), the communities correspond:

> [...] to a stable configuration in the context where some selected interdependent members, at the horizontal level and at the vertical level, share a significant number of common resources and contribute to producing a common output

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4   In these instances, players of various kinds can participate, especially non-State players: academic or intellectual groups, groups of interest or pressure, lobbyists, think tanks, social organizations, or opposition movements.

Based on this general definition, we identified 3 key features of policy communities: a) they are instances with resources and scope that shape smaller and closed network levels, thus most of the time dependent or resistant to State action (Müller, 2006; Smith, 1993); b) they are gathered around an action area defined by an "individual's political" sectors, subsectors, or populations (Medan, 2014) that provide public policy with context and distinctive nature (Müller, 2006); and c) they are articulated in response to a more or less defined style or pattern of public policy-making depending on the respective country or culture (Parsons, 2009; Richardson, Gustafsson, & Jordan, 1982)[5] . Based on this conceptual structure, key elements are identified in the genesis and establishment of the PPJ in Colombia, an experience where regional policy communities were crucial.

National background of public policy making in the relation between youth and the state: violence at the center of debate

The specific relation between young people and the State in Colombia has some recent systematization processes (F. Acosta, 2015; Castillo García et al., 2010). The general tracking of this relation brings meeting spheres up: a) the educational field, particularly the university; b) labor at all of its productive levels; and c) the literature. However, in addition to these, violence in its various manifestations in the country's history stands out, as a major meeting place. For instance, it is not by chance that the base composition of armed forces or State repression is entirely dependent on young people (Botero, 2008).

Thus, the most prevalent relation that emerges in a first exploration is not that between youth and the State, but that between young people and politics. At this point, some reflections allow us to build a map of research findings that this section relies on to grasp the relation between youth and the State, particularly youth and public policy[6] .

In this regard, Patricia Botero (2008, p. 47, our translation) comments that the political practices seen particularly under a historical and literary focus on youth, despite their abundance, do not have many interpretative ways out, they are mostly unidirectional:

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5   According to Richardson et al. (1982), the policy-making or public decision-making style – depending on the culture and its respective political system – defines the way how networks, forums, and public policy communities work. The authors identify four quadrant-related making styles: one, the anticipatory style, where the rational maker plans without asking the community, and two, its opposite, the reaction style, where she/he does not plan but acts on the run. Three, the consensual style, where the formulator asks and decides along with the communities, and four, its opposite, the authoritarian style, when the State simply imposes its decisions.

6   The historical design of top-down policies on the part of the Colombian State is characterized by the formulation of "more policies for young people and less youth policies." This occurs as long as there is no all-encompassing interpretation (i.e. on youth), but on 'young people' as a vulnerable sector (F. Acosta, 2015, p. 66, our translation).

"they point at violence." And the author goes on: "the political practices read from the academic studies and the literary narratives on youth show that in national history the notions of youth and policy have been parasitic on violence" (Botero, 2008, p. 47, our translation).

In this relationship, the historical core is violence, and the author points out four regularities in this regard, at least during the 20th century. Professor Botero organizes them in order to find the variations and convergences that provide youth with a place in Colombian public action. The first is war, as a partisan confrontation with youth social flow. The second, social movements as centripetal action taken by young people, mainly in student contexts that came to link causes or purposes from other social layers; the third, the emergence of identity youth groups fighting for rights related to freedom expressions in the framework of market capitalism; and, finally, new ways of "underground policy" (Botero, 2008, p. 47, our translation), seen as an illegal and violent mechanism for surviving the hardships of underdevelopment.

This framework is the prelude to seeing why the contemporary Colombian State, in its growth and incipient modernization, set aside at the end of the century a population that – as the regularities listed above show – played a leading role in the transformation of various social struggles, many of them resolved violently. Due to this reason, it is worth situating national contextual elements – which allow us to make connections to the regional level – that give rise to a network of players and communities and the genesis of the PPJ. There are 3 elements: a) the youth's idealization phase; b) the early links to violence and the early State actions; and, finally, c) its inclusion in the early institutional bases.

Public rhetoric about youth: idealizing political practices

A constant feature of Colombian rulers has been the intent of creating a political bond with young people. It was the rhetorical making of a recurring idealization-helplessness process, where these official voices romanticized the role and the 'condition' of being young, attenuating their needs, whose dissatisfaction was an issue created by the opposition political side (Reina, 2012).

This process refers to a mainly deeply-rooted presidential discursive tendency, maintained at least in a large part of republican life until the 1970s. The role played by 'youth' is highlighted, seen as a vulnerable condition in the present, but full of potential in the future. This is represented as a kind intent, always at the top of the agendas.

This is the case of the former regenerationist president Rafael Núñez, who, dating back to 1884, in his work *La reforma política en Colombia* (Núñez, 1945, p. 232, our translation), commented, blaming the Liberal Party – from which he had emerged –, that its lust for

power had "nipped in the bud the natural generous instincts of youth, which is the best hope of all necessary social rebirth."

Likewise, in the second half of the 20th century, around 1964, it is ideologically reproduced, through the same praise, this time by former President Misael Pastrana (1964, p. 12, our translation), who considered the generation of young people at that time as a "victim":

> This is a generation with totally new minds, as there have been few in the course of Colombian history. A generation that emerged in the midst of the most violent and pungent struggle of its parties, now its ideological heritage and its already vulnerable structures are partly in ashes.

These two references allow us to trace the existence of a recurring practice, where the idealization-helplessness process put into practice by the presidents intensifies its contradiction, or rather collapses, in terms of the devastating youth social exclusion at the end of the 20th century (Reina, 2012; Romero et al., 2015). Starting the second half of this century, references for public action, such as the developmentalism prevailing in Latin America, reversed this reality in terms of increase in the State apparatus and public spending (Escobar, 2007).

Violence in Colombia and the first national State reference for youth

The 1980s in Colombia were reflected in historiography as the culmination point of the decomposition of the 'social fabric' (Bushnell, 2004). Giving rise to a higher crime rate in Latin America, the extension of poverty and the continental economic crisis, are factors where youth played a central role, both in the impact and in a possible overcoming project (Perea, 1998).

Antioquian film director Víctor Gaviria read such a political place of youth at this time. His first two feature films, *Rodrigo D: No Futuro,* launched in 1990, and *La Vendedora de Rosas,* launched in 1998, marked an artistic representation of what happened, one way or another, to the boys in the 1980s and 90s. This director, in in 2009, when socializing his films, referred to youth in its double appearance – impoverished, but also potential:

> [...] *the way these street boys live is something that we must learn from them* [...] *and this is one thing that I want to tell them: we, the boys from the inclusion, the schools, where we have everything resolved, we are very bad observers of the rest,*

lousy observers of the rest, we do not read life. The boys on the other side of the mirror, from the 'twisted values,' do not read a book in their lives, but they read life as a book[7] .

Gaviria's idea highlights a double perception of youth at this moment: 'twisted values,' i.e. 'distorted' or 'violent' and, on the other hand, vital and powerful. Despite the fact that the majority of youth at this moment was not only impoverished, but also responsible for many crimes (Perea, 1998), Gaviria uncovered the negative ideological burden, showing how problematic it is to keep the 'violent' version.

In the second half of the 20th century, violence stemmed from the bipartisan struggle and the onset of a guerrilla war. The peasant self-defense groups, the insurgency, and the armed forces consisted almost entirely of rural youth, but they were also going through urban conflicts called *criminal phenomena* (fenómenos delincuenciales). In this context, the aforementioned concept of *social moratorium* is applied, i.e. the moment of postponing adult life, which the Colombian State sees in the early 1970s as 'excess of free time' and, in its understanding, the ease of violent players to attract this population. This idea has materialized in the early instruments of State intervention: development plans, bureaus, or programs, formally created by former President Carlos Lleras Restrepo (1966-1970), in 1968 (Sanabria-González, 2013)[8] .

This anticipatory style – planning without popular consultation –, through new entities that were destined to face the 'issues' identified, such as the guerrilla armed organizations and urban crime and, on the other hand, the strong Indian resistance and student mobilizations, did not go beyond a precarious bureaucratic and budgetary burden assigned to sport. Thus, the instrumental purposes of the political class towards youth are clear; in 1977, former President Alfonso López Michelsen reduced the age of majority range from 21 to 18 years, seeking to increase the electoral mass (Reina, 2012).

Thus, the creation of public entities in response to the 'excess of free time' of young people and, consequently, their commitment to social mobilization and violent phenomena (Muñoz, 2003) articulate a first ideological group where the State gets closer to youth. So, the history of the Colombian 20th century for youth only had a place at the end, which became known in face of the convenient and rhetorical resource of idealization, on the one hand, but above all of stigmatization and neglect. As C. Reina (2012, p. 136, our translation) explains:

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7   Comment by one of the participants in the "Foros de sensibilización sobre la realidad social, las identidades juveniles y vivencias de los adolescentes en la ciudad" (Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubj3Mzziopg).

8   This former president created this year the Colombian Institute of Youth and Sports (Instituto Colombiano de la Juventud y el Deporte [COLDEPORTES]), constituting the first organic institutional action that takes young people as its justification.

Youths became idealized throughout the 20th century to such an extent that they generally became the alternative for the "future of the country" and in the late 1970s and early 1980s the idea of a "no future" was built in real society, an idea where the absence of possibilities to get out of poverty at least through legal channels, began to have national repercussions that affected the unfolding of the country's political life.

This idealization-helplessness relationship is the response to a troublesome youth-State relationship, which goes further and, particularly, opposes and resists various local and regional expressions that are discussed later on.

Degradation of violence, the 1991 Constitution, and the building of the national institutional process on youth

The writer Alma Guillermoprieto (2000) has coincided with Colombia, among many encounters, narrating the attempts to pacify its prolonged war. In one of his chronicles, "La guerra de los muchachos" – which consists in 1 out of 3 pieces of writing, regarding the failed peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo [FARC-EP]) in the municipality of San Vicente del Caguán –, claims that what he observed when interacting in guerrilla daily life was an *army of peasant teenagers*.

Guillermoprieto (2000) identified the serious fissures of such a peace process and accurately anticipated the arrival, in the 2000s, of military escalation and the raw levels of violence that, long ago, was already perceived as ruthless. Without being mistaken, he recognized that there was a cruel slaughter of poor and frustrated young people, as well as the importance of a political solution and the maintenance of peace processes, despite any adverse atmosphere.

The accumulated use of various types of violence, those caused by narcoterrorism, the increase through young rows and their confrontation between the armed forces, guerrillas, and paramilitary forces – which, for instance, exacerbates gender violence inside and outside the war (Martínez, 2017) –, as well as the overt will of political sectors to go on with the armed elimination of the opposite, led, among other consequences, to a permanent general uncertainty in youth: massive displacement to big cities, pressure to labor precocity and, along with it, an abrupt transition to adult responsibilities (F. Acosta & Galindo, 2010; Jurado & Tobasura, 2012).

The context of a precarious youth reaches its peak, taking the State – in what most researchers agree – by surprise in 1984, when the then Minister of Justice Rodrigo Lara Bonilla was murdered at the hands of a 17-year-old boy. Here the connection of youth

to the death culture was ratified, having youth as its protagonist (Castillo García et al., 2010). Thus, another image or representation of the young person is depicted, this time associated with risk and overtly with violence, which not only puts her/him on the radar of public action, but in the media. As expressed by Romero et al. (2015, p. 42, our translation), "it took a politician's assassination and a declaration of war for young people to be made visible in Colombia."

This degradation of violence fueled both youth movements aware of the seriousness of the violent context – pushed by an international wave that begins to speak of this youth in Latin American societies [9] –, as well as a government style that ranges from reaction, i.e. acting on the march through a larger budget in areas like the armed forces and the police and timidly in education (Rodríguez, 2004), to a consensus style materialized in the constitutional process that gave rise to the Constitución Política de Colombia (Constitución de 1991) (Galán, 2000; Romero et al., 2015; Sanabria-González, 2013).

Without the students' mobilization, driven by the motto "We Can Still Save Colombia" (Todavía Podemos Salvar Colombia), the masses would not have been strongly pushed to the polls in 1990, when they voted "Yes" to the call of a National Constituent Assembly. This move was later called the Seventh Ballot (Séptima Papeleta). However, the circle of leaders did not constitute a spontaneous process of student bases, but players motivated by the government of that time and by the establishment as a whole (Jiménez, 2006; Velásquez, 1995). Student mobilizations and the process of the Constitución de 1991[10] articulated a first set of formal and informal interactions of relative horizontality, which constitute networks of players who produce images, diagnoses, and solutions regarding the youth's status.

In this sense, the institutional starting points, which begin to provide content to a possible PPJ in Colombia, are proposed in the constitutional articles 45 and 103, which protect the youth's integrity, education, and political participation. From this moment on, there are two national institutional processes aimed at young people: first, an overt purpose to building a national PPJ, and second, the formulation of a social policy that implicitly benefits various populations, among them the youth population.

The PPJ with national coverage is given by the State's obligations towards young people and the institutional conditions that the Constitución de 1991 promoted (Daza, 1996). Thus, we may say that at the national level, from the dominant State perspective, the building of the PPJ occurs in 3 fronts: a) the creation of public entities with personnel

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9   At that time, at the international level, the intervention on youth was animated by the ratification of the World Youth Year, in 1985, and the Resolución No. 45-103, approved by the United Nations General Assembly, which provided guidelines for "Policies and programs that affect young people." This type of guidelines gave rise to institutional and legislative moves in Latin America, highlighting the processes in Cuba, Chile, and Mexico (Rodríguez, 2004).

10   This process also responds to an international neo-constitutionalist process, particularly in Latin American, articulated to the post-dictatorship democratic resurgence and to a peace process with guerrillas, such as the cases of Guatemala (1985), Brazil (1988), Colombia (1991), Paraguay (1992), Peru (1993), and Argentina (1994).

and functions; b) the legal production derived from the constitutional articles; and c) the production of technical and economic documents that consider the orientation and type of action or interventions with regard to young people (Galán, 2000).

In the first group, institutions such as the Vice Ministry of Youth (Viceministerio de la Juventud), attached to the Ministry of Education, created in 1994 but replaced in 2000 by the Presidential Program for the National Youth System "Young Colombia" (Programa Presidencial para el Sistema Nacional de Juventud "Colombia Joven"), dependent on the Presidency and still existing today. Second, the first legal framework on youth is highlighted by the Ley No. 375, enacted in 1997, repealed 15 years later by the Statute of Youth Citizenship (Estatuto de Ciudadanía Juvenil), the Ley Estatutaria No. 1622, enacted in 2013, which expanded the concept of youth citizenship and participation; finally, the recent Ley No. 1885, enacted in 2018, modified some sections of the statutory law. Third, the technical documents on the subject: the Documento CONPES No. 2794[11] , issued in 1995, which provided the first bases for a national youth policy; the document for planning the Bases for the Ten-Year Youth Plan 2005-2015 (Bases para el Plan Decenal de Juventud 2005-2015); and the CONPES No. 173, issued in 2014, on guidelines for generating opportunities for young people.

Finally, social policy in Colombia, just as in all of Latin America, emerges as a historical experiment and as a development strategy associated with overcoming poverty (Escobar, 2007). After the Constitución de 1991, the neoliberal State begins to gain prominence through moderate, focused, and efficient public intervention. This time considering the notion of individual, making visible a kind of co-responsibility with the State. At this point, the so-called 'individual policies' emerge as a part of social policy, opposed to that of sectors (Medan, 2014). Thus, the concept of poverty ideologically associated populations such as childhood, youth, or Indian or racial-based communities, which are beginning to be the object of programs for their 'social integration' and seek an income distribution (Sottoli, 2002).

A neoliberal social policy has its roots in the contradiction between constitutional protection of rights and the opening of this social offer to the market. A large part of this offer involved the development of programs that had an indirect impact on young people (implicit policies), as shown in Figure 1. The main indirect actions took place: a) in the education sector, by expanding coverage; b) in health, with the debate around drug consumption, triggering the discourse of prevention and psychosocial treatment; and c) in the labor sector, with flexible regularization (Daza, 1996; Rodríguez, 2004).

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11 The documents of the National Council for Economic and Social Policy (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social [CONPES]), produced by the highest advisory body on public planning in Colombia, are a set of technical, social, and economic guidelines that diagnose and approve national public policies.
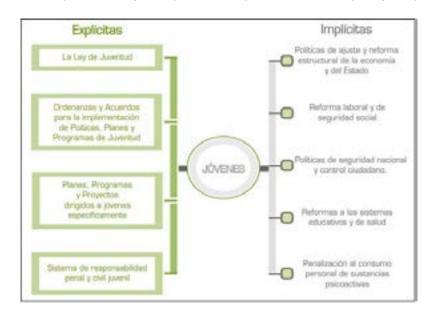
Figure 1. Relationship between youth policies (explicit) and social policy (implicit).

Source: Abad (2004, p. 70, our translation).

In this way, unlike the institutional actions of the national PPJ, exposed in Figure 1, as explicit policies, which seek to create spaces for youth itself (Abad, 2004), the social policy actions, which represent individuals and activate sectors to act on them, aim to reduce poverty and, hence, define and encompass 'the social,' euphemistically replacing the term 'poverty' with 'social exclusion' (Sottoli, 2002), by means of the failed strategy of selective public spending in fields such as health, education, or pensions (Escobar, 2007).

Both the national PPJ and social policy lead, in almost 30 years, to the building of a network of players who diagnose and define socially relevant issues, leaving behind reactionary public policy styles, which act on the march, and moving towards rather anticipatory ones, devoted to planning from the core of power, with some consensual features provided by the Constitución de 1991. Thus, a policy is not the technical document or the law, it consists in the set of ideas that represent an object or subject to intervene in, not only put into practice in the national framework, but in the regional one, which are addressed below.

Regional scenarios and players of youth public policy communities in Colombia

The national context has brought conditions in terms of the relation between youth and politics, first, and then between youth and State, something which leads to the production of bases for public action of a social and institutional order, aiming at stereotypical youth images: 'excess of free time;' 'unproductive moratorium;' and 'violent population.' From social mobilization to institutional legal work, a late PPJ is articulated, also impacted by a social policy of national scope in Colombia.

Taking this global reference, the genesis of the PPJ is analyzed, from its local or regional resignation, i.e. through rather specific social processes different from the global national one (Arocena, 2002). The concept of public policy community is used to identify instances of a regional network, consisting of players, resources, and closeness or resistance to State action, that allow the continuation of the genesis and establishment of the PPJ in Colombia. This network is shaped by two scenarios that unfold paths of ideas and actions to consolidate the PPJ in various territories: the process of decentralization and emergence of local public policies and the processes of local autonomous youth organization.

The decentralization scenario and the production of local youth public policies

Social mobilization pushed by youth and the Constitución de 1991 are foundational processes for the emergence of the PPJ in Colombia. However, despite the fact that this new constitution broke with a century-old democratic restriction and inaugurated a wide catalog of rights, it reproduces the antagonism given in terms of its legitimacy and efficiency, i.e. between two opposing requirements: that of strengthening institutions to protect rights, on the one hand, and at the same time, the obligation to 'decrease the State.' As Orjuela (2000, p. 113, our translation) states,

> [...] a new constitutional order that asks for "more State" as a condition to overcome the legitimacy crisis, and a new model of economic development that requires "less State" in order to allow the free allocation of social resources by the market.

This dichotomy situates the young population in the dilemma of protecting constituted rights, such as that of education and participation, but excludes them, in terms of the

market, access to Higher Education, or labor world (Márquez, 2005). However, the political advances are significant, and the Constitución de 1991 is the turning point that unfolds the national conditions already discussed and a regional network that goes on to building the PPJ.

One of the new constitutional themes that sought legitimacy was putting into question the traditional State centralization and the detachment from citizens. Thus, a key change was introducing the concept of decentralization, i.e. new relations between the central government and the various territorial entities (municipalities, departments, and Indian territories) [12]:

> […] the decentralist reform constituted a response to political crisis, an "escape valve" to the accumulated social tension in the country and a mechanism through which the leadership of traditional parties sought to retake the reins of political power and regain their legitimacy and the regime's, at that time quite blurred (Velásquez, 1995, p. 25, our translation).

The unfolding of the decentralizing process, starting from the Constitución de 1991, put new players on the scene in 4 dominant issues that may be classified into 2 major themes. Decentralization seen through the abilities, i.e. the transfer not only of responsibilities but of power to the territories, which covers 3 issues: a) fiscal decentralization (resources); b) political decentralization (local elections); and c) administrative decentralization (self-management). And, finally, the territory planning issue, which allows municipalities to have self-determination on the use and occupation of spaces.

These components, which determine the historical unfolding of decentralization, have as their main result the process of building territorial public policy (Jolly, 2005). This public policy is the result of a decentralization process that, by granting a wide decision margin to the territories themselves, has as its main effect the fact that major national policies stop being created, which were then taken to the municipalities, if not the interconnection of some abilities and resources of their own, as well as new regional players now producing local public policies, i.e. 'territorialisable' policies, which demonstrate the way in which public action is deployed in municipalities and departments. The PPJ shapes one of these paths to achieve local actions. The researcher J. F. Jolly (2002, p. 6, our translation) synthesized the phenomenon in this way[13] :

12　In Colombia, from the Constitución de 1991 on, the territorial State organization is unitary and administratively decentralized. In practical terms, it means that the executive branch of public power has 2 levels: a) a central one, at the head of the national government (President and its ministries); and b) a territorial or decentralized one, at the head of 3 entities – i) the governorates; ii) the city halls; and iii) the Indian territories.

13　The author raises pertinent questions, such as: "what differentiates the sectoral, the regional, the territorial and the

How, then, can a policy approach help to "rethink public administration" at the local level? The answer becomes clearer by considering the contributions of this approach to the analysis of an inherently "territorialized" process, i.e. decentralization.

The decentralizing process intertwines the local and public policies. This constitutes a qualitative political and social leap for the Colombian State, situated in a new conception and operation of local public administrations, whose governments are now somewhat autonomous, as they arrange their priorities and expenditures, and manage their decisions by means of their own public policies. These new power microstructures give rise to new public policy expressions that have been poorly documented and studied (Jolly, 2005), despite the decentralizing path that has collapsed when moving from wide action margins to an overt legislative restriction of this autonomy[14].

Despite this constraint, the conditions generated by territorial self-determination and the possibility of influencing decisions on regional populations allowed the articulation of a regional network regarding local public decisions: flow of greater resources and emergence of new (State and non-State) players, different from traditional partisans interested in how local administrations were deciding on them and for them; i.e. the emergence of *regional policy communities* interested in public actions, in decisions on the territory, and called according to action areas.

In the case of the PPJ, the new institutional players, now popularly elected, create public entities for this purpose, just as it happened at the national level. Many of these new local offices gathered various populations into the vulnerable category, where they included groups such as young people, children, women, the elderly, Indian people, or Afro-descendants. This local image of vulnerability, associated with these populations, not only structured the early local public actions, but constituted a subject of struggle and criticism on the part of the emerging youth organizations, many of them of an artistic and cultural nature, which opposed the approach to and stereotyping of populations in the region. Significant cases of counter-responses are the free and massive rock festivals, currently internationalized and acknowledged in Latin America, such as the 'Festival Rock Al Parque' and the 'Hip Hop al Parque' in Bogotá, which took place in 1994 and 1996, respectively, the 'Festival Altavoz' in Medellín, in 2004, and the 'Festival Manizales Grita Rock,' in the municipality of Manizales, in 2006 (Sanabria-González, 2013).

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local in the definition and operation of public policies, and what are their limits, their possibilities and their interfaces?" (Jolly, 2002, p. 2, our translation).

14   It has gone from a protection of autonomy in laws such as the 29, enacted in 1989, the 10, enacted in 1990, and the 60, enacted in 1993, to restrictions on local autonomy of various orders: the 617, enacted in 2000, and the 715, enacted in 2001.

Regional public policy communities interested in public decisions about local youth are shaped by municipal leadership types. On the one hand, those co-opted by political parties and, on the other, young activists at the social and cultural levels, who resist and propose the building of a rather diverse PPJ[15] . Under this tension, local youth images are produced and reproduced, and the first regional PPJ documents emerge, issued by mayors or governors, as an expression of an autonomous mandate.

Chart 1 – Documents of the Youth Public Policy in the administration of regional and local governments in Colombia (2000-2011)

Department	Administrative act	City or municipality	Administrative act
Antioquia	Ordenanza No. 16, enacted in 2003	Medellin	Acuerdo No. 02, enacted in 2000
Caldas	Decreto No. 01213, enacted in 2003	Manizales	Decreto No. 0486, enacted in 2011
Cundinamarca	Ordenanza No. 20, enacted in 2007	Bogotá	Acuerdo No. 33, enacted in 2001, Acuerdo No. 159, enacted in 2005, and Decreto No. 482, enacted in 2006
		Sibaté (Pilot test for the Department of Cundinamarca)	Acuerdo No. 15, enacted in 2006
Tolima	Ordenanza No. 009, enacted in 2007	Ibagué	Acuerdo No. 004, enacted in 2009
Valle del Cauca	Ordenanza No. 286, enacted in 2009	Cali	Acuerdo No. 226, enacted in 2007
Risaralda	Ordenanza No. 15, enacted in 2010	Pereira	Acuerdo No. 57, enacted in 2011

First PPJ documents with legal effects for the territory emerged at the local level.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

These documents authorize budgets for education and health activities, above all concerning sports and leisure, which do not protect constitutional rights stricto sensu or allow the continuity of participatory processes that the youth claimed at that time (Abad, 2004; Sanabria-González, 2013; Sarmiento; 2004).

Thus, the action of local governments is minimal (Márquez, 2005), both due to the precarious nature of the budgets and action types, and the continuity of a dependency

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15   There is the case of the Department of Cundinamarca, where, on the institutional and partisan side, the instance "Young builders of peace" was organized, and on the other hand, in its critical response, the Autonomous Board of Young People in Cundinamarca (Mesa Autónoma de Jóvenes de Cundinamarca [MAJOC]). Arguments collected by means of the semi-structured interview conducted with Nicolás López Infante, player in and leader of youth processes in the Department of Cundinamarca.

on national public action. In other words, locally, the requirements summarized in the standards of Chart 1 have brought few actual benefits:

> It was a public government policy that said "let's support young people" in programs and projects… and it was still provisional for the same historical moments. This generated some inputs, rather, to think of a public youth policy, i.e. aiming at the long term, which guarantees rights. But, then, the priority of youth rationale was not building public policy, but experiencing some benefits that a public policy of the government provided[16] .

These first youth policy documents are expressions of territorialized public actions, i.e. the new local public policies, which deployed public policy instances and communities for their debate and formulation. Basically, they consisted in the organization of few benefits and not in the protection of constitutional rights, where neither the general policy of the national government or the responses of the regional administrations were accomplished (Márquez, 2005).

The scenario of autonomous local youth organization and participation

Just like the institutional policy communities, they developed processes for the issuance of local policy documents and, along with this, they reproduced the national referentials on young people, in this territorial dimension, policy communities resistant to these views close to the State emerged, claiming a position that proposes the definitions and aspirations of the youth itself in the territory. In organized as well as unorganized projects, this youth created other forms of dialogue grounded in autonomy, i.e. "it comes out of what is imposed, controlled, disciplined; and in the […] actual youth field, it is sensitive and affective wealth" (F. Acosta, 2015, p. 64, our translation).

Thus, organized and unorganized youth processes are those that represent a significant part of the genesis of the PPJ in Colombia, at the local level, since herein the formula constituting the policy *object* is replaced by the policy *subject,* and the youth processes that materialized proposals, managed sociocultural and political scenarios, as well as asked for State intervention and accounts (Osorio, 2010).

This historical regional process is opposed to some of the weak initiatives at the national level, discussed in the previous section, which do not build scenarios for debate or

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16   Arguments taken from the semi-structured interview conducted with Nelson Arévalo, player and leader of youth processes in the Department of Cundinamarca.

participation, since the few affirmative actions that ultimately include youth are those that were timidly registered in the local PPJ documents and those that indirectly or implicitly were given through national social policy (Abad, 2004). On the one hand, organized youth is historically articulated to 2 spheres: a) student organizations; and, fundamentally, b) intellectual movements of a cultural nature, promoted by the literary[17], artistic, and musical discourses (Reina, 2012).

This type of youth social organization is projected at the contemporary level, diversifying the meanings, conditions, and means of action (identity processes); literary tendencies, friends' associations, and student movements of the past are claimed, such as that of the 1970s. This late-century social organization preserves and unfolds the purpose of the historical youth organization, which is the *resistance*[18] to worldviews that sanctioned the national political, media-based, and economic power over young people (Osorio, 2010).

The coordinates of action and interaction of the organized youth that inhabits the reticular and globalized world are fundamentally those allowed by cultural forums or subjectivity practices, which change the meaning of public, detaching itself from its prevailing institutional nature. It is not intended to reinforce the naturalization of the fact that the whole youth organizing process has as its counterpart an overt anti-hegemonic or anti-official purpose (Galindo, 2011), it is argued that the organized youth in the framework of globalization resists, under certain countercultural nuances, the process of ideological installation of the other policy communities of the PPJ in Colombia.

The contribution of youth organizations, as identity processes of the encounter between artists, writers, musicians, managers, students, popular educators, and youth leaders, constitutes a fabric of independent policy communities that unfold in merely collective processes, which differ from others of an institutional, a para-institutional, or a business nature (Osorio, 2010). Thus, this other sense of the PPJ is not structured through situational worldviews (effects of society on the subject) in order to define the condition (the meaning of being young), it is to begin by recognizing multiple meaning spaces, which have changed the condition of being young, in order to reconstruct referentials that do not naturalize or reproduce the situations of poverty, violence, stigmatization experienced as inherent to the youth (Sarmiento, 2004).

One of the states of the art that unfold in the processes of and for youth is that observed in the City of Bogotá by the researcher Esperanza Osorio (2010). Out of a sample of 88 organizations, it determines that the majority of them are positioned, given that

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17   Literary movements in the 20th century, like Los Nuevos, Los Panidas, Stone and Skyists (piedracielistas), or Nadaists (nadaístas), were some of the prominent groups of young Colombian writers or intellectuals.

18   According to M. Castells (1997), as interpreted by L. Galindo (2011), this purpose, i.e. *resistance,* is available as a mode or way of building identity, while it takes place through power relations symbolically situated between various players represented. The other ways of building are *legitimation* and *design.*

5 of them have engaged in a lengthy work since the 1960s, 70s, and 80s[19] . From the 1990s on, the growth of organizations is well known, constituting solidarity nuclei, alliances, and networks[20] , whose common purpose as a whole is the work around guaranteeing the cultural rights of youth (Osorio, 2010). In this context, we cannot fail to mention the regional and national disruption caused by the extensive student manifestations grouped together in the Student Broad Board (Mesa Amplia Estudiantil [MANE]), which during 2011 led to the dismantling of the university budget cut project (López de la Roche, 2015).

This function, as an interlocutory and destabilizing instance, provides these youth policy communities in terms of managing the resources of their own. It operates in the relation established with institutional communities in the national framework, like those already analyzed, in negotiation or resistance through the defense of an image of the position of their own as public policy subjects. Thus, this is precisely the culture field that allows unfolding repertoires and negotiations of a political order. These organizations, through public, private, and institutional resources, are the formulators and executors of their PPJ referential, even apart from the contributions of institutional communities, characterized by a minimal relation to youth groups, the case, for instance, of the neoliberal action framework both of the national PPJ and social policy.

Thus, participatory processes on the part of a regional PPJ contributed to such a claim, like that of Cundinamarca, not so detached from other territories or municipalities, or just as in the case of Medellín (Abad, 2004; G. Acosta & Garcés, 2010). The local youth organization created participatory strategies, proposing other youth images and aspirations, very different from those established by regional governments in their eagerness to institutionalize a local public policy document. This is registered by one of the young participants:

> This (State) dynamics leads to a breakdown in the department, as new leaderships emerged and became visible in the municipalities from other perspectives regarding youth work […] that asks for a rather primary, neighborhood, and street-corner social work, where there is work along with artistic movements like hip hop, rock, extreme sports, photography, which did not fit into a political renewal rationale, and this is a complete break that makes new leaders visible[21] .

19   Among the most influential collective and organizational actions taken in Colombia there is the foundation of the Cauca Regional Indian Council (Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca), which was born in 1971, with a broad youth participation (Bernardelli, 2014).

20   Organizational processes emerging within this period with youth participation are highlighted, focusing on peacebuilding and the political solution to armed struggle: a) the Black Communities Process, which emerged in 1991; b) the Pacific Route of Women, which emerged in 1996, existing in more than 9 Colombian departments; and c) the Association of Rural Workers from the Carare, existing in Santander since 1997 (Bernardelli, 2014; Martínez, 2017).

21   Arguments taken from the semi-structured interview conducted with Nicolás López Infante, player and leader of youth processes in the Department of Cundinamarca.

The literature, which documents another version of PPJ building through organized and unorganized youth, is scarce and mostly built on the basis of the institutional approach, from the perspective of policy object and not subject (Muñoz, 2003). There are few sources in this regard, which are introduced as systematizations, process documentation, or public planning exercises (Abad, 2004; Romero et al., 2015).

Thus, when comparing the testimonies or stories built in the field along with those participating in the process, relying on the scarce bibliography addressing the players and actions within the territories, political power and youth individual and collective appropriation become clear, which opened room for important struggles for their rights as a whole and a public policy that represents them on a particular basis. The participatory processes of the departments of Antioquia, Cundinamarca, the Colombian Eje Cafetero y del Sur Occidente stand out, which coincide with the territories where the political violence that the country has undergone for more than half a century has been more persistent (Bernardelli, 2014). A part of this organizational process is expressed by participation in the instituted political sphere of local governments (G. Acosta & Garcés, 2010) and, along with this, they influence the publication of policy documents through administrative acts as observed in Chart 1, which coincides with the regions highlighted (Márquez, 2005).

Finally, autonomous youth policy communities are not necessarily excluding those that are rather institutionalizing, as it has been shown. Both processes show a late genesis of the Colombian PPJ at the regional level and offer a historical basis to think through the youth aspirations and struggles. Linking the relation between both players in the analysis (Muñoz, 2003), claiming the resistance process, hence its autonomy as the formulation inherent to the young people's worldview, is a debt that both sets of players must compensate for the sake of re-founding the PPJ in Colombia.

Conclusions

Public policy communities are specific instances of a network of players, producers, and reproducers of constructed images or representations, i.e. discursive groups that they build by addressing sectors or populations in a society, characterized by shaping rather closed levels of the network, with a mediation of dependency or resistance to the State, according to a policy formulation style, as it has specific resources and identifies itself with a sector or a population action area. Policy communities give rise to another way of seeing the genesis of public policies, putting their players in interaction to naturalize or resist ideas that structure policies.

Resuming the genesis of the PPJ in Colombia from a regional or local perspective implies, first of all, tackling the persistence of this dichotomy: the regional versus the national level. Through the national policy construct, it is found that the relation between young

people and the State, from a historical background, is arranged by idealizing types of political practices, their major participation in armed struggle, as well as in social mobilizations and the Constitución de 1991, as the culminating point to structure the national institutional bases for public action on youth. In these paths to establish the PPJ, some representations about youth circulate and it is stereotyped as a population that suffers from 'excess of free time,' 'unproductive moratorium,' and 'violent action.'

The genesis of the PPJ at the regional level is a continuity of the national public policy bases. However, there are other phenomena in terms of players, resources, and relations to the State. Two scenarios of local public policy communities stand out, giving continuity to the genesis of the PPJ. First, the decentralization process and the emergence of local public policies, and second the autonomous local youth organization processes. The importance of these processes highlights the resistance of the latter with regard to the imposition of stereotypes and makes it clear that the PPJ in Colombia, from a regional perspective, cannot be reduced to presidential promises on a local basis, to technical documents published by the national government, and even less to local administrative acts taken by mayors or governors. This refers to a historical process of debate, negotiation, and resistance, regarding the images or representations produced about youth, appropriated by a set of visible policy communities in various scenarios.

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