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**Meanings and uses of the term “reconciliation” in the
Colombian Peace Dialogues: unveiling political
actions through discourse analysis**

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT

ACRONYMS

1	INTRODUCTION	7
1.1	Colombian conflict in a nutshell	8
1.2	Peace agreement with the FARC-EP	9
1.3	Research problem	11
1.4	Objectives and research questions	12
1.5	Justification of the study	13
1.6	Organization of the paper	13
2	METHODOLOGICAL CHOICES	14
2.1	Selection of relevant actors	14
2.2	Selection of relevant documents	16
2.3	Selection of analytical methods	17
2.4	Personal reflections on methodological choices	19
3	THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS	20
3.1	Approaches to reconciliation	20
3.2	Debates about reconciliation in Colombia	21
3.3	How the topic of reconciliation has been addressed institutionally?	24
4	THE SELF AND THE OTHER	28
4.1	Self – representation	28
4.2	How is the Other portrayed?	30
5	FRAMING RECONCILIATION	33
5.1	National government. Victims and former combatants as the protagonists	33
5.2	FARC-EP. Reconciliation as a goal: the old and the new Colombia	35
5.3	Civil society: the moment to talk about reconciliation has not come yet	37

6	RUPTURES AND CONTINUITIES: DIFFERENT VISIONS AROUND PEACE	40
7	CONCLUSIONS	43
	REFERENCES	45
	RELEVANT BIBLIOGRAPHY	50
	APPENDICES	56
	Appendix 1 Documents for analysis of each of the selected actors	56
	Appendix 2 Methodological steps	59

Abstract

This research paper relates the multiple visions of reconciliation of three key actors—FARC-EP, Government and Civil Society—in the negotiations of the Peace Agreement in Colombia from 2012 to 2016 with a past of war that defines them and defines the other in the midst of their grievances and with specific aspirations for the peace that must build.

After questioning the seemingly neutral character of the notion of reconciliation, it is obtained that the term is not devoid of political sense. On the contrary, it may reflect the most concrete aspirations and visions about peace in a context of post-agreement as the Colombian one.

Following a post-structuralist approach, I applied some methods of discourse analysis to trace the discursive configurations that had a place in the four years of negotiation of the Peace Agreement.

Apart from the unveiling of these varieties of possible ways to reconcile and therefore the existence of multiple peace(s), the research takes discourses as relevant ways to trace political strategies and make visible the construction of meanings, which is full of implications in the peacebuilding scenario.

Keywords

Colombia, reconciliation, discourse, peace, peace agreement, FARC-EP, national government, victims, conflict, discourse analysis, women, LGBTI, transitional justice.

Acronyms

ADO	Autodefensa Obrera [Workers Self-Defense]
ARN	Agencia para la Reincorporación y Normalización [Agency for the Reincorporation and Normalization]
CNMH	Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica [National Center of Historical Memory]
CNRR	Comisión Nacional de Reparación y Reconciliación [National Reparations and Reconciliation Commission]
CONPES	Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social [National Council for Economic and Social Policy]
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
ELN	Ejército de Liberación Nacional [National Liberation Army]
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación [Popular Liberation Army]
FARC-EP	Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria de Colombia – Ejército del Pueblo [Revolutionary Alternative Force of Colombia – People’s Army]
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
M-19	Movimiento 19 de Abril [April 19 Movement]
NGO’S	Non–Governmental Organizations
ONIC	Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia [National Indigenous Organization of Colombia]
PRT	Partido Revolucionario de Trabajadores [Revolutionary Workers' Party]
UARIV	Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a Víctimas [Unit for Attention and Integral Reparation for Victims]
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Meanings and uses of the term “reconciliation” in the Colombian Peace Dialogues

Unveiling political actions through discourse analysis

1 Introduction

I am a Colombian citizen who grew up far away from the political violence of my country as I was raised in the middle of the city during the 90s. During these years, I always heard many stories about the great ghost of the guerrilla FARC-EP, and a lack of security that I did not fully understand.

Today, it is claimed that the signing of the Peace Agreements between the Colombian Government and the FARC-EP guerrilla in November 2016 ushered the overcoming of the war, but when I look in retrospective, I still do not have a definitive understanding of the conflict: its complexities, its dominant narratives, and its silences. Instead, nowadays, the keyword is peace. There have been many actors who have talked about peace, and have linked it to many different concepts like justice, reconciliation, reparation, etc.

However, many questions still remain: if different actors hold and defend different and opposed ideas about the conflict and about the desired peace and reconciliation, what kind of future are they going to build together? If our ideas inform our actions, and the concept of reconciliation is, indeed, very different in every case, what kind of political actions can we then take together as part of a peace-building project in Colombia? It is this concern for the future of peace in Colombia and the strategies that can bring it about that inspired me to analyze the ways in which three crucial actors of conflict and peace – the government, the FARC-EP, and the civilian movements – understand reconciliation.

Why reconciliation? Under the Colombian Peace Agreements, the former members of the FARC-EP are required to go back to their places of origin. These are often the same places where they acted as combatants, but now they have a whole new different role: this time the rules are set by the State and not by themselves. This process implies the creation of new daily ways of living and coexisting with the others. As Broneus notes “since attitudes and behaviors do not change from genocidal to collegial at the moment of a declaration of peace, [...] the need for reconciliation is profound” (Bronéus 2008:11).

Furthermore, in the Colombian case, the FARC-EP is now a political party. This means that they share a political space in the system of participation mediated by the State. Thus, if forged with less antagonism than in the past, and with an orientation towards peaceful coexistence, these new relationships have a potential to prevent the risk of re-lapse into the conflict and to build a lasting peace.

I open this exploration with a brief information section about the Armed Conflict and the Peace Dialogues in Colombia, followed by the main concerns that guide this research.

1.1 Colombian conflict in a nutshell

There is no academic consensus about the causes that gave rise to the Colombian Conflict, its temporality, or its original culprits (González 2004: 11). Nevertheless, and as an initial overview, this research builds its argumentative line based on a particular view: the idea that this war is rooted in historical and dominant inequalities since colonial times, pending agrarian struggles, and the total falsehood of democratic participation that increased the phenomena of exclusion (Pizarro 2015:14).

This set of disturbances and inequities was soon transformed into an armed struggle, initially amongst guerrillas and agents of the State, but corroded for more than sixty years in terms of violence repertoires, participating actors and affected populations.

Paradoxically, the perceptions about the inceptive causes of this conflict have also changed in time and do not determine its continuity as a whole. Thus, it is necessary to recognize the “profitability of the specific economics that provide the financial resources for armed groups and allow them to continue operating” (Sánchez and del Mar Palau 2006 as cited by Guío 2017: 9), and also the existence of a distinct violence configuration: a high frequency and low intensity strategy. This means the execution of many small actions at a local level with little resonance at a national level, which in addition to strongly impacting the regions, was also part of the invisibility strategies used by the armed actors to ensure the conflict’s sustainability in time (CNMH 2013: 42).

The attempts to put an end to the Conflict were varied, came from diverse actors (State and non-State related), and had equally different results. However, in November of 2016, after four years of negotiations, the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace between the FARC-EP guerrilla and the Government of Juan Manuel Santos materialized. The time of this analysis is precisely that historical moment.

Opinions held around this milestone are varied. For some sectors, which in general defend a military solution to the conflict and portrait the FARC-EP as the greater evil of Colombia, this is an unacceptable agreement (Gómez 2017: 243). For others, especially within the Santos Government, the Agreement means the termination of the Armed Conflict and a direct step towards achieving peace.

Personally, I subscribe to a nuanced position. One that recognizes the importance of achieving a Peace Agreement that can guarantee the transit of the FARC-EP from armed group to political actor, but that, nevertheless, also reaffirms that an agreement is not necessarily the end of the conflict.

It is due to this cautious and multidimensional perception, which considers other conflicts, actors, and dynamics in force that this document refers to Colombia being in a post-agreement stage, but not in a post-conflict stage.

This investigation analyses the discursive configurations of three actors (the FARC-EP, the Colombian National Government, and an external group, understood in this work as Civil Society, and composed of two subgroups: Victims' Organizations and LGBTI and Women's Organizations) around the topic of reconciliation during the four years of negotiations prior to the reaching of the Peace Agreement.

This perspective is relevant due to the great disparity of perceptions around reconciliation in the Colombian Conflict. At least initially, perceptions and levels of rejection of the action of guerrillas on the one side, and paramilitaries, on the other side, are very different, as the first ones were historically portrayed as the main source of violence in Colombia, and the second ones treated with more tolerance (García 2012: 13). These phenomena were soon complemented by the enormous rural and urban gap, and the, consequently, equally huge economic inequality. Ironically, despite the fact that a larger segment of Colombian population lives in rural areas (where violence occurs predominantly), it is in urban areas (that have been affected by conflict to a much lesser extent) where peace, war and its end are defined.

Therefore, these factors are a way of problematizing the notion of "national reconciliation", since it is a multidimensional matter: the question remains as how to recompose or compose a society.

1.2 Peace agreement with the FARC-EP

The current framework to talk about reconciliation is determined by the six points of the agenda discussed and signed between the FARC-EP and the Government on August 2012.

These six points (Integral Agricultural Development Policy; Political Participation; Ending of the Conflict; Solution to the Problem of Illicit Drugs; Victims; and Implementation, Verification and Endorsement) would be negotiated for four years until the Agreement was signed in its first version on September 2016 in Cartagena. Then it was slightly modified to meet proposals from sectors that did not endorse it, after a referendum held in October of that same year. Finally, a final version was achieved, which was signed on November 24 of 2016 in Bogotá, and is currently in force.

This agreement was not the result solely of a four years discussion. On the contrary, "it has been in the making for decades, and is in fact the outcome of a history of initiatives related to the Colombian state's quest for peace, in part through several peace negotiations" (Diaz 2018a: 250). However, the process of the Agreement did have fundamental differences with other previous initiatives that made it possible to reach the successful demobilization of the FARC-EP as a guerrilla. Ruptures such as concrete and realistic points in the

agenda, the limitation in time, and some practicalities like the principle of “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed” (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2014: *no page*).

At a conceptual and theoretical level, two issues regarding the Agreement are relevant for the present investigation: the centrality of the victims in the process, a novel phenomenon in regards to the developments of Transitional Justice in the country, and the inclusion of harmonic elements of Retributive and Restorative Justice.

Regarding the victims, “the framework includes clauses that are oriented towards a victim-focused justice, rather than functioning as a simple punitive device” (Diaz Pabon 2018b: 3). Regarding the Process, the promotion of the participation of civil society was an attempt to shield and legitimize the peace dialogues. There were initiatives such as the reception of electronic proposals related to items on the agenda; the organization of three discussion forums in which the civil society and the academia could participate (Brett 2017: 14); and the invitation of five delegations of victims to Havana to talk with the negotiators.

To create the delegations, the UNDP, The National University of Colombia, and the Church selected a group of people to represent victims and civilians —soldiers, businessmen, trade unionists, religious figures, academics, journalists and ordinary people—. The group was made up of people who had been affected by the Military Forces and the FARC-EP, as well as by paramilitaries, the ELN guerrilla, criminal bands and there was even a case of a community affected by mining multinationals (Verdad Abierta 2014: *no page*).

Their participation brought up proposals about the victims’ expectations and their needs for peacebuilding, as well as around the issue of reconciliation.

With regards to the conceptions of justice, the Peace Agreement seeks to overcome the truth and justice dichotomies and contradictions. Especially, the justice aspects of the Agreement inform the developments of point 5, centered on the Victims of Conflict. For this point, the Government and FARC-EP, organized the creation of fundamental measures and institutions that aim to overcome the conflict, contribute to the truth and reparation, and build peace. Among these institutions are the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the judicial organism of Transitional Justice, the Truth Clarification Commission, and the Special Unit for Finding Missing Persons (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2014: 15-18)

The six points of the Agreement are interconnected and are especially framed under objectives that aim towards a process of national reconciliation. This term, “reconciliation”, is used frequently in the description of concrete measures such as the creation of a National Council for Reconciliation and Coexistence, established in point 2, on Political Participation and the Creation of a Public Policy for Reconciliation. Moreover, the term is used throughout the Peace Agreement document, and it was also common to hear it in the pronouncements of the negotiating actors during the four years of dialogues.

However, the question remains as to what do the negotiators, ex-combatants, politicians and civil society understand when they use the word “reconciliation” and how is it linked to concepts such as peace and justice used by various protagonists of the Process?

1.3 Research problem

With these initial ideas in mind, my interest about this topic started with noticing that in Colombia, especially during the Peace Process and after the signing of the Final Peace Agreement, the notion of reconciliation started to be prominent. The most frequent references oscillated, mainly, between the dimensions of individual notions linked to the concept of forgiveness and religious perspectives, and those which involved only the actions of two groups: victims and victimizers.

However, this is a paradoxical situation since not all the population can relate to those two conditions. So when the references about reconciliation are conceptualized as “national”, intuitively one could think that all the Colombian population is grouped but this is not the case, since not everybody have a religious perspective or is part of the groups of victims or victimizers.

Of course, these are not the only conceptualizations. But following the idea of several academic opinions that affirm the lack of consensus in defining reconciliation and the mechanisms to achieve it (Méndez 2011, Bloomfield 2003), it is possible that these quasi-homogenous understandings are leaving other positions unnoticed.

For now, in this post-agreement phase, the ways to implement the dispositions that were consigned in the document, which include the goal of achieving reconciliation, are starting to materialize. Reconciliation is still a major aspiration, and we still lack the explicit clarity of its meanings and the ways to achieve it. This brings us to the importance of un-veiling those meanings and noticing the debates that arose in the four years of conversations. This is important because the guidelines given by the Final Peace Agreement on how to enter a post-conflict phase cannot be reductionist and cannot ignore the different ways in which the actors experienced the war. Each new peace effort must be consistent with the needs and aspirations of all the actors and the first step is to make them visible.

In this sense, this research specifically addresses the competing discourses on the subject of reconciliation in Colombia and especially the elements that were part of the process to achieve the Final Peace Agreement with the FARC-EP. Taking into account that reality is shaped and interpreted by social actors (Frerks and Klem 2005: 3) this research aims to create awareness of the discursive practices around the concept of reconciliation, that were used during the peace talks in Colombia between 2012 and 2016.¹

¹ Some useful material on the Dialogues in Havana: Matanock and Garbiras-Diaz (2018); Diaz Pabón (2018).

The aim is, then, to discover the different positions about reconciliation that were in conflict during the four years of the Peace Process and to understand how this abstract concept was conceived. But the following pages are not only about reconciliation. There is an assumption that when framing this notion, there are important particularities of the ideas that each of the actors has about the conflict and the possibilities to construct peace.

1.4 Objectives and research questions

Objectives

- To deconstruct the variety of notions of reconciliation and make visible the multiplicity of options from which it is possible to approach reconciliation, so that more than a rhetorical element, it can become an achievable goal for societies that seek to overcome a conflict.
- To analyze how the term reconciliation is used by antagonistic actors and how, through these rhetorical uses, these actors offer different visions of peace in the post-agreement context in Colombia. In doing so, to contribute to the visibility of these political differences, and to the understanding that they may lead to very different strategies of post-conflict development and peace-building in Colombia.
- To contribute to the body of knowledge about reconciliation and peace in Colombia, and in general, and enrich existing debates about relationships between the two.

Main research question

What are the different discursive configurations on reconciliation embedded in the Peace Dialogues in Havana, and in what ways they configure political positions on peace in Colombia?

Sub Questions

- What are specific conceptualizations of reconciliation proposed by the each of the three selected actors in the Final Agreement, namely the Government, the FARC -EP and the groups of victims?
- What are the differences and similarities in their conceptualizations of reconciliation?
- What concept of peace is assumed in, and comes out of, the concepts of reconciliation of the three selected actors?

1.5 Justification of the study

The signing of the Final Peace Agreement does not mean an immediate solution of the internal conflict in Colombia. The multiple victimizations and damages that Colombians experienced, show that there are several roads to travel before reaching a post-conflict phase and that a large effort is needed, before being able to talk about national reconciliation. This is a complicated term that includes dilemmas such as the creation of a nation, the recognition of the existence of multiple identities within the actors in the conflict, and the construction of a common vision of the future. In this sense, this research is an opportunity to focus on the understanding of the multiplicity of debates that arose in the context of the post-agreement phase.

Additionally, this study is a valid contribution in the effort to clarify one of the elements that is the foundation of Transitional Justice theory: reconciliation as the result of the overcoming the conflict (Fischer 2011: 414 - 421). The meanings and uses of the word reconciliation have been taken for granted. However, studying the Colombian case will contribute theoretically to understanding that is not a neutral term, but one with political consequences.

1.6 Organization of the paper

After this introductory material, Chapter 2 explains the methodological choices that were taken to develop the research. Chapter 3 talks about the debates of the theory of reconciliation, reflected to the Colombian case. Chapter 4 is the beginning of the analysis with the conceptualization of the positions of the “self” and the “other” by the selected actors. Chapter 5 puts the focus in the different conceptualizations about reconciliation and Chapter 6 starts to present concluding remarks about the implication that this conceptualizations have for the ideas of peace. Last conclusions and summary are included in Chapter 7.

2 Methodological choices

2.1 Selection of relevant actors

The Final Peace Agreement is the result of the political will of Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia from 2010 to 2018, and Rodrigo Londoño, alias Timochenko, Head of the FARC-EP. This means that the Government and the former guerrilla are the protagonists of the Peace Process. But, in addition, from the beginning, it was thought, at least formally, that the Peace Process would be a space where Colombians could participate (Rodríguez 2015: 60). That is why it is relevant to consider the inputs of two additional actors, grouped for analytical purposes in a single one.

The **FARC-EP** was a guerrilla that emerged in the late 1930s, product of the encounter of peasant self-defence movements (born out of the Liberal-Conservative civil war), and the ideas of the Communist Party (which was excluded from a bipartisan political agreement, signed at the end of the 1950s, known as the National Front). This movement (the influence of the Communist ideas in peasant associations) was accentuated in the peripheral areas of the country, in the so-called “Independent Republics”. After the Army's attempts to fight them, in 1964 the Southern Bloc guerrillas were formed and then baptized in 1966 as FARC under the announcement that they were beginning a prolonged war to obtain power (UNDP 2003: 26). In 1982, this group declared itself “Popular Army” [Ejército del Pueblo] at the service of the socialist revolution and was renamed FARC-EP (Parra 2015: 10).

The FARC-EP is responsible for repertoires of violence that strongly affected the civilian population (CNMH 2013: 34-37). But from the beginning, they adopted a strong political and ideological project that changed with the events of the world order (UNDP 2003: 37 -39) and that allowed them to reach Havana and other previous attempts of negotiation. They are characterized for their clear proposals, which attempted to modify the Colombian political regime.

About the **Government**, after coming to the Presidency in 2010 as the successor of Álvaro Uribe, defender of a military solution to the conflict and a strong opponent to dialoguing with FARC-EP, Juan Manuel Santos opted for a less radical position. From the first moments of his government he pointed out “the possibility of starting a dialogue with the guerrillas, as long as they show their willingness to negotiate” (Parra 2015: 13). At first, the FARC-EP continued with their military activities to which the Government responded causing important casualties, among which is that of Alfonso Cano, former head of the FARC-EP. Later, the new leader of this armed group, alias Timochenko, stated again the possibility of engaging in dialogues with Santos (Wills-Otero and Benito, 2012 as cited by Parra 2015: 14). This would end, as we now know, with the signing of the Peace Agreement.

The group of actors that for analytical purposes will be called “Civil Society” is made up by Women’s and LGBTI organizations, and a group of sixty victims. This group participated at different levels in the Havana Peace Talks: The women’s and LGBTI organizations played a large role in the positioning of a gender approach through the whole text. The sixty victims who were selected to go to Havana to meet with the negotiating teams, participated and discussed the Point 5 of the Final Peace Agreement. The later actors have a special relevance in making visible the debates on the topic of reconciliation. Only in 2011, with the creation of Law 1448 of 2011, this population was officially recognized as actors affected by the conflict. In the past, they were signalled by all the sides (State, guerrillas and paramilitaries) as collaborators or informants, and they were immersed in dynamics where they had to coexist and resist the conflict, practically in silence (Wills 2015: 37-38).

With this new legal framework, victims came to prominence and were mentioned in all subjects that concerned peacebuilding. The Havana Peace Talks were no exception. From the beginning, the FARC-EP and the Government mentioned that victims would be in the center of what was agreed and that they would be taken into account. Although the level of participation is debatable, the inputs that victims brought to Havana elucidated positions on the conflict and on the ideal of peacebuilding in the years to come. It is interesting to contrast these ideas with the most visible positions of the two other negotiating groups.

However, because the victims are not a single group, the dynamics of their participation in Havana did not allow to truly make visible their multiple needs and proposals, taking into account the specific conditions of the victimizing actors and the damage inflicted. This is why, as the second elected actor to study reconciliation in a more detailed manner, I chose the LGBTI and women's organizations.

Initially, the level of participation was different. Victims acceded to Havana when the negotiators were about to start the conversations around Point 5 (Victim’s rights) in June 2014. They emitted a joint communique expressing the will to include them directly in this period, and asked the organizers (UNDP, National University of Colombia and Churh) to create the group of 60 people to be listened in the Table of Negotiation (Brett 2017: 17). Differently, women and LGBTI groups started to be prominent since 2013 when the advances in the first three points were published - integral agrarian development, political participation and solution to the problem of illicit drugs - and they did not feel represent-ed. (Verdad Abierta 2016: *no page*) Thus, the Subcommittee on Gender was created in 2014 with the intention of reviewing the advances in the Agreement so far and incorporating the gender approach, as well as the points that would continue to be negotiated until 2016 (Colombia 2020 Newspaper 2016: *no page*). This allowed them to show their specificities as a group and to engage more with all the debates in the middle of the discussions.

As mentioned before, I will refer to this third actor as “Civil Society” to denote that they are a differentiated group from the main negotiators. It is also

an analytical choice to group them and to contrast their opinion with the most outstanding positions of the Government and the FARC-EP.

This classification does not mean that all the civil society and all the actors outside the Government and the FARC-EP are represented in the insights that victims and women's and LGBTI organizations brought. On the contrary, the election to consider them, and not to consider others, is partly practical due to the availability of the material to analyze, but also, it is partly political, in the sense that I am a woman who is aware of the oppressive structural conditions that the conflict and the political regime have caused. Additionally, I have had the possibility to be close to a big and different spectrum of victims and one of the most frequent claims that they make is the right to have a voice of their own.

2.2 Selection of relevant documents

I decided to use secondary data and to apply the method of discourse analysis. Discourse is understood as “an extended stretch of language within a particular intellectual frame-work” (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 3-4).

This method allows studying how the discourses evolve, to elucidate the complexities and the possible overlaps between the positions of the social actors. It can also provide a moral framework and more clarification about grievances and power relations (Frerks and Klem 2005: 38 -44).

Similarly, it allows us to focus on the meanings and how they are constructed, conveyed and used. This is especially useful in concepts such as “reconciliation”, that contain a broad web of meanings and uses, but that, at the same time, lack clarity. Thus, with this approach, the intention is to “draw out what is connoted in what has been denoted” (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 3) and, what I draw from this approximation, is the possibility to peruse beyond what the actors stated and to have the possibility to interpret under the light of deeper political positions.

The material analyzed comes from the “Library of the Peace Process with the FARC-EP” launched in July 2018 by the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, a state institution (Office of the High Commissioner for Peace 2018: *no page*). This is a library composed by eleven volumes that gather the details of the negotiation process, the debates that took place, and the pronouncements of key actors of the Government and the FARC-EP. It also contains documents that regard all of the points of the agenda.

For the purposes of this research, this Library is a useful database for tracing different conceptualizations of reconciliation that the involved actors brought to the Negotiation Table, since there are internal discussion documents, minutes of preparatory meetings, and testimonies about the events in which actors participated. In fact, many of those documents had remained unknown by the public opinion until then (Santos 2018: *no page*). Although the use of secondary sources has the complication of selecting a few sources among a sea of relevant information, established criteria helped to make the

chosen discourses diverse and representative. Still, the discussions among the selected actors and topics could be much wider than what is possible to summarize with this kind of data. Empirical research with these and other groups would have brought broader insights, and the possibility to double check the categorizations that will be suggested of the actors and their discourses, but this was not possible due to time and financial constraints.

A first review of the documents and speeches resulted in sixty-one documents in which it would be possible to discover positions about reconciliation. However, the amount of material exceeded the scope of this research, so in order to be rigorous in the application of the methodology, it was necessary to define criteria for making the final selection of documents to analyze.

I established four criteria for choosing the final documents:

- **Relevance:** The inclusion of content concerning directly the topic of reconciliation or some of the words commonly used as synonyms, such as coexistence or connivance.
- **Time span:** Discourses written during the time of the Peace Talks with FARC-EP, that is from November 2012 until November 2016.
- **Traceability:** Being able to check and follow the possible ruptures or continuities in the positions of each actor. For this, it was necessary to choose documents from the first moments of the Peace Talks and others that were written when the Final Peace Agreement was about to be reached.
- **Representativeness:** The selected texts should represent the position of the selected actors. This was related to the authority of the actor in the matter and in the specific context.

Hence, the final selection of the documents to analyze was composed by eight statements from the FARC-EP, six declarations from the Government Delegation, and ten documents from civil society organizations. Five of them were written by victim's organizations and the remaining five by women and LGBTI. A detailed list can be found in the Appendix. The documents are organized in the Appendix in alphabetical lists and this is the way used in the following chapters to reference the findings.

2.3 Selection of analytical methods

I chose to use a theoretical approach from a post-structural viewpoint due to a concern about the way that discourses are socially constructed. Specifically, I was interested in how the discourses around reconciliation in Colombia can (re)produce power relations and visions of different kinds of peace.

With this idea in mind, I adapted some tools/questions developed by poststructuralist authors who tried to respond to the criticism of the lack of method of this approach and applied concrete research techniques to answer specific questions (see Appendix 2).

Thus, the steps to follow are organized under three stages: a) Construction of the Self and the Other, b) Framing analysis, and c) Comparison of the actors' positions. What I did was first, to read each of the selected documents under the light of each of the queries that will be presented below and that belong to one of the three stages. Second, with the inputs that each speech gave me, to construct a more complex panorama where it was possible to identify the visions of each actor on reconciliation, but also to elucidate the conceptions that each one has about the war and the future of peacebuilding.

a) The topic of construction of **“Self” and “Other”** takes into account the work of Hansen (2006) who used the example of Western engagement with the Bosnian war to show how policy choices are justified by the definition of “who we are (and who is part of ‘us’), who the others are, and towards whom we have moral responsibility” (Hansen 2006: 216). For this reason, my first step was to explore the notion of “Self” and “Other” constructed by the Government, the FARC-EP, and Civil Society at a spatial, temporal and ethical level (Hansen 2006: 37). Since my guiding theoretical principle is that there is no single truth about the conflict and that the roles of the actors involved are complex, diffused and a field in dispute, the construction of “Self” and “Other” is a logical starting point in order to unveil visions around the future of peacebuilding.

b) After establishing the discourses of “Self” and “Other”, the analysis focuses on a **framing approach**: who and what was included and excluded in the competing visions around the concept of reconciliation (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 8). The use of framing analysis allows us to understand how and why there are different meanings and uses of one concept, when applied to different contexts by different actors. I took as referent the question of Verloo and Lombardo (who applied it to gender equality policy) “What is actually hidden under the carpet...” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 41) and explored what was made visible and what was hidden in the conceptualization of reconciliation for each of the actors. I also considered the arguments, core values, beliefs and affects that lie behind the conceptualizations of reconciliation. Thus, with the idea of inquiring about the issues that are not explicitly expressed in the visions of the topic, I reflect on the differences that underlie the actors' meanings of reconciliation (Schmidt 2006: 301; Yanow 2000 as cited by Goodwin 2006: 169).

Since meanings are always depending on the context, it was necessary to question what was highlighted and what was minimized when different actors conceptualized the phenomenon in a certain way. I looked for the answers using as guidance the work of Papacharissi and Oliveira (2008) who state that this is important, in the sense that “a frame then becomes the central idea around which attributes of events are organized within individual schemata” (Papacharissi and Oliveira 2008: 54).

c) The final stage of the analysis was a **comparison** of the different ways in which the chosen actors conceived and expressed their positions around the subject of reconciliation. With the aim of understanding the implication that those different meanings/interpretations could have in actions regarding peace,

I “identified the points of conflict (about reconciliation) and their conceptual sources (affective, cognitive, and/or moral) that reflect different interpretations by different communities” (Yanow 2011: 21) and related them with the visions of peace that those specific discourses present. Finally, I applied these tools following a “principle of specificity” (Foucault 1970: 67), which made me aware of not trying to fit the findings of the discursive forms “into a play of preexisting significations” (Hook 2007: 124). Rather, the underlying idea was to question and trace the process of establishment of different discourses under the combination of genealogical and critical components.

The genealogical component “applies to the series where discourse is formed and tries to grasp it in its power to constitute domains of objects in respect to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions” (Foucault 1970: 73), while the critical portion is the analysis of “the systems that envelop discourse, and tries to identify these principles of sanctioning, exclusion and scarcity” (Foucault 1970: 73). The genealogical aspect of the analysis is presented in the tracing of the treatment of reconciliation. The critical aspect of the analysis implies reflections on the first two stages—i.e. construction of the notions of “Self” and “Other”, and inclusions/exclusions in the framing of the main concept of the reconciliation.

2.4 Personal reflections on methodological choices

As a concluding remark, I must recognize that despite my intention of taking as distant a position as possible towards all three actors, my personal readings and my own positions about each of them have been constantly present.

It is difficult to be a cool-headed observer and to defend the positions of the FARC-EP on the search for justice and peace—even though they explicitly point to the structural causes of the conflict, which I also find important—when I am aware of the death and damage that they caused. Whatever their starting position was, in the end they contributed to the conditions of inequality and marginality for the rural and poor majority of Colombians. It is also difficult to defend the State’s action at all costs because, historically, there is a huge responsibility for the continuity of the conflict and because I have seen the deficiencies by which social demands for justice are processed. Finally, I also do not believe that all the selected statements of civil society organizations represent in a holistic way the sufferings and expectations about the end of the conflict and the eventual peace of many different social groups.

However, as Francisco de Roux (2018) would say, peace is imperfect and defending it is an act of audacity. So I also speak as a defender of all the attempts to create a less violent country. I think about the ones that have resisted against the bullets and the apathy, the ones who have political visions of a more inclusive country, and the ones who dedicate their lives, from many different fields, to trying to heal the wounds made by violence. In that sense, I am also a defender of the Peace Process with the FARC-EP and I write with the feeling that Colombia needs a change and that this Peace Agreement may be the start of it.

3 Theoretical considerations

3.1 Approaches to reconciliation

The theoretical approaches around the notion of reconciliation usually start by claiming the multiple disagreements about its meaning (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 518, Bloomfield 2003: 10, Pankhurst 1999: 240) and its relation to forgiveness, truth, justice, good-will or development.

The disagreements are not only about the definition; the philosophical considerations, the actors that participate in it, the approach and even the discipline from where the conceptualizations come are also different.

Hence, rather than presenting this broad network of theorizations, it is useful to present some of the most visible debates around the concept and the disciplines from where the discussions are produced and then, to bring up a general notion of what is understood as reconciliation for the purpose of this research.

Debates within the legal discipline bring up dilemmas of juridical measures assumed to bring justice vs. reconciliation (Sánchez and Uprimny 2014). At the local level, in order to enter towards a post-conflict stage, it is necessary to find the balance between measures that foster combatants' confidence they can abandon their weapons and those that defend the rights of the victims (Sánchez and Uprimny 2014: *no page*). At the global level, War Crimes Tribunals have been criticized that they do not necessarily produce deep societal transformations and "could complicate reconciliation and be unable to address the societal cleavages left in the wake of massive human rights abuses" (Prager 2003: 2).

Talking about political reconciliation, there are two outstanding discussions. One is the treatment of reconciliation as a goal. There the dilemma is a maximalist approximation (that is not so realistic to achieve), or a process of small transformations oriented to big changes of attitudes towards the former enemy (Bloomfield 2003; Rettberg et al, 2016; Mendez 2011). Another is the kind of relation that could be established after reconciliation efforts. Some authors highlight the search of "national reconciliation" (Gibson, 2004), which can be problematic and totalizing if there is no recognition of different ways to address a violent past. Yet others suggest a more modest version of coexistence and dealing with differences under democratic ways rather than war-like solutions. (De Greiff 2008: 134-136; Uprimny, 2014).

There are many more dilemmas and reconciliation can be understood from the psychological or religious perspectives (López 2013: 87-89; Unigarro 2016: 3-4), but is important to make visible the difficulty of watching the phenomena under a single panorama.

However, and despite this multiplicity of possibilities, it is useful to have certain reference in common. So in this research, reconciliation is understood as “a multi-level process of restoring broken relationships among individuals or groups of a given society, whereby they find ways to deal with a violent past and envision the goal of building a cohesive society in which their rights are acknowledged and respected” (Tejada 2018: 152. Based in Gloppen, 2005; Lederach, 1997; Philpott, 2015; Hayner, 2001).

This understanding points to some of the contextual elements of the current Colombian scenario: It involves recognition of mutual suffering, political will to restore the way to relate with the others (which was stated symbolically with the intention of negotiate in Havana), the conceptualization of reconciliation as a process rather than something that happens in a particular time, and additionally, the character of “multi-level” opens the debate to think about reconciliation beyond the relationship between former combatants and no-combatants. In that sense, this definition has the potential to include some of the debates of this research while giving certain concreteness.

3.2 Debates about reconciliation in Colombia

When approaching the topic of reconciliation in Colombia, a variety of approaches also come up. Networks of peacebuilding actors who come from different backgrounds, from international cooperation sector to the victims organizations, use the term reconciliation. In the case of the academic, policy and media literature, the phenomenon is not so different: the abundance of articles and policy recommendations using the term is overwhelming. This gives a clue about two simultaneous things: (a) the relevance of the topic and its relation with the goal of achieving peace, and (b) the multiple possibilities of its use by very different actors.

Taking into account that this research aims to problematize the notion of reconciliation, it is useful to make the distinction between two approaches, one that considers reconciliation as an achievable practice and the other that treats reconciliation as a discourse.

Reconciliation as an achievable practice

The dominant use under this categorization takes reconciliation as an individual notion linked to forgiveness and morality (López 2013: 85; Narvaez 2017: 12). Under this approximation, the main conceptualization of reconciliation is as a phenomenon performed in an individual way. There is a constant qualifying of the conflict in Colombia as a chain of hate. Therefore, reconciliation can be achieved through individual transformations, since in the roots of the violence, there is the revenge, “final result of rages and grudges accumulated, distributed and sustained politically and culturally” (Narvaez 2017: 37) [Translation by AA].²

² Quotes translated by the author from Spanish to English.

This vision can be also applied to the collective level. After this recognition of individual processes and grievances, there is the proposal of a citizen culture of forgiveness and reconciliation, in which forgiveness is a turn from revenge to compassion and at the same time is the exercise of democracy and of respect for the dignity of the other. Thus, reconciliation is the recovery of trust by creating new conditions that guide the relationships. (Narvaez 2017: 30) In this new supposed relationship, there are visions that additionally defend the theory of moral sentiments “to show the importance of a sense of humanity in the moral evaluation of the violent acts suffered by Colombian communities” (López 2013: 89). Under this perspective, the eventual reconciliation process in Colombia should pass through a liberating experience of forgiveness by the victims and solidarity by civil society (López 2013: 91).

This set of visions around reconciliation where forgiveness is the key, has roots in the religious perspective. There are certain values and principles from the Christian tradition, such as the repentance, the work for future rewards and the love, that usually come to mind when talking about reconciliation (Donado 2015: 3). Although this research does not support this perspective, it is necessary to make it visible as the church has participated actively as mediator in the attempts to achieve a negotiated peace with the armed groups and the peace process with the FARC-EP was not an exception.

The second treatment under the notion of reconciliation as an achievable practice is to consider it as a process of reincorporation of former members of armed groups to the society through Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) initiatives. Under this conception, there is an implicit division of perpetrators/victims in the sense of them/us, so most of the literature calls for new interpretations of the prejudices around former members of armed groups, in order to overcome the negative identities and walk towards reconciliation (Sánchez 2017: 222-223). However, it does not necessarily mean that DDR provisions need to be in conflict with the traditional demands of Transitional Justice. Recently, there has been the argument that some preventive efforts of recidivism through DDR policies can contribute to the goal of reconciliation in the sense that the reconstruction of social fabric through local, community-based processes “has the potential to discourage former combatants from re-engaging in criminality” (Acosta-Navas and Reyes 2018: 117).

Within this category, there is also room for other initiatives, such as concrete policies aimed to achieve reconciliation as a final goal, such as institutional strategies that different Colombian governments have started, and for other kind of activities, predominantly coming from the private sector (Organization “Reconciliation Colombia”) or the international cooperation agencies (USAID, Programme of Alliances for Reconciliation) that promote collective initiatives, support to productive projects, strategies of employment in the rural areas of the country or capacity -building to organizations, under the assumption that it is possible to create a change in the relations after joint works and rebuilding of trust.

Reconciliation as a discourse

The other current line of thought, which this research subscribes to, is addressing reconciliation as a discourse, with intention to investigate meanings and perceptions around the concept. Again, the approaches are diverse and sometimes contradictory. Salazar (2011: 3) mentions that there is no particular definition of reconciliation that can be considered dominant among different sectors that act in the field of conflict transformation, but there are three main levels of relations that need to be considered. The first one is reconciliation at an interpersonal level, which puts forgiveness from the victims and repentance from the perpetrators as a general condition (Salazar 2011: 4). The second one thinks reconciliation as a collective process with a territorial focus on the regions that were most affected by the conflict and reflecting discussions of the private sector and NGOs (Salazar 2011: 4). And the third approach is the concept of political reconciliation that lacks a fixed definition and is expressed mostly by officials of governmental institutions (Salazar 2011: 5).

Taylor and Amezcua-Castro (2016: 90) point out that after a research with the inhabitants of the Caribbean region of Colombia, civil society gives priority to reconstructing the truth and bringing perpetrators to justice as essential aspects of reconciliation, leaving aside notions of mercy and forgiveness. This is complemented with the work of Castrillón-Guerrero et al. (2018: 96) that evaluates perceptions about reconciliation of 68 victims of forced displacement and concludes that in the context of an armed conflict, justice (restorative and/or distributive) is a requirement for reconciliation.

Firchow (2017) studied the link between reparation of victims and reconciliation “through a comparative matched-case research study of two Colombian communities that are demographically similar and have similar histories of violence, but starkly different levels of reparations” (Firchow 2017: 318). The results show that in both communities there are low levels of reconciliation, which implies that reparation is not the key element. When looking at a broader panorama of how reconciliation is understood, there is affirmation towards the conceptualization as “an axis that traverses implementation of transitional justice mechanisms, reconstruction of social fabric and consolidation of participatory democracy” (Bueno 2017: 3). Others criticize this as too broad and include concrete elements such as people’s wellbeing and their relations with others in their immediate context (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 531)

Finally, there have been academic contributions that problematize the lack of questions before the indiscriminate use of reconciliation as a concrete element. These contributions question, for example, the ideological role of the Colombian newspapers in positioning reconciliation under two purposes: “the first is forgiveness as a necessary repentance to heal wounds and the second, is social or community work as the way to approach communities where victims and non-victims coexist” (Díaz Cabrejo and Barragán 2016: 54) [Translation AA].

The previous review shows that reconciliation has been studied from very different perspectives, which contribute to the debate around its possible meanings. This review also gives relevance to the request to analyze its uses in transcendental political processes of the country, such as in the context of the Peace Process with the FARC-EP and other guerrillas that may, in the future, join a negotiated exit to the conflict.

For this specific investigation, this material shows that the positions around reconciliation are always accompanied by political ideas about typical elements of peacebuilding such as “reparation” or “justice”. For this reason, its theorization implies notions rooted in the dynamics of the war and the visions of the future. So, in order to try to be coherent with the objective of this paper, instead of choosing a particular perspective, this review of literature expects to be part of the creation of awareness of the social effects that words have.

3.3 How the topic of reconciliation has been addressed institutionally?

By way of closure, it is useful to show how these theoretical developments have been used in the recent history of Colombia. And this is why it is worth to present the connection between the theory and the analysis that comes. This will be achieved by tracing the genealogy of the uses and changes of the concept of reconciliation.

The use of the concept of reconciliation in post-conflict formulas was a phenomenon first experienced after the South African attempts to deal with the past traumas of the Apartheid. Likewise, the figure of the Truth Commissions appeared in the 90s in the Southern Cone, and it was included as part of the objectives of transitional justice (Méndez 2011: 1).

In Colombia, the uses and meanings of the concept are bound together with a historical process of sought and failed peace agreements with the guerrillas that began their armed confrontation since the 60s.

At an institutional level, the starting point of its use is 1982, with the presidency of Belisario Betancur (1982 -1986). Betancur’s government was a turning point in terms of war perspectives: the government partially abandoned its intentions of a military defeat, and attempted negotiation processes with the FARC-EP, the M-19, the Popular Army of Liberation (EPL) and Worker Self-Defence (ADO) guerrillas (Villarraga 2015: 34-35).

Behind this new perspective towards conflict resolution, there have been variables that have been expressed in different positions:

For some governments, as the Virgilio Barco’s one (1986-1990), reconciliation was conceptualized broadly and was disassociated in terms of its relationship with demobilized combatants and the end of direct violence. It was conceived as a concept related to the achievement of social justice, and especially, to the need of connecting the communities of the regions with the central State. As Méndez (2011) points out, this government coincided with the foundation of

the “Presidential Council for Reconciliation, Normalization and Rehabilitation” which attempted to materialize reconciliation in three elements: “a) peace (called by President Barco “Lasting coexistence”), b) demobilization of guerrilla groups and c) the rapprochement of the State and the Institutions through community participation” (Méndez 2011: 15).

During the subsequent administrations (Gaviria 1990–1994; Samper 1994–1998; Pastrana 1998–2002) there was a period of stagnation in the peace processes with the guerrillas, especially the ones with the FARC-EP. For this reason, the discourse of reconciliation was much more moderate and the emphasis of its use was based on aspirations of demobilizations of specific armed groups.

Thus, the concept of reconciliation varies in meanings according to the differences in governmental policies and historical priorities. For example, the Samper Government (1994-1998), sought to achieve a negotiated exit of the conflict with the guerrillas. It was failed mostly because the FARC-EP and the ELN mentioned the lack of government guarantees and denied to sit and talk (Villarraga 2015: 129). But also because the proposed solution that came from Samper dismissed the political scope and requests for structural transformations of the guerrillas, leaving the idea that the ultimate goal was to disarm the groups rather than look for consensus. This suggests that rather than multiple visions of the conflict, the Government proposed a scenario of two factions confronted (the good and the bad) and a type of reconciliation that had a specific goal: to convert ‘them’ (the bad) into ‘us’ (the good).

The Álvaro Uribe Government (2002-2010) had an opposite way of characterizing conflict, especially in regards to the FARC-EP. During these years, the notion of reconciliation was absent in the official discourse and Uribe’s Government disqualified the previous peace processes and the dialogues with the guerrillas. As a matter of fact, Uribe denied the mere existence of the Colombian Armed Conflict, categorized guerrilla groups as terrorists (in the post-9/11 world and the context of War on Terror), and closed the possibility of establishing a political agenda for negotiation between the insurgency and the government. He imposed a policy of encouragement to individual defections, demanded the unilateral cessation of hostilities and relied, predominantly, on assuring the military defeat of guerrillas (Villarraga 2015: 188-189).

Paradoxically, during Uribe’s government, the dismantling of paramilitary groups became a reality, although under questionable measures. These included a clear but also controversial increase in the number of combatants, only for the purposes of demobilization and propaganda for the process (Jaramillo 2011: 158). This increment gave rise to victims and international organizations warnings concerning the legal framework that supported the process. It relied predominantly on pardons and measures in favor of the paramilitary leaders, who were responsible for crimes, but lacked serious elements of investigation and punishment, which worked in detriment of the rights of the victims (Villarraga 2015: 194).

Then, after intense debates, Law 975—known as the “Justice and Peace Law”—was approved in June 2005. The Law recognized only specific victims of the long-lasting war and addressed some of their rights. This Law was heavily criticized; the organizations and spokespeople claimed that it did not fully consider the rights of the victims and did not adapt to the international standards of Transitional Justice, among others (Jaramillo 2011: 172).

Despite criticisms, the Law 975 was applied as the first framework of Transitional Justice in Colombia and started to act as the framework that is today dominant in this field. It established the National Commission of Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR) as an institution to assist in guaranteeing the rights of the victims to truth and reparation (Congress of the Republic of Colombia 2005: Arts 48 -52), and introduced the concept of “memory duty”. This was the starting point for the State to begin doing different projects that aimed towards the recovery of the historical memory of the conflict.

In addition, the Law includes specific guidelines on how reconciliation was understood, such as elements of “peaceful coexistence based on new relationships of trust, [...] as well as, the deepening democracy with the participation of institutions and civil society” (CNRR 2007, as cited by Méndez 2011: 16). Likewise, the text emphasized the link between reconciliation and guarantees of non-repetition, and the effectiveness of the reinsertion processes of armed groups.

On the other hand, the CNRR recognizes the effectiveness of DDR processes and the promotion of dialogue with armed groups as key elements of reconciliation. These items could allow an analytical inference: reconciliation was mainly framed as a relationship between the (direct) victims of the conflict and a broad group of different combatants.

In 2006, the High Presidential Council for Reintegration was born. This was the first State institution concerning demobilization as a long-term program aimed to replace individual initiatives and psychosocial support that were prevalent in the programs of past governments (ARN, 2018).³

Finally, an important milestone, which serves as background to talk about reconciliation today, is the Law 1448 of 2011, known as the “Law of Victims and Restitution of Land”, born at the dawn of Juan Manuel Santos’ government (2010-2018). Some critics have pointed out that this law was determined by Santos’ political interest in re-election (Delgado 2015: 122); nevertheless, it expanded the level of institutional responsibility towards the victims of conflicts. This Law is also an antecedent of the central role victims would play in the Peace Agreements, and made the agrarian issue a central one in the negotiations as well.

³ Although the focus of this research is not the DDR programs, as contextual information, it is important to note that this institution underwent modifications again in the Havana Peace Agreement signed in November 2016 and today it is called Agency for the Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN).

On a practical level, this Law allowed the creation of two important institutions in the area of reconciliation promotion: on one side, the National Center of Historical Memory, as an institution in charge of “gathering and recovering all the documentary material, oral testimonies and by any other means related to the facts of the armed conflict and to make it available to citizens” (Congress of the Republic of Colombia 2011: Art 47) [Translation AA]. On the other side, it allowed the creation of the Unit for the Attention and Integral Reparation of the Victims, under the purpose of executing the whole process of reparation of the victims and bringing them closer to the State by making them participants in the process. As a concluding remark, it is necessary to make some statements to qualify the upcoming findings:

- a) Although the focus of this paper is the institutional scenario, varied and potent reconciliation manifestations take place nearly always in the territories outside the power centers and beyond the discursive reach or mediation of the State. The decision to not to take these experiences into account for the analysis responds to practical criteria, mainly due to the time limitations, rather than to a programmed dismissal;
- b) The Agreement does not represent all the complexities of the debates as already stated; and
- c) There were clear dynamics of exclusion in the negotiations of the Agreement, such as the relegation of indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombians despite their broad participation in the reconciliation debates as well as in sharing their perspectives, which were included in the final document (Braconnier 2018: 117). These items pose limitations to the conclusions regarding the actors grouped as Civil Society in this research.

4 The Self and the Other

After making a careful reading of the documents, a first characteristic that came to light was the constant presence of historical references and political demands of each of the actors.

While it is possible to talk about the existence of a certain type of social contract through which the main negotiators and civil society decided to participate in the Dialogues in Havana, assuming a benefit, the existence of historical incompatibilities that influence the actors' worldviews about the war and the eventual peace that should be built is undeniable.

In that sense, it is important to consider the visions around the "self" and the "other" of the three actors chosen for this analysis, to understand specific discursive configurations that will be addressed later on.

4.1 Self – representation

With respect to the conceptualization of the Self, each actor tries to show itself as legitimate speaker and tries to assert the primacy of its own interpretation of reconciliation, and consequently what was the conflict about, who is responsible, and thus who should reconcile. But this is done in different manners.

Colombian Government's statements were made under a clear political moment. There were some sectors, especially sympathizers of the 'democratic security doctrine' of former president Uribe that resisted the negotiations in Havana (Gómez 2017: 242) and therefore, the claims to legitimacy were predominant. In that sense, the factors that stand out are related with "the historical moment that Colombia faces" (Gov.Doc "c": 158), the benefits for the democracy in Latin America that the end of the FARC-EP as a guerrilla will bring (Gov.Doc "a": 93) and the trajectory that was necessary to arrive to a point of negotiations and the hard work that is implicit from the beginning of the dialogues. (Gov.Doc "c": 159).

Additionally, in several occasions, the previous failed attempts to negotiate with the FARC-EP were mentioned (Gov.Doc "b": 95), as the proof of the importance of this one and making the Self a 'true peace-seeker'. So, the legitimacy of the Government is established by stressing that it is "successful" (compared to previous governments) in reaching the peace negotiations with FARC. This implies that they are sincere, trust-worthy, and persistent, dedicated, all this for the benefit of its citizens, which is a very self-congratulatory position.

The self-positioning about government's role in the conflict is ambiguous, since on the one hand it recognizes the participation of the state agents as agents of the conflict that committed victimizing acts (Gov.Doc "b": 96), but also, there are manifestations of a position of mediator rather than participant, who defines the guidelines for negotiating and invites the other to reflect

(Gov.Doc “b”: 98). This is implicitly in line with the need to create legitimacy, since it has been shown that historically the State has contributed to the continuity of the conflict (UNDP 2003: 33), and denying it could exacerbate tensions. But at the same time, it is important to differentiate from those historically designated as perpetrators, in order to continue with certain faculties to define rules of the game in a post-agreement future.

The actor defined as **Civil Society**, composed by victims and women and LGBTI organizations, came to the table of conversations sharing the characteristic of historical exclusion and stigmatization, since one of the strategies of both the governments and the armed groups to justify their military and political actions was to point to and stigmatize certain communities as collaborators of one of the sides in the conflict (CNMH 2013: 270). In that sense, initially, especially for the women’s organizations, there was a reaffirmation of structural conditions of vulnerability (CS.Doc “h”: 173). However, the strongest point is not in the victimizations, but on the contrary, in the resistances and participation (CS.Doc “g”: 169). Thus, although there are differences in the dynamics of participation of the two sub-actors, both point out that the space at the Conversation Table is a step towards their recognition as political subjects. (CS.Doc “g”: 170).

Women’s and LGBTI organizations could be heard in their particular needs in each of the agenda items and thus created an “intersectional self”, which took into account the multiple positions that make them up. However, this did not happen with victim organizations, and their struggle for Self at the negotiation table was for many legitimate Selves. They wanted to show their heterogeneity and derived from this the claims to different kinds of recognition: one is the multiplicity of the actors that committed the victimizations, the diversity in the victimizing facts that imply different needs from administrative to psychosocial reparations, and the most outstanding, the consideration of the several axes that compose the life of a person and the group who suffered the conflict (CS.Doc “c”: 151; CS.Doc “e”: 217)

Finally, the Self of the **FARC-EP** is presented as rightful, as a collective who took defendable and justifiable choices in the 1960s to constitute an armed opposition to the State and show the armed struggle as a continuous search for social justice (FARC-EP.Doc“a”: 92). From that point, FARC creates a narrative that revolves around the legitimacy to talk about conflict and peace because having reached the Havana Dialogues does not mean a defeat, but on the contrary, shows that they were finally being considered as valid interlocutors, at the same level as the Government (FARC-EP.Doc “d”: 107) (FARC-EP.Doc “e”: 202). Thus, the emphasis was on the need for the recognition of the importance of equal footing in negotiation, rather than negotiation of winners and losers, of the strong and the weak.

Additionally, taking into account that FARC-EP has been traditionally represented as the main cause of all the Colombian problems and as a criminal force without political influence (García 2012: 137), they tried to create identification with the Colombian people and represent themselves as spokespersons for people’s social demands. With the use of terms such as

“compatriots” or “our people” (FARC-EP.Doc “h”:78), FARC-EP created a sense of belonging with the Colombian population, especially with the most vulnerable sectors such as peasants or people in conditions of poverty. They even called themselves representatives of human rights and social movements (FARC-EP.Doc “f”: 264).

Something noticeable was the absolutely victorious narratives from both the FARC-EP and the Government. The speeches were full of affirmations adjectives, pride and grievances. This is a legitimizing rhetoric that reaffirms that the truth about the conflict is totally a disputed field and that the determination of discursive configurations that may be considered acceptable in the future is paramount.

4.2 How is the Other portrayed?

Representation of the Other was rather diffuse for all the three actors. As a matter of fact, problems with the representation of the Other in this case are to be expected since the first intentions were related exclusively to negotiate the agreements. The achievement of the negotiations would have been much more difficult to manage if they were seen as die-hard enemies.

Thus, as for the Civil Society sector, the discourses did not display a well-defined Other. Us/them oppositions were not based on specific actors but by stigmatization and exclusion attitudes, attitudes defined, in turn, by a reductionist images of the State, the armed groups and even other sectors of society such as the business sector (CS.Doc “f”: 240). The Civil Society discourses recognized the political will of the FARC-EP and the Government as counterparts in peace dialogues, but these discourses did not conceptualize them as multidimensional actors (CS.Doc “b”: 126; CS.Doc “g”: 170).

The misrepresentation is not surprising here—rather, it reaffirms the narrowness of the speech scope given to the Civil Society by other actors and by itself, delimited by the hope for a more proactive role towards the future. There was no option to advocate for specific claims, or at least this was not reflected in the discourses; not only due to historical contexts or political dynamics, but also due to a real heterogeneity and diversity of pains and possibilities between Victims’, Women’s and LGBTI’s organizations—each part of the negotiations would have likely represented a radically different form of Otherness.

The **FARC-EP’s** case is different. Sustained change in discourse for the four years of negotiation has been widely discussed. The FARC-EP’s communication method and concepts were much more radical at the beginning of the process but had a more conciliatory tone in 2016 (El Tiempo Newspaper 2016: no page; Morelo and Velez 2016: no page). Some critics even attribute the tone variation to the turning points of meetings with the victims within the framework of negotiation of point 5 (Gómez 2017: 247-249). At the beginning of the Process, FARC-EP statements only considered State crime victims – thus seeing the State as the Other – but the encounters lead to the recognition of all the victims and fulfilment of public forgiveness acts (Semana Magazine 2016: no page).

Furthermore, FARC-EP's conceptualization of the State was different. From the beginning of the Process, it was evident that Santos' government was recognized as a worthy political adversary, which had abandoned military solutions and opted for a negotiated way out (FARC-EP.Doc "h": 77). Nevertheless, the State apparatus and capitalist Colombian regime were strongly criticized (FARC-EP.Doc "a": 148), and the State was even qualified as "the author behind the author" (FARC-EP.Doc "c": 47), as a way to express not only connections with paramilitary groups, but also a deep causal relationship with war. One of the big paradoxes of this negotiation was the criticism of the political regime under the parameters of that political regime.

Thus, instead of the Other as an enemy, the FARC-EP and the Government soon abandoned harsh criticism of each other and turned their attention to the victims of the conflict. Rhetorical emphasis on victims and their centrality in the Peace Process on behalf of FARC-EP and the State was a central factor. The **Government**, beyond talking generally about Colombians' need for peace, portrayed the victims as "the actors in the front line of the process" (Gov.Doc "a": 197), "subjects to whom the FARC and the Government must guarantee their rights" (Gov.Doc "c": 159) and to those whom "we cannot fail", because they are the ones who represent hope, resistance and vocation of peace" (Gov.Doc "e":78).

The FARC-EP followed this focus and represented the victims, the Women, and the LGBTI population as passive actors, who "generously took from their hearts the most beautiful feeling of peace" (FARC-EP.Doc "d": 108) who "(...) dream about peace and have to be protagonists in the building of a new Colombia" (FARC-EP.Doc "a": 150).

This outstanding centrality of the victims is an implicit denial of horizontal violence. At the heart of the struggle for legitimacy sought by these three actors, there is an implicit and imposed conception around the Colombian conflict and the effects of violence. Rhetorical apparatuses of Civil Society, Government and FARC-EP deny and conceal the violence that the whole country has suffered, rather than just specific groups, a challenge for the transformative Peace Agreement spirit. It is claimed by some authors that horizontal violence has been experienced (Orozco 2005, as cited by Acosta Navas and Reyes 2018: 123) in territories where conflict modalities have been diverse, so distinction between victims and perpetrators is not always clear. Therefore, reconciliation requires recognition of "the presence and meaning of the gray zones; of figures that are simultaneously victims and perpetrators" (Theidon, 2006; Theidon, 2012 as cited by Diaz Pabón 2018: 253).

Was the Process' focus on victims unintentionally representing and constructing a duality "victim/perpetrator", without enough consideration for the possible social positions and effects outside these oppositional construction and direct confrontations? The analysis should make us aware of the traces of reductionism in the representation of the Other. In this case, the focus on victims is important, but it is also important to avoid or deactivate victim's re-victimization.

In conclusion, it is a necessary task to unveil positions concerning the Colombian Conflict complexity, the blurry lines that limit actors' identification and differentiation. It is also important to exhibit the strategies deployed by diverse actors to represent the Self and the Other. When do we need to put aside or to use our definitions of the Other, to make agreements? When does the inimical Other should come back to the stage, to assert differences that seem irreconcilable?

In that sense, demands for reconciliation presented afterwards are not only a different matter in terms of conceptualization, but also stand for divergent constructions of Self and Other through the Colombian Conflict.

5 Framing reconciliation

According to the assumption that “language matters politically” (Ferree and Merrill 2000: 454), the idea of using the framing analysis is to uncover diverse meanings of the term “reconciliation”. Another goal is to visualize different understandings of this concept, used in one very specific context, since consensus among many possible facets require being careful about generalizations, as too many different things can be signified by one and the same word (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 517)

Framing analysis is not finalized by building a “master frame”, but rather it is useful to consider a “web of meanings” (Ferree 2008: 3). This “web” is a space full of linked beliefs surrounding actors, relations, connections and perceptions of the social order (Ferree 2008: 4). Along these lines, and although in selected Government, FARC-EP and Civil Society discourses there were no explicit clarifications about the use of the concept “reconciliation”, each actor has its own and unique perspective encircling the concept. Each of these concepts is worth analyzing and is linked in turn with self-positioning and particular future visions for Colombia. The analysis of meanings of “reconciliation” is linked to this paper’s main purpose—to dissect divergent ideological perspectives, analyze important definition qualities, differences and similarities surrounding the concept of reconciliation: Who should reconcile with whom? In what time? How? (Bloomfield 2003: 27). These questions reflect theoretical debates around the concept itself and around elements that can help in unveiling its understanding. Thus, among others, there is a scale of *levels*, “referring to who should reconcile” (...); *axis* “addressing the presence or absence of references to the recent past or near future” (...); and *mechanisms*, “understood as what conditions are to be met before reconciliation can be possible” (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 520).

A debate about levels can include conceptualizations related with interstate, national intergroups and interpersonal reconciliation; for each one of those elements, one must consider certain degrees of abstraction (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 521). In relation to the axis, different positions are correlated to time—reconciliation in the present, as a reflection of the past, and/or as a projection of a common future (Rigney, 2012; Rushton, 2006; as cited by Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 521). In regard to the mechanisms, discussions include cessation of violence, dialogue, punitive justice, compassion, memory, healing and trust (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016: 522).

5.1 National government. Victims and former combatants as the protagonists

- a) Who should reconcile with whom? Collective reconciliation to be done by victims and perpetrators.

From the beginning of the Process, the Government tried to differentiate the collective scope from the individual one, and separated reconciliation from forgiveness, as the latter “is something that corresponds to each one to decide in his own conscience and in his heart”, while reconciliation consists of “the acceptance of the same rules of the game by all (...) and the work around that common purpose that is the construction of peace in the territory” (Gov.Doc “a”: 199). The collective nature of the Process was also a fundamental part of multiple references, in turn part of a variety of discourses—pronouns like “all of us”, “all the Colombians” and “we” were fundamental. Also, the idea of coexistence in the plurality was conceptualized as “the possibility of hearing all versions and aim to live peacefully, respecting differences and without resorting to violence” (Gov.Doc “d”: 167).

Despite the abstract nature of the concept of reconciliation in the Colombian scenario, the victims’ and the historically rejected actors’ prominence was a clear focus of the Process. The central role of the victims implies an antagonistic ancient actor – the “perpetrators”. Thus, reconciliation is a central aspect for the ones who have suffered the war, an exalted point out of sentences like “the victims of violence are even willing to be more generous than the average population when it comes to seeking that forgiveness and reconciliation, which are the foundations of a lasting and sustainable peace in this country” (Gov.Doc “e”: 77); or “The woman has been the vortex in which the pain has been most intensely concentrated, but also in them rests the hope of reconciliation and a hopeful look on the future of Colombia” (Gov.Doc “f”: 229). In that sense, the Process’ emphasis was to involve the victims in the reconciliation process, predominantly those directly affected by the violence.

b) When is the time to reconcile? It is a goal to be reached some day.

In the Government documents it was common to find the use the word reconciliation when referring to a “new country”, one that will be built based on the signature of the Agreement. There were also references to the “vision we have proposed to Colombians so that together we can build a new country: a country in peace and reconciliation, a country with more equity” (Gov.Doc “c”: 160). Phrases such as “pedagogy for preparing the road to reconciliation” (Gov.Doc “c”: 158) or “the hope of reconciliation and a hopeful look on the future of Colombia” (Gov.Doc “e”: 76) were ubiquitous. The character of this conceptualization is much closer to abstract aspirations than to real commitment—it reaffirms the lack of clarity theoretically claimed when studying reconciliation, and leaves reconciliation as a distant, future goal, rather than a practical objective to work for.

c) How to achieve reconciliation? It is framed in a democratic political system.

Finally, the Government equates reconciliation to “democratic deliberation”, understood as social mobilization in favor of peacebuilding (Gov.Doc “a”: 199). Likewise, regarding the aspect of how to achieve reconciliation, the priority was the “recovery of citizens’ trust in institutions, among citizens, and achieving the strengthening of the rule of law” (Gov.Doc

“b”: 97). This means that the field of action to achieve any degree of reconciliation is the political and democratic system.

So, what does this mean? The Government presents an ambiguous position that does not differentiate peace and reconciliation. Apparently it is a process that comes out of the Final Peace Agreement and that, therefore, depends on the mediation of the State. This position is consistent with the political character and self-positioning of the State as a mediator. However, this is also a problematic approach because it implicitly puts the State as an outsider of the conflict, but the main protagonist of peace in the Agreement signed in Havana. The latter is inconvenient because it puts the weight on political factors and, as we have seen in previous chapters, the Final Peace Agreement, though it is a big milestone, isn't the panacea to the universe of problems and social demands of Colombia. In consequence, some of the inputs or initiatives towards reconciliation that are formulated outside the frame of the Final Peace Agreement, or even in the opposition to the Process, can be excluded.

As expected, this position on reconciliation can be paradoxical in the sense that it is state-centered, though it aspires to bind society. The question about how to do it remains. But, placing the focus on the victims generates an extra burden on them and forces them to follow a single path, the path of reconciliation, when maybe it is not the appropriate moment (Gómez, D 2017: *no page*).

5.2 FARC-EP. Reconciliation as a goal: the old and the new Colombia

If for the Government the Peace Process is the beginning of the reconciliation path, for the FARC-EP the Peace Process is just one of the many opportunities they used to achieve reconciliation through their actions as a guerrilla (FARC-EP. Doc “a”: 150). Thus, their definition of reconciliation is consistent with a discourse full of grievances and pride.

- a) Who should reconcile with whom? “National” reconciliation, as an element to erase the line between victims and perpetrators and to involve the whole society;

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the strategy of self-representation of the FARC-EP as historical victims of the political regime and the capitalist system is an attempt to minimize the recent history in which they, as an armed actor, were in large part responsible for the continuation of the war. As this is one of their big silences throughout the discursive configurations. Thus, they cannot speak of reconciliation of victims and perpetrators. Instead, not surprisingly, a constant element in the discursive configurations of FARC-EP was “national” reconciliation. It is possible to debate about the meanings of nation and the discussion of the existence of a nation within Colombia. However, this goes beyond the scope of this paper, and for FARC-EP this is a given. What is relevant is that it is assumed that the character of reconciliation

is national, that is, it involves all sectors of the population. Phrases like “We will work for a new Government to build peace and national reconciliation, based on the definition of a minimum program, which will require the commitment of the final implementation of the Final Agreement, will gather the most immediate social aspirations of the population” (FARC-EP.Doc “h”: 77) and the frequent use of duos such as “peacebuilding and national reconciliation” (FARC-EP.Doc “h”: 78) can portray the intention of making a broad process, without strictly differentiating the direct victims from those who perpetrated victimizations.

Though the conceptualization of “national reconciliation” sounds like a call for a “new beginning”, the mention of the “national” character also poses the question of the representation of the Other that was shown previously. The FARC-EP’s discourse was consistent with the intention they showed since the first phases of the Peace Process in order to be considered as a valid political actor, one that was not defeated, and was at the same level as the Government at the Conversation Table (FARC-EP.Doc “a”: 151). Also, there was a clear attempt to generate empathy within the most vulnerable sectors, as they showed a strong rejection of the ruling class in the economic and political arenas. In this point, regarding the discourses, it is not clear to what extent this broad conceptualization of reconciliation would also include these dominant social classes.

- b) When is the time for reconciliation? A maximalist objective after a complete re-form to Colombia;

At the beginning of the Dialogues, reconciliation was understood as “fraternal understanding, in the economic, political and social transformations necessary to reach the point of equilibrium acceptable to all” (FARC-EP.Doc “a”: 148) and it was used as a synonym of “rebuilding the country” (FARC-EP.Doc “b”: 88). This was always accompanied by the claims for a political reform and a new beginning in the Colombian political regime since “Peace requires reconciliation and reconciliation demands normalization of the political and social life of Colombia” (FARC-EP. Doc “f”: 264).

Like the Government, the conceptualization was full of rhetorical constructions such as “there is the fire of hope for reconciliation” (FARC-EP. Doc “f”: 263) and of deep aspirations that do not necessarily generate a greater understanding, such as “when the truth comes to light, we Colombians will know how to find the path of reconciliation, that of a firm floor paved with social justice, democracy and sovereignty” (FARC-EP. Doc “d”: 107). This abstract and broad goal is weakened by the possibilities of multiple interpretations and therefore, the lack of concrete ways to measure something like “a degree of reconciliation”. This also reaffirms the relevance of being aware of rhetorical constructions since they can be highly malleable.

- c) How to do it? By looking towards the future and the construction of "peace with social justice", rather than delving on the past.

Finally, this rhetoric, full of aspirations towards a future of reconciliation, is also a clear manifestation of the absence of the recent past in the discourses

of the FARC-EP. Phrases like “Reconciliation as the superior purpose” (FARC-EP.Doc “P”: 263) or “We need a definitive reconciliation in our country” (FARC-EP.Doc “g”: 195) show signs of FARC-EP’s constant attempts to start a new stage and to look into the future more than into the past.

Achieving reconciliation, implicitly, is possible if the Peace Agreement brings a new and reconciled Colombia—if the historical demands of the population are taken into account: “We will work for a new Government to build peace and national reconciliation based on the definition of a minimum program, which, in addition to committing itself to the implementation of the Final Agreement, will gather the most immediate social aspirations for the population” (Document “h”: 78). This shows the importance of the historical grievances that the FARC-EP presents as the reason of their uprising and the continuation of their participation in the armed conflict.

5.3 Civil society: the moment to talk about reconciliation has not come yet

The conceptualizations about reconciliation that could be extracted from the discourses of the Civil Society are not as numerous or as profound as the ones made by the Government and the FARC-EP. This can shed light on an inequality in participation and, above all, in thinking participation just in the terms that were proposed by the two main negotiators. Women and LGBTI organizations talked about gender issues and the victims spoke only from their position as victims, without being able to go beyond those labels, which restricted, if no denied their political and personal projects. In that sense, it is important to have in mind that a) silences are also a big part of the findings around civil society dis-courses; b) they had no opportunity to deepen their views on who, when and how of reconciliation; and c) there were differences between positions of the two sub-actors.

a) Groups of victims

The studied documents of this sub-actor correspond to five pronouncements made by each group of twelve victims, when they went to Havana during the negotiation of the Point 5 of the Agreement. Out of those five pronouncements, two did not have any reference to reconciliation. Rather, they focused on demands that were a priority, before opening the talk about reconciliation. Among those, the victims asked the Government and the FARC-EP for concrete measures, such as demining and disengaging the minors who were part of armed groups; the solution to the problem of the land distribution and the displacements that the indigenous communities suffer, as well as peasants and the afro-descendant population; the need for psychological support and real justice to victims of sexual violence; and the creation of a protocol for the return of victims who are in the exile (CS. Doc “c”: 151; CS.Doc “d”: 182-183).

The three groups that talked about reconciliation mentioned that “the inclusion of the victims in the Dialogues in Havana is a step towards it” (CS.Doc “a”: 92) and conceptualized it as “justice, tolerance or coexistence” (CS. Doc “b”: 126). This was linked with the achievement of the classical measures of transitional justice, especially measures concerning truth and memory, since “when victims talk about what happened, they are creating historical memory, which allows to think about the future from the truth. This will bring paths of reconciliation” (CS.Doc “e”: 217).

These positions indicate two main ideas. First, that the issue of reconciliation was not a priority at the time of the victims’ participation in the Dialogues, perhaps because there were not yet sufficient conditions to transition to the future without reviewing the past. Second, different positions among the five groups reaffirm the proposition regarding the construction of the victims’ Self: one that claims consideration under the lens of diversity and that has many more sides than that of the “victims”.

b) Women and LGBTI organizations

In relation to this sub-actor, between 2014 and 2016, five documents were written and none had explicit reference to reconciliation. Some measures of transitional justice were highlighted as “guarantee of the right that women victims of the conflict have to truth, justice and guarantees of non-repetition, and a truth commission that guarantees the voices and stories of women” (CS.Doc “g”: 170), but its dimensioning was not presented explicitly as a direct step towards reconciliation.

Still, there were discussions around peace and the basic conditions that the Government and the Guerrilla must take into account to achieve it. These included: women's participation in all the stages of the peacebuilding process; recognition of the diversity of identities of the black, indigenous, peasant, rural, urban, young and LGBTI women; a guarantee of the equal distribution of goods, services, resources and wealth for women in comparison to men, including land ownership (CS.Doc “g”: 170-171). Additionally, there were direct suggestions to the development of the Dialogues, like the use of inclusive language, the will of creating a constructive environment between the Negotiations Table and social movements so that everyone felt truly included; the need to lead the discussions towards the regional level; even the demand that the media stop using war-like and sexist language (CS.Doc “h”: 173-174).

This helps to confirm that for the Women and LGBTI organizations, reconciliation is an abstract notion that was not even considered in the Agenda of that time. There is scepticism and the affirmation that the conditions of the country, despite the Peace Process, were not the appropriate ones to leave the conflict behind and to talk about a “new be-ginning”. This also refers to the fact that the historical discrimination and the conditions of vulnerability of women and LGBTI did not start and will not end with the Peace Pro-cess between the Government and the FARC-EP. This allows us to reflect on the fact that peace should not necessarily be linked to reconciliation. The latter cannot be considered as a straitjacket for moving forward into a less violent society.

To conclude, the analysis of the perspectives of three principal actors on reconciliation opens up a number of very interesting issues:

First, the concept of reconciliation as a goal that was predominant in the documents issued by the **Government** and the **FARC-EP** is problematic because of the expectation of an ideal state in the relations between the three actors. This would not be easy or even possible to reach. Additionally, such conceptualization makes a homogenizing division of the temporality of the conflict, assuming that it is easy to talk about “before” and “after” the war, which is not the case yet. Similarly, when reading the Civil Society documents, in most of the cases there is framing of ideas related to reconciliation through claims of transitional justice: truth, justice, reparation and guarantees for non-repetition.

There have been studies that concluded that “state-building initiatives, combined with mechanisms to deal with past atrocities, are expected to lead to stability and reconciliation” (De Greiff, 2012, as cited by Díaz Pabón 2018:4). But also, there have been studies that questioned these kinds of approaches. For example, the reconciliatory power of telling the truth is empirically put in doubt in the case of Rwanda (Bróuneus 2008: 18-20), and there are arguments that after the pursuit of legal accountability there is an increase in the divisions of the society (Lekha Sriram 2007: 587), which hampers the reconciliation process. Criticism of the transitional justice measures is out of the scope of this paper, but personally I see that the connection between its application in Colombia and the achievement of a more reconciled society is not very clear. First, because there are no standards that can determine when there is justice or reparation. This situation leaves space for a very similar rhetorical construction like the case of reconciliation, which is conveniently used accordingly to the contextual specificities. Second, because these measures are mainly a development of the “International Community” under a paradigm of Liberal Peace (Lekha Sriram 2007: 588). This may not tackle completely the local needs and strengths to achieve a reconciliation process, such as the traditional worldviews of indigenous communities or the territorial cultural differences in the regions of the country. Likewise, I believe that although the groups of women and LGBTI communities did not mention reconciliation in their speeches, implicitly there is a desire to change the way we relate in a society that created violence. However, this is not easy to achieve under totalizing notions, even if this means a totalizing peace or reductionist reconciliation.

So, more than affirming how reconciliation should be understood, and to adhere to some theories that prioritize some elements over others, this chapter wanted to demonstrate that, in the Colombian case, reconciliation is a notion used as a discourse for many different purposes—from legitimation of one’s political relevance to obscuring violence—and its use should be cautious, because just like the conflict itself, this is also a field in dispute.

6 Ruptures and continuities: different visions around peace

Analysis of reconciliation discourses shows problematic implications of the three actors' understanding of themselves and the others, and their role in conflict and peace negotiations. This chapter functions as a concluding remark, bringing link between visions on reconciliation and visions on peace. Eventually, this connection should elucidate probable ways of action for the selected actors in the post-agreement context.

How to measure the understanding of peace? Lederach (2014) structures and analyses three components as part of a strategy to respond to conflicts and therefore construct peace: “the presenting situation, the horizon of preferred future, and the development of change processes linking the two” (Lederach 2014: 34). So, keeping in mind a possible imagined future and a variety of proposals and dynamics to achieve it is a useful framework to establish comparisons on perceptions of peace between the actors.

The **FARC-EP's** visions on reconciliation are related to the construction of a new Colombia, and to components of social justice, expressed mainly on two levels—one concerning social inequalities and another addressing political dynamics. At least initially, the FARC-EP's identification with vulnerable sectors of society is consistent with the need for their participation in peace construction and the solution to the exclusion that historically have placed these populations in conditions of vulnerability. Thus, it is stated that “the voice of the majorities, the most vulnerable, needs to be listened” (FARC-EP.Doc “b”: 87) and that there is a need for a change in the historical conditions that originated the conflict (FARC-EP.Doc “c”: 48). To achieve historical justice claims for “land, housing, health, education, bread, freedom and true democracy” (FARC-EP.Doc “d”: 108) have to be realized, and “economic development with social justice and in harmony with the environment” is seen as “a guarantee of peace and progress” (FARC-EP.Doc “d”: 107). On a second level, the FARC-EP's visions on reconciliation are correlated with the strengthening of democracy and the growth of political participation, in order to give voice to opposition perspectives and divergent spokesmen within the current political regime. This process implies the inclusion of historical exclusions rooted in the origins of the armed struggle. In that sense, peace implies “recognition of the members of the FARC-EP as truly political opponents” (FARC-EP.Doc “a”: 149), as well as processes of democratization of the State, guarantees to exercise opposition, guarantees to former combatants to participate in politics, democratization of information, communication and mass media, and strengthening of public institutions. It also reaffirms the idea that the war did not originate with the creation of this Guerrilla, but was “(...) a consequence of the violence of the dominant power bloc and social inequality phenomena that ended up engendering and making evident to choose the Right of Rebellion” (FARC-EP.Doc “f”: 264).

Consequently, perspectives on reconciliation proposed by the FARC-EP, comprising a “New Colombia” that must be built, are consistent with a maximalist vision of peace, oriented towards a future that vindicates the historical struggles of the past and with clear positive obligations on behalf of the State. However, there is great silence concerning recent history and the FARC-EP violence as an armed actor, and how these affect the peace.

The **National Government's** vision of peace has differences with the FARC-EP and the main one is a change of responsibilities. Although for the FARC-EP there is a clear responsibility of the State to provide minimum basic conditions that dignify the life of the most vulnerable sectors, for the government this is different. Peace is conceptualized as a collective construction of all sectors of society, with a particular emphasis on the regions of the country. This is consistent with the strategy of “Territorial Peace”, which consists in giving prominence to the territories in two ways: “expand the scope and strengthen the institutional framework in the regions, and (...) build peace from below, with the capabilities of the communities” (Gov. Doc “a”: 198-199). This idea is reinforced by the notion of “transition” which implies that the Peace Agreement is the beginning of a change where all people (without giving greater specificities) must be protagonists (Gov. Doc “c”: 159). In that sense, peace implies that the attitudes and behaviors must change so that changes also occur in the type of society that created the violence. However, this conceptualization is not precise and generates gaps in several ways: first, there are no differentiations in the type of responsibilities that must be tackled that arise from a differentiated participation of the actors in the conflict. And second, it is a rhetorical construction that does not contain a large number of concrete elements and gives rise to multiple interpretations. The specific elements contained in the definition of peace are related to the operationalization of the transitional justice measures that contain the agreements in an articulated manner (Gov.Doc “b”: 98) and to the strengthening of a rights approach, since for example, with the case of women, “peace implies the recognition of the rights of women, for example land rights” (Gov.Doc “f”: 228).

In a way, this vision is consistent with the position taken in the conceptualization of reconciliation in which the State is more a mediator than a true protagonist. In the case of the vision on peace, it is not possible for the state to be total “outsider”, but it does try to make clear that there is a whole system of political relations and conditions that made war, and that the process of change is long and requires much more than signing the Peace Agreement.

Finally, under a different position, peace for the two sub-actors representing the **Civil Society** is a tangible peace, it “is a hope but it is also a requirement” (CS.Doc “c”: 151). Peace is a question of life or death that must represent the change between the conditions of life under the anguish of being at the mercy of the armed groups or a condition of dignity and recognition of the difference. Thus, from the beginning of the dialogues, there was a requirement to the two main negotiators about the need to see the Table of

Conversations as a space for the recognition of responsibilities but not as “an exchange of impunities” (CS.Doc “a”: 92). Similarly, there were requests for a change of the basic conditions of living aligned to the premises of social justice as “integral education, health and basic sanitation of all the population (...) taking into account a territorial approach, as well as a special respect for the rights of women and children, and, in general, of civilians in the scenario of the armed conflict” (CS.Doc “c”: 152). And also there was a query for a “commitment to the eradication of violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in the armed conflict, within a broad context of gender discrimination and inequality” (CS.Doc “f”: 240).

Peace also implies a change of relationships. But more than a call to coexistence, as in the case of the FARC-EP, the call is towards the elimination of discrimination and marginalization of social movements. There must be spaces of political inclusion and democracy in the frame of the respect for the difference (CS.Doc “e”: 127).

Finally, for the Civil Society, the effects of war must also be reflected upon. Peace does not mean making premature closures, but instead, going back to the past to determine what happened and why. And it is precisely because of this, that the component of Transitional Justice that stands out most is the recovery of the truth (CS.Doc “a”: 93; CS.Doc “b”: 126). Because, as already mentioned, the armed conflict in Colombia was a myth until very recently and there are still many factors and actors to unveil.

So, what is left after these reflections? I believe that making visible the existence of an ideal of maximalist peace on the part of the FARC-EP, a peace with shared responsibilities from the Government and a peace that guarantees the minimum to continue with life as requested by the Civil Society is a sign of one thing: Colombia is entering a period of abysmal transformations that can lead to a change. But this change is not easy nor is it automatic. The determination of direction is in dispute and the message—as my research exemplifies—is that there are no single ideas about peace; therefore, the efforts to build it cannot be totalizing.

As with the concept of reconciliation, the rhetorical uses of peace have diverse and divergent political ideas behind. The discursive configurations, as one of the means in which these ideas come to light, allow elucidating feelings, imaginaries and even ways of future action. Therefore, a sense of awareness is needed. An awareness that allow the construction of a peace diverse and inclusive, not one that excludes and simplifies because at the end, it only creates war.

7 Conclusions

Intuitively, talking about reconciliation in a political context implies a change of relationships from the past of antagonisms and conflict, towards a new state of coexistence. However, this research argues that there are a lot of nuances that controvert such a linear claim.

Although the initial starting point is the academic literature that accounts for the multiple disagreements surrounding the term reconciliation (Bloomfield 2003, Méndez 2011, Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016), this research intends to go further and show the complexity of this notion. This is done firstly by showing the different discursive configurations embedded in three participant actors of the Peace Dialogues in Havana, namely the FARC-EP, the Government and the Civil Society.

In this sense, under a clear silence that makes blurry the recent history of violence, reconciliation is understood by the FARC-EP as the construction of a New Colombia where there is a whole change of relationships. The new state aims towards a new fraternal way of coexistence and political diversity, with the condition of a positive peace that makes a change for good in the living conditions of the population. On the other hand, for the Government, although there are elements that characterize reconciliation as a national process, the largest space was occupied by reconciliation between victims and non-victims, with a predominant attitudinal component of change of relations that liberates, a little, the state's responsibility and locates it as a mediator in the process of conflict trans-formation. For the Civil Society, it seems that the references to reconciliation implied talking about closing and starting again, and since the conditions are not propitious to do so, and their claims are still valid and unresolved, reconciliation was in most of the cases an absent notion.

Secondly, I found that despite the fundamental differences, these conceptualizations present a great similarity, which is the call for a change and built something new. Moreover, this is the point that allows making a connection with the different kinds of imagined peace. In that sense, differences in reconciliation are not only rhetorical; rather, they are an indication of embedded political positions.

The peace that is assumed in and comes out from the FARC-EP is maximalist. It is a positive peace that implies that the state should provide suitable material and political conditions to create welfare for the population, especially the most vulnerable. The Peace for the Government is political and is framed in the accomplishment of the international standards of Transitional Justice and the transformations (emotional, attitudinal) of a whole society that was part of the violence and still suffers its consequences. In addition, for the Civil Society, peace is not only the absence of the armed groups and the victimizations; it is also the recognition of the suffering and the fixing of the conditions that originated it but is also a demand of the creation of new possibilities to act as political subjects.

These answers have at least three theoretical implications:

Initially, they make it possible to reaffirm the importance of the specificities of actors, times and places in the fields of conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Carefulness must be used when labelling people and specific political processes, since the reductionist mentions to “the victims” or “the guerrillas”, just to give an example, usually do not take into account all their complexities. In this sense, the recipes of Transitional Justice mechanisms, dominant from the international community, that supposedly lead to major objectives such as reconciliation and peace may not achieve this goal if they do not take into account the deepest configurations and needs of each particular case.

Consequently, this research followed the awareness of theoretical constructions that treat carefully the generalizations about the outcomes in the application of Transitional Measures. Ideas like the ones presented by Brounéus 2008, who questions that truth telling leads to healing and reconciliation in Rwanda’s post-genocide context (Brounéus 2008:10-11). Or Lekha Sriram (2008), who situates the assumptions of Transitional Justice in the dominant paradigm of Peacebuilding and mentions the possible destabilization that can cause is post-conflict scenarios (Lekha Sriram 2008: 580). Similarly, in the Colombian context, affirmations like the ones presented by Gómez D, 2017 who states that victims do not have the responsibility to forgive was also especially relevant to question the issues and affirmations that are usually taken for granted.

Secondly, although it is recognized that the academic literature mentions the lack of consensus on the theoretical definitions of reconciliation, after this research, I noticed that there was an evident gap in the way of dealing with that ambiguity. This paper helps to understand that the fact that reconciliation is a term with a large number of uses represents that it is related to less abstract aspects that can be taken into account to achieve a better understanding. In this case, those less abstract factors were the self-positionality and the representation of the other in a context of a recent war and an operationalization of Peace Agreements. Nevertheless, at other times, ethnic, age, gender, and other power relations can help understand this ambiguous use and may help in the operationalization of reconciliation.

Finally, this research allows reiterating that discourses are in the midst of the creation of meanings and rather than rhetorical artefacts, discourses are part of political strategies that have implications for actors. The history of Colombia has been and continues to be a history full of exclusions, where it seems that the “other” only exists in a nominal manner because it is not really taken into account. With this discursive exploration, it was shown that language could reinforce those exclusions while imposing commonly understandings and singular references, to terms full of battles, like reconciliation and peace.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Documents for analysis of each of the selected actors

FARC-EP

- a) 04.09.2012 Statement by the FARC-EP on the exploratory meeting for peace with the Colombian Government. P. 148 -151 (Volume 1)
- b) 21.12.2012 Peace Declaration of the FARC-EP: A badly constructed peace is worse than a war. Conclusions of the Integral Agrarian Development Policy Forum and the importance of solving the problem of latifundio to build a truly stable and lasting peace. P. 87 -89 (Volume 2)
- c) 21.06.13 Peace Delegation of the FARC-EP. Political participation for real democratization, peace with social justice and national reconciliation: Ten minimal proposals to transform the Colombian political regime in the face of a real democratization of the State. P. 47 -50. (Volume 3)
- d) 22.08.2014. Delegation of Peace of the FARC-EP. New advances towards peace. The hearing with the first victims, the Historical Commission of the Conflict and its Victims, the Technical Subcommittee and the transitional notions of transitional justice. P. 107 -110. (Volume 5)
- e) 08.10.2015 Peace Delegation of the FARC-EP. A decisive stage for peace. The reasons for the conflict and the construction of peace with truth, justice and acceptance of responsibility. P. 201- 202. (Volume 5b)
- f) 15.12.2015 Peace Delegation of the FARC-EP. Message to the Colombian people on the definitive closing of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and the Partial Accord on Victims. P. 263-265 (Volume 5b)
- g) 23.06.2016 Secretariat of the Central Staff of the FARC-EP. May this be the last day of the war Confidence in the proximity of the signing of the Final Accord, a brief historical account of the FARC-EP's struggle and optimism in the face of building peace among all Colombians. P. 194 -196 (Volume 6)
- h) 23.09.2016 Secretariat of the Central Staff of the FARC-EP. Political Declaration of the 10th Guerrilla National Conference: Commander Manuel Marulanda Vélez. Approval of the Final Agreement by the highest decision-making body: the National Guerrilla Conference. P. 77 -78 (Volume 10)

National Government of Colombia

- a) 09.05.13. The transition in Colombia. The Peace Process and transitional justice. Sergio Jaramillo. High Commissioner for Peace. P. 197-201 (Volume 2)
- b) 18.08.2014 Statement by the Government. Working document: Discussion topics on Point 5, Victims Concepts and key considerations on the rationale of Point 5, the Government's commitment to the victims and what is and is not Point 5. P. 95 -99. (Volume 5)
- c) 09.10. 2014. Declaration of Juan Manuel Santos. Intervention at the meeting of the National Peace Council Official installation of the Council and reflection on its past, present and future in the face of the Peace Process. P. 158 -161 (Volume 5)
- d) 24.10.2014 Government Delegation. Working document: Discussion topics on the Truth and Coexistence Commission (CVC) Objectives, characteristics, functions, general guidelines and modus operandi of the CVC. P. 166 -168. (Volume 5)
- e) 09.04.2015 Statement by President Santos on the occasion of the National Day of Memory and Solidarity with Victims and the launching of the competition for the design of the National Museum of Memory. P. 76 -78 (Volume 5b)
- f) 24.07.2016 Statement by Humberto de la Calle, Head of the Government Delegation. Inclusion of the gender approach in peace agreements. P. 228 -230 (Volume 6)

Civil Society

- a) 16.08.2014 First delegation of Victims. Release. Words of thanks to the Bureau and ratification of the commitment of the victims to build peace. P. 92 -93 (Volume 5)
- b) 10.09.2014. Second delegation of victims. Release. Gratitude of victims for peace efforts and the invitation to meet with the Mesa, and demand that the parties guarantee their rights. P. 126 (Volume 5)
- c) 02.10.2014 Third Delegation of Victims. Release. Recount of the symbolic act offered, expressions of support for the Process and rejection of the threats and stigmatization of those that have been the object of the victims who have met with the Mesa. P. 151 -152 (Volume 5)
- d) 02.11.2014 Fourth Delegation of Victims. Release. Recount of the eight considerations expressed by the victims, regarding the Peace Process. P. 182 -183 (Volume 5)

- e) 16.12.2014 Fifth Delegation of Victims. Release. Count of the calls to advance in the Process, to listen to the communities most affected by the conflict and to promote the necessary mechanisms to build peace. P. 217 (Volume 5)
- f) 11.02.2015 Organizations of women victims, peasants, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, ex-combatants and lesbians, gays, bisexuals, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people, leaders and leaders defending human rights. Release. The importance of the recognition of full citizenship and political participation for women and the LGBTI community and seven demands of these populations for the Process. P.240 -241 (Volume 5)
- g) 15.12.2014 Statement. Women's organizations demand before the Mesa de Diálogo to be both pacts and non-pacts in the Peace Process in Colombia. Organizations: The House of Women, Women for Peace, with its delegate ASODEMUC; Mujeres Arte y Parte en la Paz of Colombia, with its delegate the Colombian Theater Corporation, and the Women for Peace Summit, with its delegates Peaceful Route for Women, National Network of Women and Alliance Initiatives of Colombian Women for Peace -IMP. P. 169 -171 (Volume 7)
- h) 11.02.2015 Press release. The importance of the recognition of full citizenship and political participation for women and the LGBTI community and seven demands of these populations for the Process. Organizations of women victims, peasants, indigenous people, Afro-descendants, ex-combatants and LGBTI, leaders and leaders defending human rights P. 173 - 174 (Volume 7)
- i) 22.04. 2015 Statement by delegates and delegates from women's and LGBTI organizations that participated in the Havana Round Table between December 2014 and January 2015. Ten considerations regarding the Gender Subcommittee and its contribution to the Peace Process since 2016 the perspective of women's organizations and LGBTI, indigenous women's organizations, black peasant OCT, feminists, trade unionists, women victims of forced displacement and dispossession, ex-combatants, art workers, students and LGBTI people. P.183 -184 (Volume 7)
- j) 26.08.2015 Communiqué of women's organizations in the Havana Round Table Proposals to eradicate violence against women and girls, including sexual violence in the armed conflict, as an essential condition to embark on the path of a stable peace, lasting and sustainable. Adriana Benjumea, Corporación Humanas; Ángela Cerón, IMP; Diana Guzmán, Dejusticia; Dora Isabel Díaz, School of Gender of the National University; Linda María Cabrera, Sisma Woman; María Elena

Unigarro, Open Workshop; María Eugenia Cruz, Women's Corporation Follows My Steps; Marina Gallego, Pacific Route; Olga Amparo Sánchez, House of Women; Silvia Juliana Miranda, PROFAMILIA. P-188-189. (Volume 7)

Access to the Documents

Through this link, there is direct access to download each of the volumes of the Library of the Peace Process that were used to get the discourses. (In Spanish)

<http://www.altocomisionadoparalapaz.gov.co/Prensa/Paginas/2018/Biblioteca-del-Proceso-de-Paz-con-las-Farc-EP.aspx>

Appendix 2 Methodological steps

Table 1
Methodological questions

QUESTIONS / STEPS	National government	FARC-EP	Victims organizations
Stage 1 – Construction of identities and otherness			
Construction of identity (Self and Others). <i>See tables below.</i> (Hansen 2006)			
Stage 2 – Framing analysis			
Different visions on reconciliation (Verloo and Lombardo 2007)			
Arguments and core values, beliefs and feelings (Schmith 2006 - Yanow 2011)			
What is emphasized and minimized? (Papacharissi 2008)			
Stage 3 – Component of comparison			
Points of conflict and their conceptual sources (affective, cognitive, and/or moral) that reflect different interpretations by different communities (Yanow 2011)			
Implications of those different meanings of reconciliation for predominant visions about peace (Yanow 2011)			

Source: Author's elaboration

Table 2
Construction of identity. "Self"

Stage 1. Construction of identities and otherness. "Self"			
	National government	FARC-EP	Victims organizations
Spatial identity			
Temporal identity			
Ethical identity			

Source: Author's elaboration

Table 3
Construction of Identity. "Others"

Stage 1. Construction of identities and otherness. "Others"			
	National government	FARC-EP	Victims organizations
Spatial identity			
Temporal identity			
Ethical identity			

Source: Author's elaboration