Women PeaceMaker
Case Study Of: Rosa-Emilia Gonzalez Salamanca

Peace is not only about negotiations, it is also about transforming a society
The Women PeaceMakers Program is based at the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) at the University of San Diego’s Kroc School of Peace Studies. To learn more about the history of the Women PeaceMakers Program, visit: sandiego.edu/peace/institutes/ipj/programs/women-peacemakers.php
Navigating Colombia’s History and its Journey to Building Lasting Peace
Our History and Approach to Peacebuilding

Since 2002, the Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice (Kroc IPJ) has been working for preeminent Women PeaceMakers (WPM), learning from and with them. We co-research with these women to document the leading-edge practices they are using to navigate and challenge extremism, violence, and inequality on the frontlines of conflict around the world. Together, we develop powerful and bold new strategies to end cycles of violence. The following case study is an outcome of such collaboration.

Case Study Focus: Understanding how to ensure women have a seat at the peace negotiation table

To best align the WPM program with today’s most relevant peacebuilding needs, each year the Kroc IPJ asks its network of WPM alumnae (now over 65 women from 35 different countries): What is the most pressing issue women peacebuilders are currently facing? This year, the WPMs selected the ongoing lack of inclusion of women in peace negotiations. Therefore, to better understand this issue, the Kroc IPJ brought together four WPMs who have held multiple roles in a range of peace negotiations, and paired them with Peace Researchers to explore the following research question:

How can international partners work more equitably with national women to broaden their participation and representation in the decision-making process before and during peace negotiations, and the implementation of peace agreements?

In addition to exploring this question, this case study highlights other critical junctures, strategies and experiences that shaped the WPM and her personal approaches to ending cycles of violence.

SUMMARY

In this case study, through the lens of woman peacebuilder Rosa-Emilia Gonzalez Salamanca, an intersectional feminist approach to re-imagining peacebuilding, using the example of the women in the Colombian peace process is explored. It covers the lead up to the peace negotiations at the table in Havana, and the beginning processes around the implementation of the peace agreement. In particular, the frameworks covered in this study will help international organizations find more effective ways to understand and work with national women in order to broaden their participation in peace processes. It will do so by sharing out how to identify local focal points, networks and how to navigate the complex social fabrics of Colombia. Understanding the significance of relational autonomy in this context will additionally be explored and will provide international organizations steps to effectively integrate themselves into different interrelated local systems in order to work with them to achieve a shared goal, without inadvertently altering the existing formal and informal local trust networks and systems that organically exist. Lastly, the frameworks shared will give insights on how to ensure local women will have equal power within this related autonomy and how they can leverage international knowledge to widen their work more effectively in local contexts. Given the unique characteristics of the intractable and complex nature of the Colombian case, an analysis of this kind is critical so that such frameworks can be leveraged and applied to other similar complex conflict scenarios.
INTRODUCTION

As part of the women’s feminist movement in Colombia, Salamanca has worked in peacebuilding over the last 30 years. To better understand peacebuilding in Colombia and the unique strategies its women have used to end cycles of violence, it is important to understand how the work of Salamanca and the Colombian women’s peace movement fit into the history and larger peace efforts in Colombia.

Salamanca’s commitment to social justice and building peace began at an early age. She was raised in a family that believed in engaging social change. Since her early years, she was inspired by conversations between her parents. Her parents were strong people who had lived through the violence of the 1940s and worked hard to build a future for their children. Her father, an architect and photographer, was a man of values with a commitment to artistically represent ‘identity,’ who was always defending public services and working to improve people’s access to rights and resources. Salamanca’s mother, a woman raised in rural areas, was a determined, driven and intelligent women who felt a strong sense of solidarity with the people. Her mother came from a liberal family and her father from a conservative one, but he was inspired by an intellectual bohemian artist’s community and developed a liberal way of thinking. He was a dreamer, and his dreaming was transmitted to his children. Her mother kept their feet grounded and their minds disciplined. “We were taught how to dream, and how to also dream of the architecture to make the dream real,” says Salamanca. Both of her parents were very generous, and Salamanca is proud they adopted her into the family, having had three children of their own.

Methodology

In order to best understand the complex realities pertaining to the peace negotiations that the WPMs were involved in, the Kroc IPJ conducted over 70 hours of in-depth semi-structured interviews with each WPM during a seven-week period. Additionally, this case study is informed by secondary sources. The secondary data was gathered through the analysis of contemporary news articles, expert reports, academic peer-reviewed articles, and relevant research papers. Lastly, to best elevate the expertise of the WPM, the framework of the research process and the outline of the case study were co-designed by the Kroc IPJ and the WPM. Through this process, each WPM’s unique and rich perspective of building peace in her own context is captured.

“Peacebuilding is many things,” according to Salamanca, “it is dynamic and multifaceted. The concept of peace and its meaning depends on who is speaking and from which context they are coming from.”
Salamanca's whole life has been touched and shaped by and within movements. She was a part of the students and supported the native person’s movement in the 1980s. Furthermore, her participation and fervor for the feminist movement began during her university years and continued onwards till today. “When you are in a country of armed conflicts,” says Salamanca, “you have a moment to decide how best to realize your rights and contribute to peace, take the weapons, or work on civilian issues.”

A pacifist at heart and in practice, Salamanca does not like any arms or any type of weapons. She envisions a society of peaceful mutual respect with relationships founded on shared values that believe in access to basic human rights, where people work together to bridge historical divides and co-create a more peaceful Colombia.

Her early years have played a direct role in shaping Salamanca’s current work and her contribution within the peace movement in Colombia. She is the Strategic Director of Corporación de Investigación y Acción Social y Económica (CIASE) in Colombia, a member of the Women, Peace and Security Collective for Reflection and Action (Colectivo MPS), which ensures women are part of building a more peaceful Colombia. Salamanca also participates in Coalición 1325, which works on the implementation of resolution 1325 and whose principle function has been to present annual updates on the advances made in this regard since 2013, which is important to building lasting peace, considering Colombia does not have a National Action Plan (NAP).

Furthermore, Salamanca has participated actively as one of the Speaker Madam’s of Collective MPS in instances like the National Convening of Women and Peace, a working platform that includes eight women networks and organizations participating together. For Salamanca, working with these networks was key for her and their peacebuilding efforts, as the network played a critical role in the lobbying efforts to influence the Colombian peace talks, held in Havana. In particular, they helped to ensure women’s voices and gender issues were included in the agenda.

The work of women peacebuilders like Salamanca and the networks she has been a part of have been important to building a stronger and safer future for Colombia. In particular, in September 2012, a major breakthrough occurred for the country. During this time the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) announced after seven months of secret talks, that they had agreed to a road map that

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1 A National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) describes the course governments will take to accelerate, institutionalize, and better coordinate efforts to advance women’s inclusion in peace negotiations, peacebuilding activities, conflict prevention, and decision-making institutions; to protect women from gender-based violence; and to ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance, in areas of conflict and insecurity (https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/196726.pdf)

2 Today eight of them still remain, and are driving forward the implementation process of women, peace and security in Colombia.
would hopefully lead to peace. Points that were covered in this map included: a place for the guerrillas in Colombian politics, an end to FARC’s lucrative drug trade, war crimes and victims’ reparations, and a silencing of arms. On August 24, 2015, the FARC and the Government of Colombia signed an agreement to end Latin America’s longest running insurgency — which had lasted over 50 years and left conservatively, as many as 262,200 people dead, 83,000 people disappeared, and 6,043,500 million people displaced. Though the peace agreement was not upheld in a referendum later that year, it remains a strong guiding document.

This recent Colombian peace process is largely regarded as the most gender inclusive peace process worldwide to date, credited to a strategic and multi-faceted approach from women’s movements that transformed a ‘table of men’ into a dynamic, inclusive team, autonomous in their views, yet with a shared vision to transform Colombia by broadening democracy and the participation of society as a whole, towards ‘peace’.

3 According to The National Center for Historical Memory (CNMH), 4,210 massacres have occurred leaving 24,445 victims. The civilian population is the most affected it has ever been from violent conflict; with 23,937 deaths. Furthermore, until now, 2001 has been the year with the highest number of massacres: 406 and 67% were concentrated in 166 municipalities, according to CNMH. Regarding terrorist attacks and attempts, in the last 60 years they have tabulated 238, of which 100% occurred in 106 municipalities leaving 3,549 injured and 732 dead. In 2003, 697 deaths compared to 1989, 173 deaths were the years with the most injuries and deaths that had been registered. Regarding sexual violence in the conflict, during this time 15,222 acts were documented, with 15,738 victims. 66.3% of these victims were concentrated in 144 municipalities; 2002 was the worst year, with 1,491 cases reported. Regarding the forced disappearances, as of now; 68,431 have been reported and of them 63.6% of cases occurred in 135 municipalities. The total number of victims is 80,472, most of whom were civilians that were forcibly disappeared (79, 2,000). The 3,000 false positives and crimes of political parties that are more than 5,000, and attempts on political candidates’ lives, was also significant. For more information please visit: http://www.centrodememorialhistorica.gov.co/


After over five decades of armed conflict in Colombia, one of the lasting characteristics are the women and their unwavering commitment to building peace. “We are always there,” says Salamanca; “We are people who work in all areas — peace, human rights, law. Within the women’s network there are people with high profiles, and people in national and grassroot organizations that are highly recognized by their communities, women’s organizations, and institutional actors.”
“We would like to move from a dichotomy of friend v. enemy towards an understanding of I am, defined in the interrelation with you. Identity is complex and doesn’t have only two sides, we need to have a kaleidoscope view.”

Therefore, the women’s movement is comprised of a complex system with different currents moving together, and different people who are self-organizing based on their relation to women’s rights. These people, the networks and the currents within them have created important spaces and platforms to discuss critical issues, which have allowed for the transformation of Colombian society.

Colombia has had around 17 peace negotiations in the last 100 years, and eight in the last 30 years. Now, Salamanca sees each negotiation as an opportunity to change the architecture of the country and improve its future. For example in 1991, Colombia began the process of drafting a new constitution following negotiations with parties to the conflict. During this time, many women were active in groups that advised on gender issues for the new constitution. During this time the National Women’s Network (one of the first national networks) organically formed as an informal coalition of women. It was also very important to include gender issues in this new constitutional document. This network was especially in that it drew together women from across various sectors and regions. Subsequently, they formed a powerful political lobby to ensure gender issues were considered and included to the constitution. This work resulted in the first Colombian constitution that provided equal gender rights to its people. Additionally, the constitution offered religious freedoms to its people, and for the first time, guaranteed full citizenship rights to indigenous and Afro-descendent people, including providing special elections and guaranteeing these groups two seats in the Senate and one in the Parliament. Lastly, the Constitution provided affirmative action for previously disadvantaged groups. These foundational changes were due in part to the women’s groups leveraging their vast knowledge and network, working together to advocate for their issues. Such work and the momentum that started in 1991 continues today, where women’s groups continue to ensure peace, equality and the right to exist for all Colombians.

The Colombian Case of Complex Identities

In this section, an intersectional approach to understanding social hierarchies and the complexity of identity in the Colombian context is further explored. “Traditionally, we have been divided in many ways,” says Salamanca, “so

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5 Parties to the negotiation included the 19th of April Movement (M-19), the Quintin Lame Armed Movement, the Revolutionary Workers’ Party (PRT) and the Popular Liberation Army (EPL). The two main armed opposition groups, FARC and ELN, did not contribute, through a small socialist branch of ELN was included in 1993 (Corriente de Renovación Socialista).
one of the things that our feminist perspective and the Collectivo MPS is bringing to the front now is that we cannot continue to see truths as absolute nor to see identities as strictly defined dichotomies, leading to opposition and polarization. This leads to positioning ‘self’ against ‘the other,’ rather than understanding a more nuanced continuum of interrelations. We would like to move from a dichotomy of friend v. enemy towards an understanding of I am, defined in the interrelation with you. Identity is complex and doesn’t have only two sides, we need to have a kaleidoscope view.”

In order to further understand the relevance of intersectionality in the Colombian context, it is important to define and unpack the concept. Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages, and also advantages. In this case, it takes into account people’s overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face. Intersectionality recognizes that identity markers (e.g. female and Colombian) do not exist independently of each other, and that each informs the others, often creating a complex convergence of oppression. This concept matters for the identity of individuals, recognizing that within their context they are defined by their intersectionality. Intersectionality can be applied to individuals, groups, and even nation states. Thus, using this as a tool of analysis, understanding the intersectionality of individuals and the contexts they carry and represent are key to understanding peace and understanding conflict. With the concept of intersectionality in place, we apply it to the case of Colombia and the spaces Salamanca has been navigating in a complex society.

To best understand intersectionalities in a society, hearing each other’s experiences is paramount to understanding similar and divergent lived realities. For example, in the case of the Colombian peace process and negotiations in Havana, the value of sharing the experiences of victims and women helped to reframe the conflict dynamics. This created space for others to hear new approaches to re-imagining systems and thus, new ways to build peace in the country. According to Salamanca, “my country is a country of paradoxes, historical dynamics have led to complex identities, that are situated in hierarchical systems that were inherited from the colonial period and remain to this day.” Within these systems, people feel they do not have ‘freedom for being’ because they are either ‘incorporated’ into the current hierarchy of being and/or are obliged to behave a certain way because of the system.

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6 This concept was used first by the black feminist movement by Kimberle Crenshaw 1989.
Furthermore, due to a large division between the national state and local people, it is often hard for local people to even dream of other ways or new systems of living. For example, people have different frames of reference to understand concepts such as ‘democracy,’ ‘state’ or ‘freedom’, ‘peace’. Often, even the concept of ‘the state’ can be something different to local people because of their experience of violence, or, conversely, their lack of exposure. “In some places you only find the police, the priests, and the teacher, sometimes if there is a teacher. Healthcare is something you don’t see in many regions,” according to Salamanca, “so, it’s hard to explain to the local people what a state can be or even is!”

While the 1991 constitution was significant in helping Colombians continue developing their own concept of the ‘state,’ later changes from Congress, which incorporated elite interests that did not reflect the public collective interests, caused hopes to start waning, resulting in frustration. During this time narco trafficking continued to expand, and also the increased growth of paramilitary groups. This violence and the influence of narco traffickers further complicated an already intractable conflict. These new, more brutal conflict dynamics deepened the complexity of identities of the people and the complexity of the conflict in Colombia. Though death was being normalised, says Salamanca, “we are a country of victims and survivors. To survive, one must be resilient. We are victims, but political victims that ask for their rights, so at the same time women are victims and survivors.

Victims according to the law, and survivors politically. We are like political tigers. This is one of the reasons why Colombia is so dynamic - we need to survive, and political creativeness is one of the ways!”

As this study highlights, because of the complexity of identities and geographical, political and cultural differences in Colombia, people have different referential frames for many concepts. When rights are designed with one static cultural ‘norm’, and one group benefits at others expense, it results in different people having different reference points for ‘freedom’ and different paths to access their rights. Those who are further from this ‘norm’ will be obliged to operate within a frame of being determined as an ‘outsider.’ They will be incorporated into the referential frame and forced to renounce their own behavior and adopt new ways of behavior that are classified as ‘intelligent’ and ‘right’ within that particular frame, leading to feelings of being silenced or oppressed, and to eventual conflict. We design reality for conflict. If they refuse to shift their behaviors into a predetermined outsider-imposed referential frame of being, and risk punishment, this only further deepens feelings of unjust disenfranchisement.
that lead to conflict. Therefore, to allow for peaceful coexistence amongst complex identities, the frame of reference for 'freedom' cannot be determined by an unbalanced system. There is a need to ensure our roots are strong that allow branches to grow and flourish in new, liberated ways.

**Common Understanding: What it Means to be Colombian**

“May be, we can say that there is a very Colombian way of behavior, we have learned that from the studies that have been done about us from outsiders or insiders,” says Salamanca, “what is our reality is although we believe that we are Colombians as a whole, and we love our country, we know that we have names, we are ‘Colombian-something’. We are ‘Afro-descendant Colombian’, we are ‘native Colombian’, we are ‘Colombian rural women’; we are Colombian urban women, etc. and as a whole we know that we don’t have one only identity.”

Salamanca feels it is important to generate a common understanding of what it means to be Colombian and how the Colombian state should define itself despite the crisis of the country and its complex history of Colonialism and imposed systems of governance of the past. “Strict social structures have been created, and often imposed, and these do not fit all of our diverse and unique humanity,” says Salamanca. “I love identity, but I question identity per se. How can we retain the security that identity gives to a human — as a position from which to speak — but allow dynamism of identity that is ever morphing, breaking free from the bounds of a strict and singular identity?”

To build peace, Colombians are questioning the roots of what a complex and diverse society’s ethos may be. To do so, besides or as part of peacebuilding, the Colombians are working to deconstruct inherited norms and decolonize their minds. For example, Colombians are not just questioning land distribution, but Colombians are seeking to understand what is ‘land’ and ‘land rights?’ and it depends in who is giving the answer. A native woman that will talk about ancestral territories, or an urban person that will talk about the price in meters. Colombians are similarly redefining, for example, what it means to be ‘woman’, ‘traditional’, ‘Colombian’, ‘native’, etc. in the 21st century.

This journey, according to Salamanca, is richly complex, but many Colombians want their identities back because it has been stolen, humiliated, Colombians want recognition and the rights that recognition will bring. “As Colombians, we are singing and dancing —
blending the old and the new styles. We are finding new ways of being that integrate old knowledge with new perspectives that can be defined between us,” says Salamanca.

The Individual and the Collective

It is important to understand that ‘individuality’ and ‘collective’ are conceptualised differently, in individualistic or collectivist cultures. Moreover, in Colombia, human individualism and human interconnectivity are understood differently by different people in different ways. For example, in some native languages, there is a concept called Minga, or Únuma, meaning ‘collective work,’ that has now gained political traction in new ways, widely used by both indigenous and mestizo people in Colombia. By calling their movement a ‘minga’, which means working together. Some indigenous participants call attention to both the work that must go into politics and the idea that the work must be collective. In doing so, they also reclaim it from a long history of state-led attempts to organize and control collective politics and community organizing. ⁹

This way of understanding humanity provides for a different frame of reference for ‘leadership’— one that recognises the importance of empowering all of us collectively. Other grassroots movements have different understandings of interconnectivity and are working in their own ways to create a shared vision. As feminists in the women’s peace movement, Salamanca and other women have worked to find holistic approaches to conflict mitigation that are not bounded by strict cultural norms or referential frames. Rather, they provide a pathway towards a dynamic way of operating within and between different frames to access rights, allow harmony and sovereignty within an authentic recognition of diversity.

Peace is a Process, and that Process is Dynamic

“We believe that peace is a process, and that process is dynamic. Peace is a utopia, so when you talk about only positive peace, you may forget the dynamism of societies catalysed by conflict and its great tensions. Conflict and their tensions are important, and managing conflict determines peace. Salamanca believes as systems begin to shift: micro, meso and macro conflicts

⁹ https://nacla.org/node/5517
that arise during these shifts will also have to be negotiated. Therefore, there are different paths coexisting peacefully,” according to Salamanca. “We are in a moment of redefining what the new agreements between different people with different referential frames will be to access their rights: a new space or pact or covenant that will bring a new type of multicultural ‘state’ (if we want to call it a ‘state’) that will break apart the political structures we have now and allow for a governance model that integrates political diversity, religious diversity, and cultural diversity with authentic ‘freedom’ and equal access to rights.”

It was through this dynamic framework that Salamanca as part of the women’s movement-viewed peace negotiations and approached the peace process. This directly informed her work with the Colectivo MPS, who worked with other women’s groups through the Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz, to inform and influence the formal negotiations between the Government of Colombia and FARC, in Havana.

Relational Autonomy: Women in the Havana Negotiations

In this section, we look more closely at how to incorporate complex experiences into formal negotiation processes. This is done through understanding relational autonomy as modeled by women’s interactions: both within the formal negotiation framework in Havana, and in the spaces around the negotiation table.

When the Government and FARC began negotiations to end the conflict and reach a peace agreement, many groups were waiting to be invited, and the women took it upon themselves to decide to be there. Due to their agency and not sense of collective autonomy, and the long history of women’s movements in Colombia, women came with their own social and political legitimacy which allowed them to be recognized as legitimate actors. “Women are strong,” says
Salamanca, “and when we decide something, we go for it. We decided we were going to be contributors, not observers. We wanted to make an impact, not just be impacted. We wanted to be part of the pact, not put into it by the elite.”

Women in Colombia felt that the opportunity to push for change was not to be missed, as it had in every past negotiation attempt. There was a further sense of timeliness, because it was believed this was one of their last opportunities to make a difference: “We are constituents and women and we saw a window of opportunity and we were not going to wait!” says Salamanca.

In order to effectively navigate and meaningfully contribute to the negotiations, Colombian women knew that they had to have a comprehensive understanding of the complex conflict dynamics in order to contribute effectively and appropriately to the negotiations. To set an agenda that would impact the negotiations, and directly influence its outcomes, 800 women gathered in Bogota for the first National Summit of Women and Peace (Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz) to agree on their agenda and identify windows of opportunity to achieve an agreement that was responsive to victims and could achieve sustainable, democratic participation for women and other marginalized groups.

The reality was that those who were parties in the negotiation were armed actors, mainly men, and the violent expression of the conflict mirrored a patriarchal dynamic. Women wanted to participate in the Havana negotiations to contribute to these dynamics with non-patriarchal perspectives as a way of redefining this process of negotiation outside of existing patriarchal structures. “It is important that negotiations incorporate social realities – if the table is patriarchal or elite, then the other societal dynamics are ignored and neglected. This dynamic also influences how the outcomes of negotiations will be viewed — in terms of how the outcomes of an agreement play out in society and are interpreted,” explains Salamanca. “So, that means that you can also re-define what you are thinking, and you can redefine the dynamic of a new concept of new bodies in a nation with new ways of statehood. So, I think that is quite powerful. We are shifting paradigms, which I think is very deep.”

How The Women of Colombia Pushed Forward Their Work In Havana

In 2013, La Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz, which included nine women’s groups and networks, developed a unified ‘Women’s Agenda’ for influencing the negotiations. The Collective of Women, Peace and Security joined this first summit, sending Salamanca as one of the delegates.10 Together, the organizations developed an agenda, divided it based on the structure of the negotiations. They then added to the agendas to address the concerns of the victims and women of Colombia onto every item

10 In addition to El Colectivo MPS, in the Cumbre they have seat: Ruta Pacifica de Mujeres y Casa de la Mujer, Iniciativas de Mujeres por la Paz, and CNOA (Conferencia nacional de organizaciones Afro-descendientes), Mujeres por la paz, WILFP and ANMUCIC.
in the negotiations. As a main point, the women differentiated between ensuring representation of and restitution for victims of violence, enhancing women’s rights and opportunities for empowerment, and shifting gender relations towards equity.

The Summit continued their work with a group of 18 speakers, constituting a board of women as representatives of the network who had long-standing deep trust with their communities, and extensive experience. These women began to interact with negotiators in Havana in multifaceted ways, continually feeding content from their discussions back to the group, and feeding the group’s input back to Havana. This created a dynamic, responsive, and effective feedback loop. The board and the women leaders at the Summit then returned to their respective women’s groups, further they then disseminated information to the local people to help them understand why this was a window of opportunity for everyone. Complex communication feedback loops emerged organically, which ensured the flow of information from the negotiating table to the people of Colombia and back continued. In various ways, this strengthened connection between the parties to the negotiations in Havana, the nine women’s groups, and the board of the network, so that information was spread along many chains of influence. Although this was the ideal, it was not always achieved because lack of resources for communication and for the dissemination of this information.

Salamanca summarizes the significance of their decision to influence the negotiations from a more autonomous position outside, yet deeply connected to the negotiations...“we as a movement can see our role when we understand the role of the negotiators and we see the role of the international community, and we can see that we have completely different roles and in those roles we can be very autonomous, we can be critical, we can have freedom in our thoughts, but at the same time there is a frame of conversation that will relate us all to the same issues. So, autonomy is very [important for] us and the outcomes that are going to come out of these relations.” Of course, not all perspectives could be shared due to limitations of the women’s movement capacity and reach.
Reconciliation in Havana and Beyond

It is often said that reconciliation is simply finding a space to disagree together, without violence.11 By providing a space for victims of the Colombian conflict to share their stories, the parties at the negotiations in Havana gained a new understanding of the dynamics of both the violence and of the social breakages that allowed conflict to thrive. In entering into the negotiations, both the government and FARC had held ideological legitimacy in their eyes, and so were genuinely shocked by many victims’ testimonies. It also opened their eyes to the truth of the gender dynamics of the conflict, and the intersectional power relations that deepened divisions and hatred of ‘the ideological other’. Finally, they all began to see the importance of authentic structural changes towards equity. Their understanding of the very personal nature of the many of the atrocities committed gave birth to a newfound compassion and humanizing of ‘the other’. It is believed that this contributed to parties within the negotiation realizing their interconnectivity, and deciding to work together on the shared goal of creating a new political landscape to nurture peace, understanding, and equal access to rights. Though each maintained autonomy of thought and action and often remained loyal to a party or particular frame of thought, they were eventually able to make decisions towards attaining their goal together.

The way in which a women’s network engaged the formal negotiations with relational autonomy to successfully achieve a shared goal can be used as a framework for other mediation and negotiation processes that address complex conflicts. To map this, one must look at each individual within a complex conflict dynamic to understand his or her role, influence, and effectiveness within various trust networks, moving from Lederach’s concept of peacebuilding to a more holistic and dynamic feedback loop with complex relationships of varying strengths, in order to build more effective approaches to peacebuilding.

Salamanca recommends that to best achieve an effective exchange of knowledge foregrounded in

Within this new frame of understanding for interconnectivity of complex social identities and systems, or ‘related autonomies’, we see how women leveraged positionality, self-organised, and worked intelligently and diligently to integrate their perspectives into the peace negotiations in Colombia. The women at the table had coherence towards accomplishing their goals, but autonomy to make decisions from the perspective of their relative ‘in-groups;’ they utilized their positionality within their chain of influence. In doing so, they were able to monitor, evaluate, and adjust in a dynamic way, in parallel to the process, ensuring continual feedback with extensive women’s networks on the ground in Colombia, and ensure their continued contribution at each step. This method of feedback allowed for grassroots and local direct contributions to the process in a significant way. This can be used as a model for utilizing local methodologies within existing systems to access relevant, contextual, knowledge continuously throughout a peace negotiation and peacebuilding process.

Implementation of the Agreement - Pathways to Peace

The women negotiators who participated in the Havana process are now tasked with the implementation of the peace agreement, despite the shifting landscape caused by the failure of the people to embrace the new agreement in the referendum. In this section, we again use an understanding of relational autonomy to map a pathway to peace. This is done through localisation of the agreement and shared journeys of reconciliation through dialogue, co-creating the re-imagined national vision of peace with the people themselves, and rooting the process to the ground.

The National Government and the FARC agreed to implement the agreement according to the following 12 guiding principles: a rights-based approach; respect for equality and non-discrimination; a gender-based approach; respect for the freedom of religion; territorial
integration and social inclusion; strengthening and coordinating institutions; strengthening democracy; ‘building on what has already been built’; efficacy, efficiency and suitability; prioritisation; transparency, social control and fighting corruption; and democratic principles. The parties agreed that, “the implementation will include measures and mechanisms that enable citizen participation to have an effective influence on the decisions of the corresponding public authorities and promote dialogue between the different sectors of society, the building of trust and social inclusion”.  

The Commission for Monitoring, Promoting and Verifying the Implementation of the Final Agreement (CMPVI) developed a ‘Framework Plan for the Implementation of the Agreements’ in order to guarantee the implementation of everything agreed — policies, regulations, plans, programs — and to facilitate follow-up and verification. The Framework Plan includes the practical and strategic needs of women, including identifying the multiple intersectional discriminations that must be addressed for the execution of the agreements. Furthermore, in respect to the implementation of the agreements, CMPVI drives forward public policies, programs and reforms that take into account the particular requirements of women and ethnic populations, including impact indicators that make it possible to identify the progress of implementation in that regard. As a subcomission of the CMPVI, a Gender Commission was elected, which integrates people from ‘local women’, ‘native’, ‘peasant’, ‘movements’, and ‘young people’; gender was mainstreamed in the Justice for Peace Commission to address issues of ‘justice,’ ‘truth, memory and reconciliation’ (living together), and to find a process to identify and memorialise the disappeared. In addition, the Commission for Peace and Reconciliation was formed, and Salamanca was invited to be a member. 

Given all that has happened in Colombia, public confidence has been destroyed in particular due to the breakdown of trust during the conflict, the culture of informants and the possibility that everyone is a potential enemy. To remedy this damage, the social fabric has to be carefully knit together again through slow relationship building and the creation of spaces for meaningful interaction among populations that have been divided and damaged.

In 2017, CIASE, in partnership with the Women, Peace and Security Observatory of the Humanas Corporation, published a book entitled: *Experiences, Contributions and Recognition: Women in the Peace Process in Havana*. The idea was to bring visible harmony to Colombia through a book tour across the

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country. According to Salamanca, “seeing the faces of the people behind the agreement makes it human [...] showing that it was possible to work together, it really helped so much for the people to see that we could live in another way, that we could come together in another way. I think the most valuable part of this book was the presenting of the book! Some [audiences] were very angry, some victims were asking FARC, what are you going to do with us, and so on, and we gave the space for all of these questions. We honored the women of the local areas also giving back information, taking the women with all of us to see people who had been involved in the agreement, and so on.”

What does Salamanca think of the path forward for peace in Colombia? “We are finding ways to achieve personal and shared happiness and peace, and one way is the implementation of the agreement. But still, as we say at Colectivo: we need fifteen paths for peace, and we are still a long way off from achieving this, and there are still many negotiations to be done between different actors.”

To learn more about the Women PeaceMakers program, go to: sandiego.edu/peacestudies/ipj/wpm