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# Building up a peace infrastructure for Colombia: lessons from implementing the Victims Law

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## Executive summary

Whether a potential peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia will translate into the necessary transformations on the ground will depend, among other things, on the quality and legitimacy of its implementation system. Colombia will need to set up a peace infrastructure that not only facilitates formal compliance, but helps to transform the state, particularly at the local level, as well as citizens' interactions with it. Tasked with implementing the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law, the National System for Comprehensive Attention to and Reparations for Victims provides important lessons for the architects of a future peace infrastructure. In order to have an impact on local dynamics, such an infrastructure will need to be developed in cooperation with regional and local actors and allow a degree of flexibility and autonomy for setting up cooperative spaces, while establishing clear standards and effective accountability systems. In the long run these spaces can only become vehicles for peace and confidence-building if power asymmetries and security risks facing community leaders are addressed. Finally, the success of a peace infrastructure will depend on the degree to which it is woven into existing institutional processes and logics, and manages to introduce good management practices instead of creating parallel, partly competing systems.

## Preparing for the post-conflict period: the need for a peace infrastructure

On September 24th 2015 the front pages of Colombian newspapers displayed an unprecedented image: a hand-shake between the Colombian president, Juan Manual Santos, and the head of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), alias Timoschenko. After almost three years of negotiating the end of the armed conflict the parties had reached a provisional agreement on one of the most thorny issues on their agenda: judicial accountability for serious human rights violations. Previously, provisional agreements had been reached in the areas of rural development, political participation, a solution to the drug problem and truth.

The recent achievement has been interpreted by many as the point of no return for the negotiations. As the possibility of a deal becomes real, questions regarding implementation are gaining weight. While tackling the remaining issues to effectively reach a peace accord in the six-month time frame that the parties have now established would be an historic achievement, many Colombians rightly expect its implementation to be an even greater challenge.

In this context, theory and international practice point to the importance of a well-designed institutional architecture – a peace infrastructure – to help ensure that the agreement is effectively translated into transformations on the ground. If peace is to be sustained over time this infrastructure must not only serve to administer reconstruction funds and projects, but also to "empower the resources for reconciliation from within ... society" (Lederach, 1997: xvi). The focus is therefore on institutionalising mechanisms for cooperation among relevant stakeholders beyond political cycles. To be effective, a peace infrastructure should cut across the various levels of society and government; be inclusive; and have the necessary mandate, legitimacy and resources to perform its role effectively (Hopp-Nishanka, 2012).

In terms of preparations for a post-conflict scenario, the Colombian government faces a dilemma. The parties have

not started to discuss implementation – included in point VI of the negotiation agenda (Colombia & FARC-EP, 2012). The rules of the negotiation process state that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed; hence, provisions may still change. At the same time, once the historic juncture of a deal is reached, the country will not be able to afford to improvise. Colombia will need time to set up systems, enact legal frameworks and build capacities. This time will hardly be available after a deal is clinched. Not only will the FARC make certain steps conditional on progress in implementation, but a population whose patience has been overly strained by a long negotiation process will want to see results on the ground.

Against this background preparations have kicked off in national government and in some departments (Pfeiffer, 2015). Staff in the recently created Post-conflict Ministry and the High Commissioner for Peace's Office are drafting rapid-response plans for the first year of implementation and have started working on an implementation structure. In September 2015 the government put forward a constitutional reform bill proposing the creation of a special legislative commission to accelerate the translation of an agreement into law.

What is clear from the discourse of national government, from the negotiations' framework and from the long-standing claims of communities in conflict regions is that the implementation of an agreement will need to particularly target Colombia's marginalised rural territories and trigger development from below. There is consensus about the importance of citizen participation. To what extent a new architecture will build on existing structures or entail the creation of new ones remains undefined so far. According to High Commissioner for Peace Sergio Jaramillo, peacebuilding will not be achieved in "the normal course of things", but will require "new and exceptional institutions", as well as "new spaces for participation, deliberation and debate" (Jaramillo, 2013: 4-5).

The good news is that Colombia does not need to start from scratch. Not only has the country established a number of institutions over the past decades equipped for tasks typically associated with the post-conflict period (Pfeiffer, 2014), but also has considerable experience in creating systems to roll out major national reconstruction policies in its territories.[1] Finally, citizen participation is not a new concept in Colombia. The country can draw on the experience of various models of participation, whether in connection with the aforementioned national policies or with ordinary planning and policymaking processes. This has generated considerable social capital in many regions. One of the most recent and perhaps most relevant references for the task ahead is Colombia's National System for Comprehensive Attention to and Reparations for Victims (SNARIV). Based on the provisions of the 2011 Victims and Land Restitution Law (Victims Law) (Congreso de Colombia, 2011), the system is tasked with attending to over 7.5 million registered victims of the armed conflict, i.e. over 15% of the population. SNARIV connects state institutions and victims' representatives horizontally (i.e. on one level of government) and vertically (i.e. between different administrative levels). Based on fieldwork in the Caribbean departments of Córdoba and Sucre, as well as in the capital, this report focuses on the lessons that can be drawn from SNARIV for the development of a new peace infrastructure.

A future peace agreement will, of course, go beyond victim-related provisions. Drawing on the lessons of SNARIV for the design of a new implementation architecture is nonetheless a sensible proposition for various reasons. On paper, the system has many of the ingredients that recipes for peace infrastructure tend to prescribe. Secondly, the system is geared to shoulder a major task that will not only remain a key dimension of post-conflict work, but also has clear connections with other policy areas of a future agreement. Finally, SNARIV caters for a considerable percentage of Colombia's population that is concentrated in those regions that will most likely be targeted by post-conflict provisions. While there is little doubt about the importance of ensuring victims' rights as a basis for advancing peace and reconciliation, this report does not focus on policy contents, but on the institutional conditions under which relevant policies can successfully be implemented.

## National System for Comprehensive Attention to and Reparations for Victims (SNARIV)

On paper, SNARIV looks quite exemplary. Mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation provide the basis for a concerted and comprehensive policy response. SNARIV's architecture cuts across all administrative levels. Presidential leadership is strong and resources have been assigned to implement policies. Victims' participation mechanisms provide for dialogue between relevant stakeholders and allow beneficiaries' perspectives to be included. SNARIV was not invented from scratch, but was based on the structures of the National System for Comprehensive Attention to the Displaced Population, which from 1997 to 2011 (when it migrated to SNARIV) dealt with what is today over 85% of the overall victim population. This section will briefly describe the new system's main features.

SNARIV brings together close to 50 national and subnational state entities that all bear responsibilities vis-à-vis victims.[2]

1 Such as the National Rehabilitation Plan (1983-approx. 1992), the Democratic Security Consolidation Programme (which started in 1997), the Reconstruction Programme of the Eje Cafetero (Coffeezone) following the earthquake in 1999 or the Colombia Humanitaria Programme to mitigate the effects of the 2010/11 floods.

2 For a complete list of these institutions, see SNARIV (n.d.a).

The system is governed by the Executive Committee for Attention to and Reparations for Victims (Executive Committee). Chaired by the president, the committee is staffed by the ministers of justice, the interior, finance, and agriculture, as well as by the directors of the National Planning Department, the International Cooperation Agency and the National Unit for Attention to and Reparations for Victims (Victims Unit). Located in the Presidency, the Victims Unit serves as the Executive Committee's Secretariat and SNARIV's overall coordinating agency. To support subnational authorities and better reach out to victims, it has branched out at departmental level (Direcciones Territoriales) and established contact points in many municipalities.

The concept of comprehensive attention to and reparations for victims covers a broad set of state responsibilities related to victims' rights. "Attention" includes humanitarian aid, psychological support, legal advice and the provision of social services. The law also commits authorities to ensure the effective protection of victims and prevent further crimes. "Reparations" entail financial compensation and the restitution of land, housing and employment prospects for those forced to abandon their homes. They also include symbolic acts such memorial sites or pardons, as well as activities to ensure the right to non-repetition. Reparations can be granted to both individuals and specific societal groups or communities harmed by the armed conflict (Congreso de Colombia, 2011).

In accordance with Colombia's decentralisation system, most of the provisions of the Victims Law are executed at the subnational level. Tasks such as the provision of temporary shelter and food aid for displaced persons are the exclusive responsibility of municipalities. Other obligations – notably the provision of access to healthcare and education – are carried out by municipalities in coordination with national programmes. National state institutions such as the Victims Unit or Land Restitution Unit bear responsibilities that are carried out with the support of municipalities. This, for instance, is the case for land and housing restitution matters (Ministerio del Interior, UARIV, n.d.). Municipal budgets are sourced from municipal tax revenues, contributions from Colombia's national financial redistribution system and the national royalties system.

To translate their respective duties into policies and actions, municipalities and departments are tasked with developing Territorial Action Plans (PATs). PATs are developed, formally approved and their implementation monitored by multisectoral spaces at departmental and municipal levels, i.e. the Territorial Transitional Justice Committees. Chaired by the governor and the mayor, respectively, these committees bring together representatives of relevant municipal offices (*secretarías*); the territorial offices of relevant national agencies, including the Victims Unit; and representatives of the military, the police and victims (Ministerio del Interior et al., 2012).

Victims' representation is granted through so-called Victims' Tables at the national, departmental, district and municipal levels. These Victims' Tables are staffed by elected representatives of accredited victims' organisations based on a quota system for victims' groups and types of crimes. They are tasked with feeding into policy development processes, mobilising victims behind the law and monitoring the implementation of the various policies. They send representatives to the Territorial Transitional Justice Committees.

To facilitate inter-institutional coordination at the territorial level and improve service delivery to victims (one-stop-shop), the Victims Law provides for the creation of Regional Centres for Attention to and Reparations for Victims in those municipalities that host large numbers of victims. All the relevant agencies are physically represented in these centres.

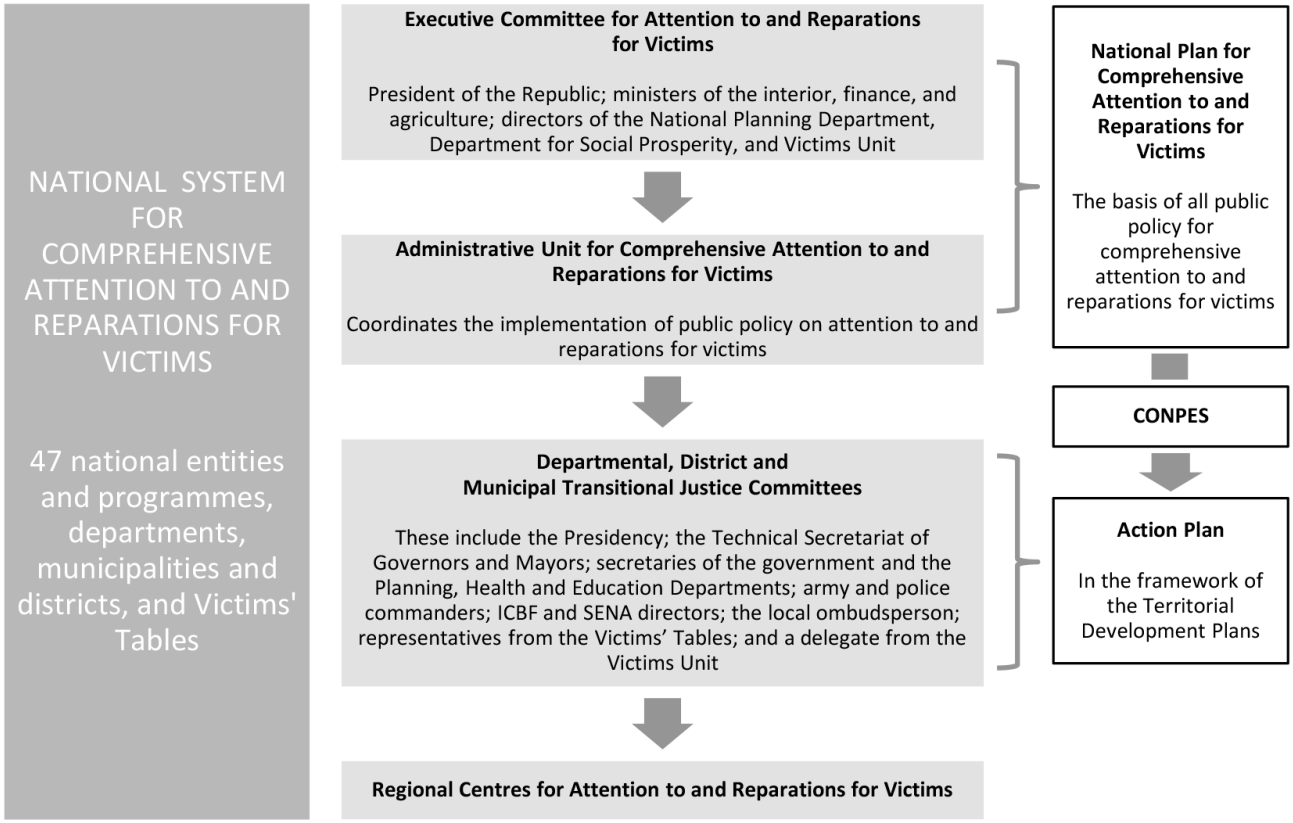


Chart adapted from Santamaria Vecino, 2011.

## Taking stock

Setting up SNARIV has been a marathon effort. Four years into the implementation of the Victims Law, the Victims Unit is up and running with over 800 staff across the country (plus another 800 on short-term contracts). Transitional Justice Committees and Victims' Tables have been set up at all levels. A comprehensive body of rules and protocols has been developed to translate the Victims Law into instructions for the various agents. The National Victims Attention and Reparations Plan budgets activities for the first four years of implementation (DNP, 2012).

SNARIV has helped to raise the profile of the victims' agenda, which had been practically absent in many regions. It has lent an additional and visible platform to victims to claim, shape, and monitor the enforcement of their rights vis-à-vis the authorities and society. Representatives of victims' organisations have become interlocutors of both local and national policymakers, and the negotiating parties in Havana.

Beyond this political and symbolic empowerment of victims and their agenda, the record of the implementation of the Victims Law on the ground through SNARIV has been mixed. The following subsections analyse four factors that have notably marked the success of implementation: existing capacities, the degree of agency and ownership, the way in which coordination has worked, and security issues.

### Existing capacities

The Victims Law places a large and complex task on the shoulders of the Colombian authorities, notably at the municipal level. However, this task is not equally large for all municipalities. For example, the department of Antioquia, home to 14% of Colombia's population, hosts close to 25% of all victims nationwide. In cities like Sincelejo, the capital of the Caribbean department of Sucre, almost half of all inhabitants are victims. While the task is large, many shoulders are small: 89% of Colombia's 1,098 municipalities have less than 10,000 inhabitants (Portal de Alcaldes y Gobernadores de Colombia, n.d.).

The "Territorial Capacity Index" established by the Victims Unit acknowledges these differences (UARIV, 2014b: 11). Accordingly, the unit and other national government agencies offer capacity-building for weaker municipalities. Municipalities can compete for national (and departmental) co-funding. It does, however, not come as a surprise that the level of compliance and proactivity has differed greatly across the country. While a number of municipalities, reportedly notably in the departments of Antioquia, Meta, Cauca and Huila, have performed well, many municipalities have failed to effectively respond to their legal obligations vis-à-vis victims.

Many local officials claim to struggle with the fact that their new responsibilities did not come with the provision of new financial resources for the tasks assigned to municipalities. Indeed, the bulk of the COP 54,000 billion (around EUR 20 billion at 2011 exchange rates) set aside for the ten

years that the Victims Law is to stay in force is allocated to activities for which national entities are responsible. Municipalities are required to fund their victim-related duties through their ordinary budgets. The fact that many needy municipalities do not utilise the option of tapping into national budgets by presenting victim-related investment projects reveals other barriers, i.e. problems of technical capacity and lack of ownership.

Assessing the profile and needs of victims in their municipalities, and translating them into plans and policies to raise the necessary resources for implementation require a level of knowledge, organisation and strategic thinking that is absent in many small municipalities. Adequate information systems often work poorly or do not exist. In its 2013/14 report the commission that was set up to monitor the implementation of the law (known as the Follow-up Commission, or Comisión de Seguimiento), which is staffed by the offices of the Inspector General, the Comptroller General, and the Ombudsperson, as well as representatives of the National Victims' Table flagged the "low level of budgetary, technical and administrative capacities of local authorities … and the lack of experience in preparing investment projects" (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 557). According to the report, this has created an uneven playing field in terms of applying for national co-funding (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 591).

Capacity-building efforts often suffer from the fact that local officials change or lose their jobs in a short period of time. Clientelistic politics compounds institutional learning on the ground. Relatedly, some critics have denounced a long-standing tendency to channel national investment funds to the regions based on clientelistic criteria instead of sound proposals (López, 2013: 27).

Capacity problems often also constrain the work of victims' organisations and their ability to effectively lobby for their cause. Knowledge of municipal affairs and management tends to be limited, while the opportunity costs of their physical participation in meetings can be high.

## Agency and ownership

At least equally relevant is the question of local ownership. The fact that President Santos has openly connected his legacy with the passage and implementation of the Victims Law has lent an unprecedented agency to its implementation. Juan Fernando Cristo, one of the principal promoters of the bill in Congress at the time, currently heads the Ministry of the Interior. Under the previous administration the Constitutional Court had virtually been the only powerful lobby supporting the legally protected rights of the displaced.

At the subnational level the Victims Unit reports that in some departments, including Meta, Antioquia and Huila, governors have pushed the victims' agenda and managed to rally municipal authorities – notably those of the same political colour – behind it. In other departments, however, governors and mayors continue to resent the additional responsibilities imposed by national government without much consultation. In these cases, lack of progress at the local level tends to be blamed on shortcomings at the national level.

All too often attention to and reparations for victims compete with the other priorities of individual power holders: "If the mayor is not interested, there is not much one can do about it", stated a senior official at the Victims Unit. Members of Transitional Justice Committees in Córdoba and Sucre report that mayors leave committee sessions after opening them or do not attend at all. According to a representative of a victims' organisation in Sucre, in some municipalities PATs are drafted in the mayor's office and approved by decree. The Follow-up Commission has criticised the fact that they are sometimes simply copied from other municipalities (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 41).

Field visits carried out by the Follow-up Commission confirm the problem of merely formal compliance. While the majority of the mayors it visited had produced plans, the low levels of implementation were proof of "low commitment and lack of political will vis-à-vis the victims" (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 557). The fact that local administrations often do not utilise the opportunity of national co-funding to spur development in their municipalities may therefore be due to a lack of capacity. It is certainly also related to the fact that victims' rights still do not enjoy priority on many local agendas.

The Victims Law did not come without teeth, though. Apart from the abovementioned Follow-up Commission, which sends yearly reports to Congress, national control agencies, such as the offices of the Inspector General and Comptroller General, can apply disciplinary and fiscal sanctions in cases of compliance problems. Transitional Justice Committees and Victims' Tables at all levels are tasked with monitoring implementation. Each year the Victims Unit rates departments and municipalities as bad, medium or high performers based on a set of gradually increasing standards (UARIV, 2013). A new management tool, the *tablero de control*, will be pioneered from 2016. Based on a standard format, it will break down PATs into projects and resources to facilitate monitoring and reporting. All *tableros* will feed into a nationwide information system that will help national agencies to identify priorities, compliance problems, and the need for technical and financial support (DPS, 2015).

In terms of teeth, these mechanisms, more than anything, generate political pressure and reputational risks that undoubtedly provide incentives to perform. The question of whether they will suffice to gradually change the dynamics on the ground cannot be answered conclusively after only four years. In the long run this will certainly depend on the extent to which negative incentives are paired with positive ones, and whether accountability systems are designed in

a way that encourages the relevant authorities to go beyond merely ticking boxes.

## Coordination

Broad in scope, the Victims Law involves a great number of institutions at the national and subnational levels. In the context of Colombia's decentralised system, this implies considerable coordination challenges among the various government levels (vertical coordination). In addition, the notion of comprehensive reparations prescribes policy integration at all levels (horizontal coordination). Finally, new and transitory processes bound to the implementation of the law are to be aligned with an existing bureaucracy, its rules and practices, and will ideally have a positive, transformative impact on them.

While this report cannot address the challenges resulting from Colombia's decentralisation model, it is clear that the Victims Law and its operationalisation have all but reduced existing complexities. High aspirations, an awareness of existing challenges and a commitment to address problems as they appear exist, as the body of evolving rules, policies and mechanisms designed to achieve coordination shows. Whether they provide adequate answers or simply over-tax existing capacities remains to be seen.

To mention just a few examples: there are problems related to the process of aligning old and new systems, e.g. the development of ordinary Territorial Development Plans and the new PATs – a problem that has been compounded by differing time lines. On that subject, a September 2015 decree on "Shared Responsibilities" organises, sequences and aligns planning duties at various levels of government, including the establishment of the abovementioned *tableros de control* (DPS, 2015). The decree also addresses some institutional competence issues that had come to the fore with the creation of a new coordinating agency – the Victims Unit – with offices across the country and implementation functions that partly overlap with those of the Ministry of the Interior.

Observers further report how the concept of policy integration provided for by mechanisms of inter-institutional coordination such as the SNARIV Executive Committee or the Transitional Justice Committees at the subnational level tend to clash with pre-existing logics of sectoral policymaking. Existing institutional incentive structures still seem to work against cooperation, as the example of ministries operating in isolation indicates.

If policy coordination is difficult at the national level, it is not surprising that the majority of municipalities are over-taxed by the need to formulate a coordinated policy response among local agents while liaisoning with the various national programmes. On paper, the Territorial Transitional Justice Committees seem like ideal spaces for policy integration. The Follow-up Commission claims, however, that it has not encountered a single good example of horizontal and vertical coordination during its field visits (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 558). Regional Attention and Reparations Centres are an important step forward in that they physically bring together all relevant state interlocutors and thereby simplify victims' access to the services to which they are entitled. Beyond counting on interlocutors in one space, the question of whether victims' expectations are fulfilled depend, however, on the capacity of the system and the interests of the respective agents to offer solutions that do not only perpetuate prior dependencies.

Policy solutions to structural problems require a creative, long-term and concerted approach. Considering the abovementioned shortcomings, it may come as no surprise that the Victims Law has so far generated only limited impact in this regard. According to a 2012 report issued by the offices of the Comptroller General, the Inspector General and the Ombudsperson, over 80% of the 2012 budget went to humanitarian aid, financial compensation and social services provision. This situation, the report argues, risks converting the policy into a "purely assistance-based model", as opposed to helping to facilitate victims' autonomy, e.g. by generating new income-earning opportunities (Contraloría et al., 2013: 10-11).

## Security

It is impossible to assess SNARIV's activities without bearing in mind that what in other parts of the world would be a typical post-conflict construction, in Colombia was conceived in the midst of the ongoing conflict. According to the Victims Unit, 206,504 people were forced to leave their homes in 2012 and 142,181 in 2013 (UARIV, 2014a). The human rights organisation Somos Defensores registered 96 attacks on human rights leaders between January and March 2014 (Programa Somos Defensores, 2014a), while 78 activists were killed in 2013 (Programa Somos Defensores, 2014b), indicating the limited capacity of the national government, including SNARIV, to effectively prevent attacks and protect social leaders.

This situation has had several implications for victims' participation and the way in which political differences are resolved on the ground. Firstly, while encountering an impressive level of resilience in many places, in others violence has resulted in silence. Secondly, the existence of armed guerrillas has served as an excuse to stigmatise victims' representatives, particularly those representing victims of state or paramilitary violence. Thirdly, victims' participation does not take place on a level playing field, nor are pro-victim policies, notably land restitution, uncontested propositions. Some powerful regional economic and political sectors, particularly those that benefitted from the expansion of the paramilitaries, oppose these policies. The numbers of activists killed since the implementation of the Victims Law is also tragic proof of the continuing proclivity to use violence to defend political and/or criminal interests, a tendency that the armed conflict has served to legitimise.

In this context, a number of Transitional Justice Committees confront victims' representatives with local authorities that not only oppose their cause, but maintain ties to armed actors. The resulting barriers of confidence and underlying power asymmetries greatly undermine cooperation towards concerted policies. The difficult dynamics may be best illustrated in the figure of the local ombudspeople (*personeros*). Present in all of Colombia's municipalities, these officials are not only in charge of taking victims' initial declarations. The Victims Law also tasks them with supporting the adequate functioning of the Victims' Tables and guaranteeing victims' participation in local Transitional Justice Committees. Many *personeros* have indeed become victims' advocates. Elected by municipal councils, they tend, however, to be aligned with the predominant political interest. Worse, a number of *personeros* have been convicted of having ties with paramilitaries.

According to the Follow-Up Commission:

> In Magdalena, Bolívar and Magdalena Medio, victim organisations and representatives that are members of the Victims' Table are in fear when meeting the mayor and even distrust some municipal ombudspeople, some of whom seem to be part of the mayor's office, as the Commission could confirm (Comisión de Seguimiento, 2014: 557).

## Towards a new peace infrastructure: lessons and recommendations

Should the government and the FARC reach a deal, the peace infrastructure to implement it will necessarily look different from SNARIV. An implementation system will have to cover a broader range of policy areas. At the same time peacemakers would be well advised to build on and in some way integrate the SNARIV experience, thereby using existing institutional capital. In this process it will be important to work on the shortcomings of the current system. SNARIV teaches a number of valuable lessons, particularly when it comes to the question of how to design a system that not only facilitates formal compliance, but also helps to change prevailing institutional and political dynamics in order to spur and sustain the transformative impact that a future peace agreement will aspire to have.

To start with, the degree of success of a future peace infrastructure will in great part be marked by the leadership and ownership behind it. While the agency of the president is key, SNARIV has also shown the importance of other authorities sharing both a narrative and a common priority. Among other things, this will depend on the extent to which those who will implement the peace agreement – whether governmental or non-governmental actors – are given a voice in developing both the system and related policies. In this process local actors and national agencies need to be addressed not only as advocates of their territories or respective portfolios, but also as interlocutors in designing a national model/policy. National government efforts in this direction have been timid and for now almost exclusively shouldered by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace (Pfeiffer, 2015). The October local elections represent a great challenge to align future subnational authorities and ensure the continuity of existing efforts to build ownership and leadership for post-conflict work in the regions.

Local ownership will also be marked by the degree of flexibility and autonomy that the system grants not only for the development of local agendas, but also for setting up cooperative spaces at the local level to negotiate, implement and monitor these agendas as part of a nationwide peace infrastructure. If peace is to be built based on local identities, needs and preferences – as the government's discourse on territorial peacebuilding suggests and many communities have claimed for a long time – this needs to be reflected in the peace infrastructure. Instead of imposing blueprint-management models across the country, the system could establish minimum standards and monitoring systems for local processes. If needed, external facilitators could provide support to the various deliberations on the ground. A more flexible and differentiated approach should also help to address the highly uneven level of governance capacities across the country.

High Commissioner Jaramillo's focus on new spaces for participation, deliberation and debate is highly appropriate. Yet SNARIV and other existing participatory mechanisms indicate the challenge of making these spaces legitimate and effective. Effectiveness will likely correlate with a clear distribution of, a clear distinction among, and a shared understanding of the various roles and functions; it will require both special capacities among all concerned and adequate resourcing. Accountability systems that link prospects of reputational damage and sanctions with positive incentives – e.g. by rewarding the degree and quality of community involvement in local project development – are key.

Whether cooperative spaces can effectively become vehicles for confidence-building will depend on whether individual participants experience the benefits of cooperation and learn to appreciate one another's contributions. This task will not become easier with the participation of demobilised ex-FARC combatants. It will require trusted leaders that can serve as mediators and increase the authority of the cooperative spaces. Creating an atmosphere in which none of the participants will need to feel threatened is a basic condition for confidence-building.

Developments of this kind are difficult to imagine in the context of current power relations and security conditions in many regions. To facilitate local discussions at eye level, communities and their representatives will need to be empowered. The end of an armed conflict that has served to legitimise the use of violence to settle political differences, as well as provisions on political participation in the peace agreement, provide a chance for changes in local political landscapes in this direction. A peace infrastructure could support such developments through

affirmative action provisions. Transformations on the ground will, however, encounter opposition and criminal allies will continue to abound beyond the eventual demobilisation of the guerrillas. Protecting social leaders should therefore be a high priority.

A peace infrastructure will also need to be designed in a way that its requirements do not over-tax local agents, but instead facilitate good management practices. SNARIV has shown how the important proposition of vertical and horizontal integration can generate counterproductive complexities. The success of integration will depend on the degree to which the new peace infrastructure takes into account and is woven into existing processes, logics and incentive structures, and manages to gradually transform deficits instead of creating parallel, partly competing systems. An overall coordination unit must be able to exert political leadership while not eclipsing other agents and their responsibilities.

In this context it is worth considering whether municipalities should be the main units for the development of local agendas and for policy implementation. Montes de María, the region where field research for this report was carried out, is only one of many examples of communities sharing an identity beyond municipal and departmental borders. This raises the question of how peacebuilding efforts and the related peace infrastructure can honour these alternative spaces and boundaries.

Finally, SNARIV also teaches the importance of carefully managing the expectations of all the actors involved. If attending to and providing reparations for 7.5 million victims is a gigantic undertaking, it looks less so if compared to the transformations a peace agreement is supposed to trigger. In the same way that the implementation of the peace agreement will have to be carefully sequenced, the infrastructure to sustain it will likely have to evolve gradually. Right from the start peacemakers should think about effective and legitimate feedback systems at all levels.

## Conclusion

Whether a deal between the government and the FARC will prepare the ground for lasting peace in the country will depend on many factors. Experiences in Colombia and abroad indicate the decisive impact and transformative potential of well-designed and legitimate implementation systems that institutionalise mechanisms for cooperation – so-called peace infrastructures. Colombia's SNARIV can rightly be considered both a central precedent for and a possible building block of a future peace infrastructure. Whatever the system's future role, four years of Victims Law implementation teach invaluable lessons.
If addressed, these lessons will help a future peace infrastructure to not only support formal compliance, but to effectively influence prevailing institutional and political dynamics, thereby becoming a true vehicle for building peace across the country.

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