

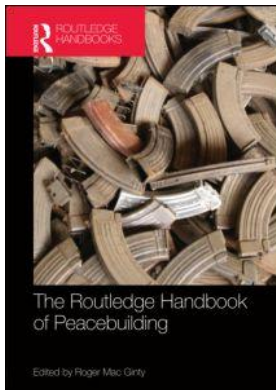
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Roger Mac Ginty

### **Zones of peace**

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# 18

## ZONES OF PEACE

*Landon E. Hancock*<sup>1</sup>

One of the more stable notions to come out of classical history has been the idea of sanctuary; defined as a place or a type of person which is held as inviolate and protected from harm. As described by Mitchell (2007b) this notion held through much of human history, though it was weakened somewhat with the advent of total war strategies in the early twentieth century. Despite this weakening, which included the decline of holy sites and special cities as sanctuaries, some forms of sanctuary—such as political asylum and, imperfectly, protection for clergy—did remain as viable practices (Mitchell 2007b).

Beginning in the 1980s a new sanctuary movement started in the Philippines, where it sprang from the EDSA People Power movement that toppled Ferdinand Marcos. According to Garcia (1997) the idea was inspired by a news report of a local community that had convinced leftist guerrillas to withdraw from their town and had, subsequently, prevented the military from occupying the town as well. This led directly to the creation of the first actual zone in Naga City. This zone, known as the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN), was declared in September 1988 and was followed by a number of other zones in the following two years in what is known as the first wave of Filipino ZoPs (Avruch and Jose 2007).

Following the relative success of the first wave of Filipino ZoPs, the use of territorial and communal-based forms of sanctuary both during and after civil conflicts began to grow. As Mitchell (2007b: 24) puts it, the end of the twentieth century saw ‘a revival’ of the use of local sanctuary in the midst of violent conflict, taking many forms; zones of peace, communities of peace, safe havens, truce corridors, days of tranquility and other forms of sanctuary were implemented, with varying levels of success, in conflicts around the world (Hancock and Iyer 2007). The basic characteristic of these sanctuaries, especially those based on communities or physical spaces, is that they are designed to produce negative peace by removing the threat and use of violence through the agreement of all warring parties. Beyond this basic characteristic, many ZoPs have expanded their activities into the realms of positive peace, seeking to create improved social relations, participatory governance and economic capacity. Thus, in many ways, zones of peace may be considered to be at the forefront of peacebuilding

and conflict resolution, especially as they attempt to address both the cause and effect of violent civil strife.

This chapter will explore some of the current uses of ZoPs, indicating where they are entrenched as well as where their use may be seen as more innovative or exploratory. Following this I will examine the struggle for sanctuary and how the ZoPs movement, while born out of a desire for a cessation of violence, has extended its efforts well beyond this arena into realms of deliberative democracy, economic development and citizen peacebuilding.

### **Sanctuary defined: A ZoP's typology**

Given the wide variety of ZoPs there can be some difficulty in creating a meaningful typology; one that is able to capture and categorize the different elements of ZoPs as they are actually used without doing damage to the wide variety of goals, methods and experiences undertaken by those seeking peace. Drawing from an earlier work (Hancock and Iyer 2007), I will use a temporal framework looking at ZoPs undertaken in the midst of violence, ZoPs undertaken as part of peacemaking and post-conflict peacebuilding and, finally, ZoPs whose use falls outside of these two main categories.

#### ***In the midst of violence***

The most typically studied type of ZoP is that which has been created for the purpose of mitigating the effects of violence during a civil conflict. The two main areas where these types of zones have been created are the Philippines, where the idea originated, and Colombia which, arguably, has been home to the widest variety of zones of peace experiences, ranging from traditional locality-based zones to communities, *experiencias* (experiences) and supporting networks and NGOs. Other attempts at using zones of peace or safe havens have been made during the Bosnian civil war with the ill-fated UN safe havens (Mitchell 2007a), the *rondas campesinas* of Peru (Langdon and Rodriguez 2007), Operation Lifeline Sudan (Rigalo and Morrison 2007), Sri Lanka's Butterfly Peace Garden (Hancock and Iyer 2007) and the multiple use of Days of Tranquility for immunization and inoculation of children in the midst of civil conflicts (MacQueen et al., 2001).

In looking at these different instances of sanctuary at the local level it is important to note two primary categories: those zones or havens that are intended to last over an extended duration and those with either a limited duration or limited goals. The latter, typified by Days of Tranquility and Operation Lifeline Sudan are characterized by a limited temporal duration and often by their support by outside agencies seen as neutral to the conflict, such as the UN or UNICEF.

The former type of ZoP, typified largely by the many zones in the Philippines and Colombia, are characterized by a number of features. The first feature is that these zones are often created following some form of triggering event—usually an act of violence, that galvanizes the local population or, more infrequently, leads to outside intervention.

A second feature, which will be discussed in more detail below, is that many of the most successful zones of this type draw their strength from their grassroots orientation towards ownership and control. Most are governed by some form of participatory

democracy and, in some places, have supplanted the existing local government, while in others, they exist alongside the official local government (Mitchell and Rojas 2012; Rodriguez 2012; Rojas, 2007; Valenzuela 2009).

A third feature present in many, if not most, of the grassroots-driven ZoPs is their multifaceted approach to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. Unlike top-down oriented zones, which tend to limit themselves to ameliorating violence, grassroots-driven zones focus on a wide array of projects, beginning with mitigating violence, but also including increased democratic representation, educational initiatives, economic initiatives and social and cultural activities. As Mitchell and Rojas (2012) and Rodriguez (2012) show, these efforts can lead to tensions with existing state authorities. Additionally, Avruch and Jose (2007) note that where local efforts are welcomed, and supported, government sponsorship carries its own price; often leading to dissension as to how to use newly acquired resources.

The fourth feature I will detail here—there are many other possibilities—is the necessity for any local peace zone to negotiate ‘buy-in’ or acceptance of the zone’s existence with relevant armed actors. This feature will also be covered in more detail below, but essentially involves continuous negotiations with local representatives of different armed actors to ensure that the neutrality of the zone is respected by both sides and gives assurances to each side that the zone will not become a base of support for the other side (Mitchell and Hancock 2007; Neumann 2010; Rojas 2007; Sanford 2003; Valenzuela 2009).

Despite the promise that ZoPs can create an environment of sanctuary for many local communities in the midst of conflict, these types of zones—while the most prolific—also tend to be the most fragile. Whenever an armed group—whether pro- or anti-government—feels that a particular zone is thwarting its ability to control a region or is providing aid to its enemies, there is little that unarmed peasants can do to stop them taking action against it. Additionally, some ZoPs in Colombia have been displaced or destroyed merely because their location sits upon a valuable route for drug trafficking or other profitable activity (Mitchell and Rojas 2012). Finally, these fragile zones almost always run up against government opposition due to their direct challenge to governmental authority. In situations like these governments may attempt to coopt the ZoPs, as they did in the Philippines and Colombia; create their own zones, as they did with the southern *rondas* in Peru; or, as was also done in Colombia, to meet the ZoPs with hostility and declare that those who reject the control of the government must, by necessity, be part of the insurgents and should be treated as enemies of the state (Mitchell and Rojas 2012). These responses can bring significant challenges to the success and even existence of peace zones and, as we will see below, are the basis for continuing tensions between local peacebuilding efforts and national-level peacemaking.

### ***Post-conflict peacebuilding***

A second area where zones of peace—or ZoP-like entities—have been used is in post-conflict environments. Initial examinations of this temporal slot parsed out the use of ZoPs as devices for peace implementation in places like Zimbabwe, Yugoslavia or Aceh (Hancock and Iyer 2007; Iyer and Mitchell 2007; Mitchell 2007a) and separately considered their use as peacebuilding devices for addressing post-conflict violence and

deprivation in places like El Salvador and Northern Ireland (Chupp 2003; Hancock 2007; 2012). Both types of ZoPs are important for our examination, but recognition of their inherent differences is necessary in order to understand when and why each type of zone can be considered successful and what kinds of challenges each type of zone faces.

The use of ZoPs as a post-conflict peacebuilding device was pioneered by local activists on the southern coast of El Salvador. As detailed elsewhere by Lopez-Reyes (1997), Chupp (2003) and Hancock (2007), the Local Zone of Peace (LZP) was formed by 43 communities in 1995 in response to increasing civil violence following the repatriation of Salvadoran youth who had become gang members while living in the US (Hancock 2007: 107). In the decade and a half that the LZP has been in operation, it has expanded from its original 43 communities to encompass 146 communities engaging in a variety of social, cultural and economic activities designed to address the needs of its local communities. Current and past activities have included their inaugural *culture of peace program* (Chupp 2003) which set the methods and goals for the rest of their activities, sustainable agricultural programs, youth internet and radio programs, tattoo-removal programs for ex-gang members, disaster-relief and rebuilding programs, and economic cooperatives for generating products and moving them to market (Hancock 2007).

The growth and success of the LZP has led in a number of directions, some actualized and others as possibilities. One of the more interesting possibilities was the proposal by Timor-Leste's President, Dr José Ramos-Horta, to create 46 post-conflict peace zones as a method of peacebuilding and development for that war-ravaged country.<sup>2</sup> Although this project did not come to fruition it provides an ambitious blueprint for the innovative use of peace zones to rebuild war-torn societies. Other outcomes of the LZP project have been expanded partnerships between its projects and the Salvadoran government, including collaboration with the Ministry of Education to increase basic literacy for low-income adults and a proposal to expand parts of the LZP model to other regions of the country.

A second area which could be classified as a post-conflict zone of peace is the Suffolk–Lenadoon interface in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Throughout the violent upheaval known as the Troubles, a majority of the violence between Protestant Unionists and Loyalists and Catholic Nationalists and Republicans took place on the interfaces between their working class enclaves in Belfast. As a result of this violence many of the interfaces between the communities were dotted by barriers, known euphemistically as peacelines, and remain sites of intense economic deprivation as well as flashpoints for periodic violence (Boal 1996; Jarman 2005; Shirlow and Murtagh 2006). In 1996 community activists from each side of the interface began to meet and, eventually, created both the Suffolk–Lenadoon Interface Group (SLIG) and its economic arm, the Stewartstown Road Regeneration Project (SRRP). Almost alone among the many projects seeking to address either political and criminal violence or economic deprivation, SLIG and SRRP have integrated their efforts in a recognition that economic development requires good inter-community relations and that good inter-community relations cannot be built in an atmosphere of economic deprivation (Hancock 2012).

As a method of peace implementation, zones of peace themselves have only been used once: in the ill-fated attempt to create peace zones in Aceh between *Gerakan Aceh Merdeka* (GAM) and the Indonesian government (Iyer and Mitchell 2007). Elsewhere

these safe zones have been discussed under the nomenclature of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) efforts undertaken by local parties or the international community—often under the guidance of the UN (Hancock and Iyer 2007). The key elements of these ZoPs are similar to those outlined for limited duration or temporary zones undertaken in the midst of violence; namely an effort to keep the parties within the zone safe from violence and the necessity of achieving agreement from all warring parties to support this aim. One major difference between DDR zones and the temporary zones discussed above is the goal of such zones in assisting a transition from conflict to peace—rather than just providing an interlude in the fighting. In order to ensure success of this mission, DDR scholars and practitioners have come to realize that much more needs to be done than was traditionally envisaged.

DDR efforts, once limited to gathering forces together, collecting their arms, demobilizing them and, finally, providing individuals with minor resources and training, are beginning to expand their repertoire of activities. Recognition that ex-combatants suffer from physical and psychological illnesses, and that they can be stigmatized upon their return to society have led to the inclusion of other ‘R’s such as repatriation, resettlement, reception and, at times, reconciliation; each designed to more fully reintegrate ex-combatants into society and to give them a sense of place and a stake in the ongoing peace process. The hope behind the expansion of ‘R’s is that, with a stake in the process, ex-combatants will be less likely to return to fighting if, and often when, political gains either evaporate or shift against their favor (Knight and Özerdem 2004; Theidon 2009; Wessells, 2004).

One important element of this vision of DDR is the alignment that it has with elements of traditional ZoPs, whether those created during conflicts or in post-conflict environments. Like El Salvador’s LZP and SLIG’s efforts, newer DDR programs seek to more fully integrate former combatants through multiple avenues, including social, psychological and economic initiatives designed to ensure a positive experience for both the ex-combatant and for the society to which he or she returns. Unlike the more comprehensive post-conflict ZoPs, DDR programs still tend to focus more of their energy at the individual level, and especially on the ex-combatant, rather than on the entire community (Kingma 2002).

### *Preventive deployments?*

As in an earlier analysis (Hancock and Iyer 2007) we continue to find uses of ZoPs which sit outside of the temporal framework or represent innovative uses of that framework. Some notable examples include Operation Lifeline Sudan, days of tranquility in the Salvadoran and Somali civil wars for health inoculations, the Butterfly Peace Garden in Sri Lanka and the protection of sacred sites and religious artifacts advocated by the Zones of Peace International Foundation (ZOPIF). More recent research and activism have proposed the use of zones of peace along the Haitian–Dominican border as a preventive measure (cf. Warfield and Jennings 2012).

In addition, a number of other initiatives have been taken that resemble ZoPs created in conflict or post-conflict zones, but instead of operating in environments which have suffered from civil violence, these zones seek to create peace or address inequality in urban areas of the United States. One of the earliest was the Harm Free Zone (HFZ)



initiative, piloted by the US NGO, Critical Resistance as a method of self-policing communities and reducing reliance on what they called the ‘prison industrial complex’. The goals of the HFZ are to build community autonomy, abolish the prison industrial complex and ‘transform our ways of treating each other’ by addressing the harms that individuals do to themselves and their communities and by redressing those harms within the community.<sup>3</sup> Other groups, such as Sista II Sista, in Brooklyn, New York and Spirit House in Durham, North Carolina are listed as participating in the HFZ movement as late as 2009, but as of 2011, no longer advertise doing so. This may be because the HFZ movement, like other ZoP movements, requires that both relational and structural elements be addressed; a goal that may be out of reach for many smaller communities embedded within larger societies.

### **The struggle for sanctuary**

As we transition from description to discussion, this section will highlight some of the many challenges local communities face when attempting to either create or sustain a zone of peace. Some of these challenges are internal, while others are external, but both types must be successfully met in order for any particular zone to be successful, or to even survive in the long run.

#### ***Internal challenges***

Like any other community organization, a zone of peace needs to have a high level of internal cohesion and buy-in into the mission, direction and goals of the whole. Many ZoPs, especially those created in the midst of violence, come about as a result of some triggering event that shocks the community and brings it together. The transformation from the initial activist impulse into social change requires a great deal of coordination, discussion and agreement from the larger community. In many ZoPs there is a core cadre of leadership, but decisions are rarely taken without agreement or consensus amongst the larger community. One of the main goals for any cadre is to ensure that there is sufficient buy-in from the community (or communities) that make up the zone. In locales as different as Northern Ireland and Colombia, core cadre members used participatory processes to ensure that all members of the community had the chance to discuss and approve of the creation of the ZoP as well as its goals, programs and general operation (Hancock 2012; Serna 2002).

Using a participatory process can, at times, slow decision-making, but it does have important benefits that provide internal strength to any peace community or ZoP. One of these is the sense of individual agency that involving the community in decision-making processes gives. This sense of agency is, I believe, one of the characteristics that makes grassroots-oriented zones more likely to survive, and thrive, as compared with instances where the impetus for the zone comes from outside the community. However, in order to preserve that sense of agency for the largest possible number of individuals in the zone means that the goals and programs of the zone will need to be able to accommodate the aspirations of various constituencies in the zone. This drive for agency, alongside the recognition by these communities that their problems extend far beyond physical violence perpetrated by outsiders—or themselves—is one of the

main reasons that grassroots-oriented zones engage in a wide variety of peacebuilding and development-oriented activities. Many authors detail the wide variety of activities undertaken by ZoPs both in and out of conflict zones, including educational activities, job training, economic initiatives, public relations campaigns and the creation of parallel governance structures just to name a few (Avruch and Jose 2007; Neumann 2010; Rodriguez 2012; Rojas 2007; Valenzuela 2009). The Colombian peace community of San José de Apartadó, has gone so far as to create its own university in partnership with 15 local communities.<sup>4</sup>

The continuous work on cohesion does not, in every case, lead to success in the face of external pressure or even internal dissent. As discussed by Mitchell and Rojas (2012), Colombia's initial ZoP, the Constituent Assembly of Mogotes, fell victim to a combination of internal division and external pressures. The internal division was the resurgence of traditional conservative forces, which, alongside pressures from the Catholic Church and the Colombian government, have managed to sideline the activities of the Constituent Assembly, even if it has not been disbanded (Mitchell and Rojas 2012).

One of the more important tools that peace communities use to support their internal cohesion is their attention to creating cultures of peace. The idea of creating a 'culture of peace' in opposition to existing cultures of violence is one that has arisen in a number of different locales and can be expressed as an explicit program (cf. Chupp 2003) or merely as an aspiration to incorporate peaceful methods of conflict management into everyday life. In places like Mindanao or San José de Apartadó, the culture of peace is seen as an intentional rejection of the existing cultures which tend to glorify war and extol the virtues of vengeance (Alther 2006; Iyer 2004).

The main difficulty that ZoPs have is a general lack of resources. Most ZoPs in places like the Philippines, Colombia, El Salvador and other developing countries operate on a shoestring budget, if that, and can, at times become hostage to foreign funders or governmental restrictions. As shown by Rodriguez (2012), recent Colombian initiatives have attempted to bring peace communities under government control by dictating how they use government-disbursed funds. Additionally, community groups in Northern Ireland have traditionally had difficulties in securing funds unless they focus primarily on inter-communal relationships rather than on the economic development issues they often feel are important to addressing the underlying causes of conflict (Hancock 2012). In the Philippines the designation of several ZoPs as Special Development Areas made them eligible for governmental funding; which positively affected some zones, but proved detrimental to others when the new resources created conflicts over how they should be directed, shattering the ZoPs' hard-won internal cohesion (Avruch and Jose 2007: 61).

By contrast, the two post-conflict ZoPs, in El Salvador and Belfast, have made concerted efforts to maintain control over their own funding sources. When the LZP was declared in 1998, it also created its own US-based NGO, the Fund for Self-Sufficiency in Central America (FSSCA), located in Texas and managed by José (Chencho) Alas, a prime mover in the creation of the zone (Hancock 2007: 109). The FSSCA has expanded beyond the LZP, renaming itself Eco-viva and working on a number of projects throughout Central America. However, it maintains its relationship with the LZP, soliciting funds and overseeing visits from US-based groups seeking to assist the region. Likewise SLIG has broadened its funding base from the UK's Community



Relations Council, which oversees much of the peace-oriented funding provided to the province by the UK, EU and US. SLIG has gone directly to large foundations, such as the Atlantic Philanthropies, in order to circumvent what they see as onerous regulations and red tape imposed by governmental funding agencies (Hancock 2012).

While ZoPs face many difficulties from within and, as we will see below, from without, many of their greatest strengths are drawn from their internal cohesion. Despite the fact that this cohesion is difficult to achieve and to maintain, it provides the basis for carrying out the many programs that assist the community to create sanctuary and achieve positive peace.

### *External realities*

The main external reality for many ZoPs is that they are located in local communities with limited resources. They often face up to groups that are far larger, both in terms of numbers and in terms of monetary wealth and coercive force, and challenge their power to exact compliance. Adhering to our temporal framework, I will first discuss the main challenge faced by ZoPs in the midst of conflict, followed by the main challenge that ZoPs in the midst of conflict share with those in peace implementation and post-conflict arenas. Given that most, if not all, ZoPs that fall outside of these two areas are created by external agents, there is little need to examine their external challenges as separate from what has been covered above.

The main external challenge faced by ZoPs in the midst of conflict is the threat and use of violence against the citizens of the zone. By declaring neutrality, rather than taking sides, ZoPs in the midst of conflict run high risks of violence by both sides—as well as by their shadow proxies—and have often suffered for this resistance. In San José de Apartadó, the number of villagers killed by armed actors since the declaration of the zone in 1997 is just under 200, including the massacre of eight people in 2005 (San José de Apartadó 2011). The kinds of resistance put forth by external actors ranges from the violence just described to pressures from the state to either participate in the creation or maintenance of local armed militias or to provide intelligence for use by state forces or insurgent groups (Hancock and Mitchell 2012). Mitchell and Rojas (2012) outline the kinds of tensions that have existed between the Colombian government and local zones of peace, especially under the ‘democratic security’ policies of President Uribe. Three of these policies appeared to directly target the efforts of local ZoPs to remain neutral and to work for peace in their own communities. Specifically they called for the creation of military or police posts in every municipality throughout the country; the creation of local forces of armed peasants; and for the creation of a network of ‘informants’ who would be paid to supply intelligence and information about suspected insurgents (Mitchell and Rojas 2012). These three ‘democratic security’ policies point to a key area of tension between local ZoPs and the state centered around the disputation over control, sovereignty, and the extent to which local communities may dictate to or restrict the actions of the state. The problem is that the very definition of the state—as understood since Westphalia—is that it is the only entity with a monopoly over the use of force and it should have undisputed control over this force within its borders. The existence of ZoPs in the midst of conflict as places which typically bar all armed actors from their territory sets up a situation in which police and the military—who are ostensibly responsible for

public safety—are barred from performing their duties.<sup>5</sup> When coupled with the tendency taken by many states following the 9/11 attacks in the US to describe conflicts in more Manichean terms, what one sees in Colombia is the equation of a desire for neutrality with the suspicion that ‘neutrals’ are really ‘sympathizers’ with insurgent forces. In fact, as Mitchell and Rojas (2012) indicate, statements by government ministers—and President Uribe himself—allude to this belief, indicating that the desire for neutrality by San José de Apartadó was ‘a signal’ that they supported the FARC.<sup>6</sup>

A second challenge for many ZoPs, both during and following conflicts, is their lack of resources and, at times, the withdrawal of state resources from regions that do not support government policies. In Colombia and, to a lesser extent, Northern Ireland, agencies charged by the government with overseeing national and international resources have attempted to direct those resources towards specified goals. For Colombia, part of the goals were to ensure that peacebuilding projects remained within the scope of governmental and World Bank requirements, creating extraneous reporting requirements and forcing local peacebuilding efforts to compete with each other for limited funds. As Rodriguez (2012) notes, this level of centralized control over access to funding has resulted in programs that become more and more dislocated from the needs of the local communities that they are supposed to serve. An additional problem relating to this control over resources is the fact that peace communities which resist governmental oversight gain no access to these resources.

In Northern Ireland the issue of control of access to funding is less severe; but issues regarding the aim and scope of programs required by the Community Relations Council (CRC) remain. The most contentious of these for local groups is the CRC’s main requirement that funds should be primarily for improving community relations rather than solely for development. As explored in more depth elsewhere, this requirement has created difficulties because of the inability of local communities to address what they see as structural problems which contribute to continuing violence on Belfast’s interface zones (Hancock 2012). The only interface zone which appears somewhat immune to these funding requirements is SLIG, which has been able to garner significant international attention and funding with its successful mix of community relations and economic development. This success story is similar to the LZP in El Salvador, which circumvented a lack of resources from the central government by creating their own US-based NGO to solicit external grants and other types of aid (Hancock 2007).

Despite the hardness of these external realities, the fact is that many peace sanctuaries continue to be founded and many of them continue to thrive. They do this without many external resources and, often, when facing hostility from forces of the state, paramilitary forces, or even criminal gangs. While some of these forces won’t hesitate to use violence, others attempt to assert their authority in a more traditional fashion, by controlling resources or access to those resources. Like their need for control over core principles, goals and content of their programs, ZoPs benefit from some level of control over their own resource streams, with those ZoPs having either no resources or their own resources generally achieving more longevity and success than those ZoPs which are dependent upon national or international sources for a majority of their resources and funding. This reality accentuates the importance of grassroots ownership and control over the ZoP and the fact that abrogating this control often leads to the failure of the ZoP, or at least to the failure of its ability to meet the needs of its constituents.

### Beyond sanctuary

Overall what we have seen in examining the ‘state of the art’ with respect to Zones of Peace is that despite their many challenges—both internally and externally—they remain a viable method for peacebuilding and development both during and following violent conflicts. It is also apparent from many analyses of ZoPs that the most successful are those which engage in a wide variety of activities to engender positive peace as they attempt to address issues of violence and a lack of negative peace. As discussed above, part of this may stem from a need to take into account the many goals of different members or constituencies within the zone, but another part likely stems from the recognition that violence does not stem from poor relationships alone, but also results from structural violence creating a deprivation of basic needs for things beyond security. ZoPs which address issues of structural violence through peacebuilding activities have the effect of also addressing the deprivation of ‘higher order’ needs by providing avenues for individual and communal agency in addressing perceived problems of a lack of resources, education and control over their own destinies.

The strength of the tie between grassroots control and peacebuilding activities is such that, in comparison with temporary zones controlled from above, one would have to recommend that most, if not all, ZoP efforts should attempt to follow a bottom-up orientation towards governance and should allow themselves as broad a remit of activities as the community itself feels is necessary. This recommendation should be followed despite the very real tension that exists between local and national efforts (covered below) because the greatest strength of any ZoP appears to lie in its community and the cohesion that comes from a sense of local ownership and control. As Avruch and Jose (2007) warn us, even well-intentioned attempts by national governments to support ZoPs can undermine their survivability if, through their assistance, they undermine the cohesion that grassroots ownership brings.

The need for and strength of grassroots ownership and control is one source of the second major issue that must be addressed by many, if not all, zones of peace: the continuing tension between local control over initiatives and the desire for central control by authorities outside of the ZoP. In conflict zones this has largely to do with the desire of the ZoP to exclude armed actors, whether incumbent or insurgent, and the inevitable tension this creates between those groups who insist they are acting in the best interests of the community and the voice of the community rejecting this claim. In post-conflict ZoPs this tension has more to do with control over resources and the direction of peacebuilding and development efforts. In many places ZoPs face the unenviable choice between accepting state help and direction or proceeding with very little in the way of support, but retaining their neutrality. For most, the best path remains to ‘go it alone’ whenever possible and to deal with national-level agencies whenever forced to. Thus far, only a few post-conflict ZoPs have been able to harness enough resources from beyond the state to avoid this Hobson’s choice; but some examples from Colombia, most notably San José de Apartadó, have shown how even conflict-ZoPs may be able to gather regional and international resources in order to sustain themselves.<sup>7</sup>

Despite these difficulties, one can note that the move beyond sanctuary towards positive peace and development shows the powerful potential of ZoPs to change their own environment. Zones of peace are not a panacea for peacebuilding and development. They do not equalize power with the state, or with insurgents in conflict zones, seeking

to assert their authority, either military or otherwise. But they do provide a mechanism to take a principled stand against the kinds of violence, both direct and structural, that continue to deny people in conflict-troubled areas the opportunity for peace, development and the fulfillment of basic needs. Because of this, zones of peace remain a powerful tool for the oppressed, the persecuted and the forgotten in these societies.

### Notes

- 1 With thanks to Christopher Mitchell for helpful comments.
- 2 For more information on the intent of Dr. Ramos-Horta's initiative see: <http://www.zonesofpeace.org/zones.html>.
- 3 For more detail see the Harm Free Zone General Framework at <http://harmfreezone.org/framework.pdf>.
- 4 This university is known as either the University of the Peasant or the University of Resistance. See <http://vimeo.com/13418712> for more information.
- 5 This theoretical argument ignores the reality, particularly in Colombia, that much of the violence committed against the citizens of these zones is committed by forces allied to the state.
- 6 From the President's March 20, 2005 remarks in Cerpa.
- 7 Most notably, San José de Apartadó has been supported by Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interfaith peace organization, which has sent unarmed accompaniment missions to the peace community since 2002. For more on their work with the peace community, see <http://www.forcolombia.org/peacecommunity>. Last accessed June 27, 2012. For more on unarmed accompaniment see Coy (2011).

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