LOG BOOK OF A JOURNEY TOWARDS PEACE

Systematization of the Truth Commission's working methods

LOGBOOK OF A JOURNEY TOWARDS PEACE

SYSTEMATIZATION OF THE INVESTIGATION METHODOLOGY FOR THE CLARIFICATION FROM THE TRUTH COMMISSION

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ADD MARKETING CONNECTIONS SAS

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It is time for a light, however dim, that will allow us to glimpse the face of the tragedy we have lived through. Let the windows be opened! The mission we have been entrusted with is a stormy one. That suffering turned into conscience will be liberating, and perhaps from then on, we can be passengers on the same ship.
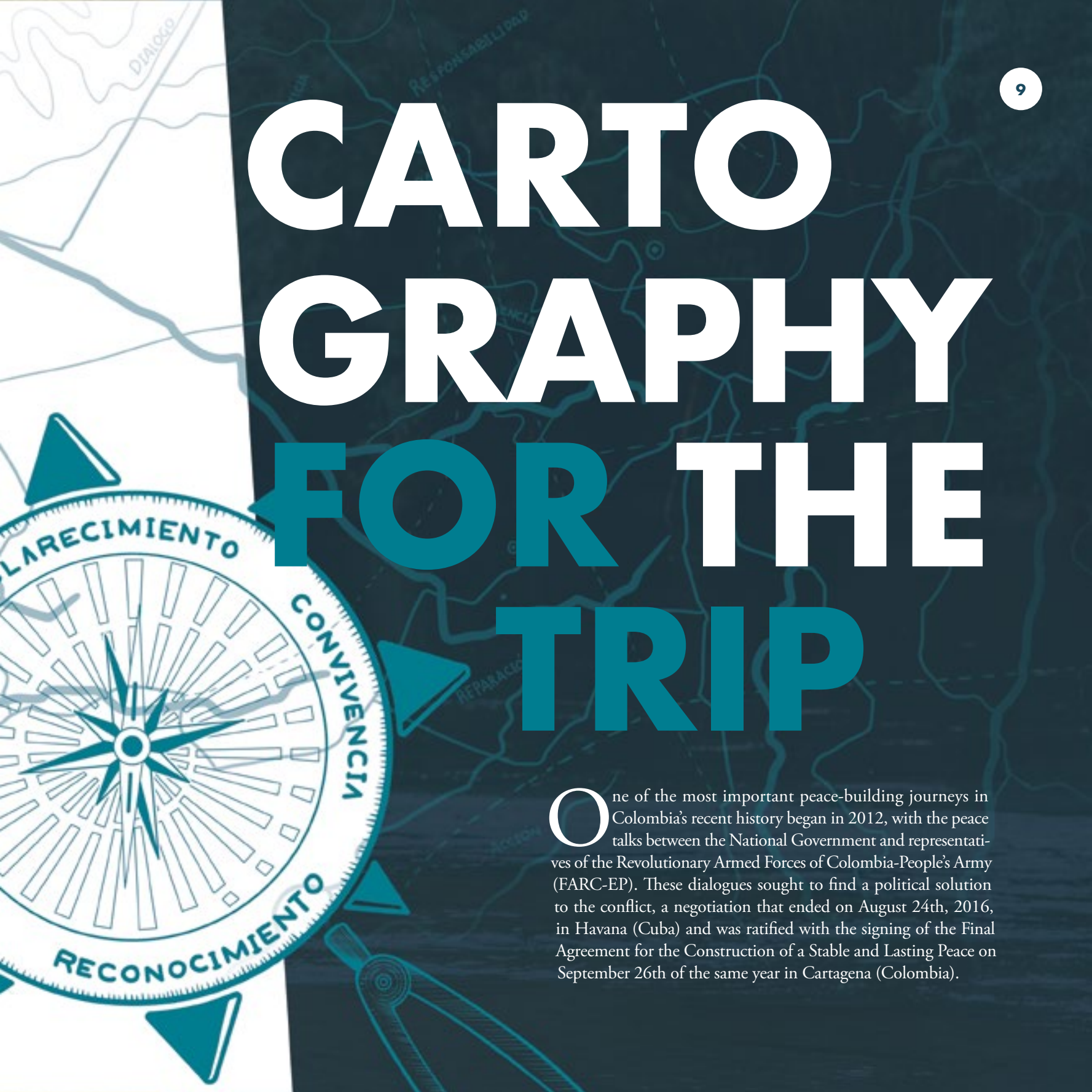
Alfredo Molano

Photography: Truth Commission
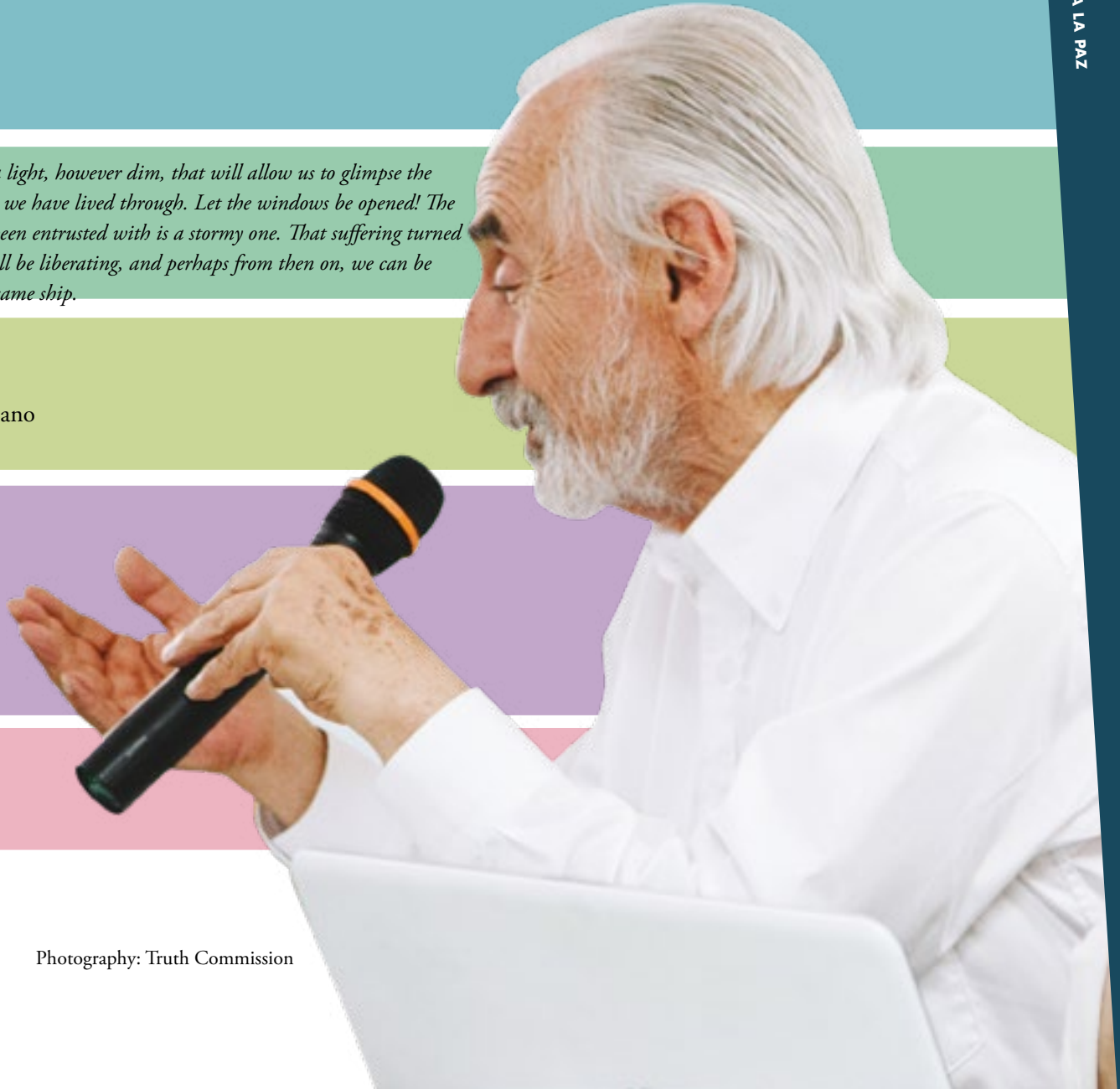
Photography: María Paula Durán

CARTO GRAPHY FOR THE TRIP

One of the most important peace-building journeys in Colombia's recent history began in 2012, with the peace talks between the National Government and representatives of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP). These dialogues sought to find a political solution to the conflict, a negotiation that ended on August 24th, 2016, in Havana (Cuba) and was ratified with the signing of the Final Agreement for the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace on September 26th of the same year in Cartagena (Colombia).

PEACE AGREEMENTS

Chart 1.
The geography of peace talks
Photography: Truth Commission

Since the start of the negotiations, different social movements and organizations have sought to promote their views and proposals. Their voices were fundamental in promoting the inclusion of victims at the negotiations table between the FARC-EP and the Government and the opening of spaces for the recognition and clarification of the experiences and agendas of the different sectors, regions and populations affected by the armed conflict. To this end, different sectors of society and, across the board, anyone who willingly wanted to contribute to the process, were called upon and mobilized for a great dialogue on ways to build a stable and lasting peace.

The citizen participation process was carried out through mechanisms such as the website of the Talks Table; physical participation forms; citizen forums, established by the stakeholders; regional meetings, organized by the Congress; several meetings, such as the National Summit of Women and Peace; negotiation tables by the delegations of victims' groups; leaders and members of farmers' associations; ethnic peoples and women's organizations. In direct visits to Havana, 60 victims attended, more than 1,300 women from all over the country participated in two women and peace summits, and 7,811 participants attended the citizen forums established by the organizations, who made 40,658 contributions to the six points of the Agenda.

In addition, more than 100 experts participated in direct counseling. They sought to provide input to the parties on each of the points of the negotiation agenda. According to the Special Programs Fund for Peace and the Office of the High Commissioner for Peace, 67,371 inputs were identified through physical and virtual forms. Of these contributions, according to data from the Fundación Ideas para la Paz (FIP, Ideas for Peace Foundation), the issues with the highest participation were point 1 (Comprehensive Rural Reform) and point 5 (Victims) of the General Agreement.

Thus, the implementation of the Agreement had broad participation, but its ratification faced several obstacles, such as critics and opponents. This became more evident on October 2nd, 2016, when the Colombian society was called through a referendum to answer the question «Do you support the "Final Agreement for the termination of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace"? » and 50.21 % of the votes were in support of NO.

In order to achieve compliance with these agreements, adjustments were made between October and November 2016; only until then could the process really move forward. However, political, and social conflicts remained throughout the process to comply with the agreements reached in Havana.

FARC-EP

NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

THE NEGOTIATION ESTABLISHES

TO SEARCH OF PEOPLE MISSING

TO CLARIFY THE TRUTH

A TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

TO GUARANTEE COEXISTENCE, RECONCILIATION AND NON REPETITION OF THE CONFLICT

IS CREATED

UBPD
UNIDAD DE BÚSQUEDA
DE PERSONAS DADAS POR DESAPARECIDAS

COMISIÓN DE LA VERDAD

JEP
JURISDICCIÓN ESPECIAL PARA LA PAZ

Chart 2. Structure of the Comprehensive System for Peace
(SIP, from its name in Spanish)
Photography: Truth Commission

A SPECIAL TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Of the six major points into which the Peace Agreement was divided, the fifth was related to the agreements on the victims of the conflict. Three of the most important background information and references for the dialogue, agreement and construction of all the contents of this point were: i) Act 975/2005, which provided a transitional institutional reference framework created during the «Justice and Peace» process, and which in its Articles 3 and 5 defines the concept of victim of the armed conflict in Colombia; ii) The work of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation, and therein, the Historical Memory Group; and iii) Act 1448/2011, better known as the Act on Victims and Land Restitution, which provides the measures for care, assistance and comprehensive reparation to people who have been victims of the armed conflict, which gave rise to the Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas (Unit for Assistance and Comprehensive Reparation to Victims, Uariv). Negotiations on this point took the longest time within the process, as they began in June 2014 and ended in December 2015.

The path to undertake the journey towards a stable and lasting peace involved the search for truth, justice, and reparation, as well as the effort to clarify the disappearances in the framework of the armed conflict; therefore, during the negotiations, the stakeholders recognized the need to create a comprehensive system to search for missing persons and to formulate a transitional justice so that the crimes perpetrated would not go unpunished.

The creation of the *Sistema Integral de Verdad, Justicia, Reparación y No Repetición* (SIVJRNR, from its name in Spanish, Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition), currently known as the «Comprehensive System for Peace», was agreed upon[1]. This system is made up of different mechanisms, both judicial and extrajudicial, implemented in a coordinated manner to ensure that the rights of the victims of the conflict are met in the best possible way, to ensure accountability and recognition of responsibilities and to contribute to guaranteeing coexistence, as well as comprehensive reparation measures and guarantees of non-repetition.

The Comprehensive System for Peace (SIP) is made up of the *Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz* (JEP, from its name in Spanish, Special Jurisdiction for Peace), the *Unidad de Búsqueda de Personas dadas por Desaparecidas en el Contexto y en Razón del Conflicto Armado* (UBPD, from its name in Spanish, Unit for the Search for Missing Persons in the Context of and Due to the Armed Conflict)

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[1] Once the system was implemented and given the coordination between the agencies that made it up, as part of the communications strategy it was decided that the public name to strengthen its recognition and remembrance, emphasizing the ultimate goal of the agreement - peace - would be «Sistema Integral para la Paz» («Comprehensive System for Peace»), and henceforth in this document the system will have this name.

and the *Comisión para el Esclarecimiento de la Verdad, la Convivencia y la No Repetición* (CEV, from its name in Spanish, the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition). Its purpose is «to meet the need and obligation of the Colombian State to guarantee the rights of victims, investigate and punish the most serious crimes that occurred in the context of the armed conflict and provide legal security to those liable, within the framework of a transitional justice model without precedent in the world»[2]

The Comprehensive System for Peace was founded on the full truth, understood as a conjunction of truths that was nourished by: a) the judicial truth that emerged in the JEP about the circumstances of time, mode and place of the victimizing events; b) the humanitarian truth that made it possible to find the whereabouts of the people reported missing by the UBPD; and c) the human and broad truth in terms of coexistence addressed by the CEV, considering that the fact of contributing to the full truth did not imply the obligation to accept accountability. However, it could happen that, in the framework of its contribution, a beneficiary might accept responsibility, as will be discussed below[3].

During the mandate of the three agencies, they worked together with the System's Inter-institutional Coordination Committee and with the Victims Unit, as a permanent guest agency, and a coordination route was undertaken. A joint communication strategy was also adopted on issues commonly addressed by the SIP components, especially to disseminate its message of zero tolerance to violence and its commitment to peacebuilding.

A TRUTH COMMISSION BY AND FOR THE VICTIMS

The search for a stable and lasting peace as the horizon of the negotiations implied the construction of mechanisms and entities that responded to specific needs for truth and justice. This gave rise to the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, a transitional institution focused on the victims and responsible for building a comprehensive and insightful account of the causes and effects of the internal armed conflict; to promote the extrajudicial recognition of responsibilities of the stakeholders who in one way or another participated in the conflict and to invite the State and society to reflect on the severity of the events, in order to identify what needs to be transformed so that it never happens again, and thus move towards coexistence and non-repetition.

In order to provide a regulatory and legal framework for the creation of this Commission, technical working groups were held between government institutions and civil society organizations. The experiences, lessons learned, duration and scope of other peace commissions in the world were also considered. Likewise, an extensive collection of studies on violence and conflict since the 1960s was explored, as well as the records of different agencies and organizations that had a large amount of information collected and systematized. The result was the approval of Decree Act 588/2017.

Thus, the Commission was created as a constitutional agency of a transitory and extrajudicial nature, with an initial duration of three years. Its extrajudicial nature implied that its activities and results, as well as the information arising from them, could not be used with evidentiary value in judicial proceedings to attribute accountability.

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[2] bout Justice, The Truth Commission and the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Repetition: key concepts for its mandate.

[3] Comprehensive System for Peace, "Comprehensive System for Peace Classroom".

The decree act established the structure, general guidelines, and rules of the game of the Commission. In other words, the mandate, objectives, roles, criteria for the appointment of commissioners, general work strategies and methodologies, management bodies, forms of access and custody of information, and sources of financing, among other fundamental aspects for the operation of the agency.

The decree also established the Commission's mandate to contribute to the clarification and recognition of thirteen fundamental issues in order to describe the internal armed conflict, highlight its impacts and try to explain both its origins and the reasons for its persistence. These aspects were:

1. The most severe violations of human rights (HHRR) and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL), especially those that were repeated or massive, and which took place in very complex contexts.
2. The collective responsibilities of the State, the FARC-EP and other guerrilla groups, paramilitary groups and any other group, organization, or institution, whether national or international, that has participated in the conflict.
3. The human and social impact of the conflict, looking in particular at the groups that suffered the most, those that require special protection, such as children, ethnic peoples, peasants, and women, and also the impact on the territories.
4. The impact on democracy, the social movement, and the parties, especially the opposition parties.
5. The impact of the armed conflict among the combatants, their families, and surroundings.
6. The historical context, causes and origins of the conflict, considering different inputs such as the reports of the Commission on the History of the Conflict and its Victims.
7. Factors that contributed to the persistence and extension of the armed conflict.
8. The actions of the State, the guerrilla groups, the paramilitary, and the different sectors involved in the armed conflict.
9. The phenomenon of paramilitarism in all its dimensions.
10. Displacement and land dispossession in the context of the conflict.
11. The relationship between drug trafficking in all its links.
12. The experiences of social resistance and resilience of the communities.
13. The positive transformation of institutions and organizations throughout the armed conflict.

This mandate gave rise to the Commission's objectives, provided for in Article 2 of the Decree Act. First, to contribute to the clarification of the truth about the conflict and to offer a comprehensive explanation of its complexity. Second, to promote the recognition of the dignity of the victims, the damages and violations of their rights, the voluntary acknowledgement of responsibilities (both individual and collective) and society's recognition of what happened. Third, to contribute to coexistence in the territories. And fourth, to identify and promote the necessary conditions for non-repetition.

In addition to the fulfillment of the truth as a right of all people and a public good necessary to deepen democracy and the good life of society and future generations, we sought the construction of a narrative based on a reflective analysis of the gravity of what happened, the pain and also the processes of resistance and positive transformations that were built in response to the war.

Since its constitution, the Commission has had a territorial approach to guarantee an approach to the realities of the conflict from the different regions of the country. Recognizing that peace is built in the territories acquired a particular connotation for the Commission because it meant recognizing that the armed conflict has not impacted in the same way in all areas, so clarifying the conflict implied listening to the people in their different territories:

> *The territorial approach involves considering and recognizing the needs, characteristics and economic, cultural, and social peculiarities of the territories and communities in order to guarantee socio-environmental sustainability and to implement the different measures in an integrated and coordinated manner, with the active participation of the citizens*[4].

The nearly four years of the Commission's mandate focused on two main processes. On the one hand, the clarification of the causes, patterns, contexts, and factors that have allowed the conflict to continue. On the other, social dialogue as a national and territorial deployment to mobilize society around the search for the truth. The first focused on the research process based on a broad territorial deployment for listening and managing the knowledge that was produced, utilized, and transferred; the second, on opening a national dialogue based on spaces for listening, recognition of accountability, promotion of coexistence in the territories and dialogues for the non-repetition of the armed conflict.

[4.] Government of the Republic of Colombia, Final agreement to end the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace.

Photography: Truth Commission

REFERENCE MAPS

To carry out its work, the Truth Commission took as a reference the experience of other commissions. Among these, the closest were in Latin America: Chile, Guatemala, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru, Argentina, and Ecuador, although the experience of the South African Commission was also important. The recommendations, achievements, and difficulties of these other efforts to seek the truth served as a guideline for the Commission in Colombia and the development of its mandate.

From the Guatemalan process, for example, great lessons were learned for the development of an information system that would allow the collection, reception, organization, and availability of information. Among other references consulted, the Commission for Historical Clarification (REH, from its name in Spanish) and the Inter-diocesan Project for the Recovery of Historical Memory (REMHI, from its name in Spanish) stand out. The Colombian Commission was developed in a time characterized by abundant information and high technological development. Therefore, its challenge was not only to access information, but also to develop sufficient tools that would allow the management of the vast amount of previous knowledge, in addition to the knowledge that would produce.

Through other experiences, such as those of South Africa, Peru, and Paraguay, it was understood the importance of promoting public participation strategies «as spaces of loudspeaker and recognition for the victims, as well as strategies to disseminate the truth while the Commission was working, not leaving these revelations only for the publication of the Final Report»[5]. Analyzing the experience of other commissions made it clear that these are not agencies whose final product is generally a report but should be understood as institutions in charge of processes that contribute to the truth and the recognition of facts that broke the social fabric of the territories. It is in public spaces where other practices of recognition and communication that build trust and allow understanding the value of the story in order to understand what happened begin to take place.

[5.] Martín Beristain, "Truth commissions: from comparative experience to proposals for Colombia as part of the peace process".

In this regard, among the points of analysis and comparison that guided the design of the Colombian Commission in order to understand the complexity of the research and its working methods, the following points were considered:

- The number of dead and missing persons, victims of torture or cases of massacres (from 3,000 dead and missing persons in Chile, 12,000 in Argentina, or an estimated 65,000 in Peru and 200,000 in Guatemala, according to estimates).
- The time of dictatorship, authoritarian regime, or internal war (between the eight years of dictatorship in Argentina and the almost four decades of internal war in Guatemala, or the 45 years of the formalization of the apartheid regime in South Africa).
- The prevalence of violence in urban or rural areas (mostly urban in Chile, Argentina, or Ecuador, while mainly rural in Peru, Guatemala, El Salvador and in both sectors in Paraguay or South Africa); the ethnic characteristics and the situation of social exclusion of the affected population, such as the impact on indigenous populations (75% and 83% of the victims in Peru and Guatemala, respectively).
- The involvement of paramilitary groups and intra-community violence, as in Guatemala and Peru. This situation complicates the processes of local peace reconstruction because victims and perpetrators often coexist in contexts of impunity[6].

Another central point was the inclusion of ethnic peoples in the clarification processes. The commissions in both Peru and Guatemala, although they had a considerable percentage of indigenous victims, did not analyze the consequences of the violence directly from their rights, but in a more general manner. Paraguay focused only on the case of the Aché people, and Chile, 15 years after the end of the mandate of its original commission, opened a specific commission to look at cases related to the Mapuche people.

The Colombian Truth Commission was nourished by all these experiences, while at the same time proposing new paths and learning routes that enriched the search for the truth by understanding that it had to place itself «next to the pain and suffering» and dare to face «the truths that do not want to be heard»[7].

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[6] Martín Beristain

[7] Martín Beristain, "To do our job. Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition".

Photography: Truth Commission

CARDINAL POINTS

CLARIFICATION[8]

Based on the above, the direction where the Commission should direct its work towards was determined. Although three objectives were initially defined, in the second half of 2019 the agency expanded these to include a fourth: non-repetition, wherein it was reiterated that human rights violations and breaches of IHL are something that deserves to be rejected by all and should not and cannot be repeated. Each of them is defined as follows:

The clarification sought to construct an explanation of what happened during the internal armed conflict in order to contribute to the satisfaction of the victims' and society's right to the truth, and a thoughtful analysis of the severity of what happened, of the pain and also of the processes of resistance and positive transformations that, as a society, have been built to resist the war. The main concern of the clarification was to shed light on the reasons why the internal armed conflict had existed and had spread over time, as well as to know what happened, how, where, and when, and to explain who benefited from the violence. The clarification effort was also interested in identifying strategies to prevent its repetition.

The knowledge that was produced during the research was organized on the basis of criteria such as considering what could best answer the questions of the victims and society, what could best explain the complexity of the conflict, which were the most dire or relevant events, which were the most unknown or silenced, which were the most likely to be repeated, and which actions contributed most to the possibility of building a lasting peace. The information was gathered through the collection of individual and collective testimonies, in-depth interviews, and life stories, as well as the collection of the memory produced around the armed conflict, in a research route that followed four main strategies until reaching the Final Report. The Commission sought to provide this explanation through patterns of violence, the main historical, political, cultural, and environmental dynamics of the armed conflict, and the factors that cause the war not to cease.

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[8] Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing, and understanding in order to transform".

The Commission understood recognition in three dimensions. First, the recognition of victims as political subjects with the capacity to transform those whose fundamental rights were violated by the war. Second, the recognition of individual or collective perpetrators who by action, omission, complicity, or negligence caused harm to people's dignity, denied them their fundamental rights, or used violence in the context of the internal armed conflict. These may be armed actors (public forces, insurgent groups, self-defense groups and paramilitaries), State agents or civilians, whether individuals, groups, or institutions. And third, society's recognition of the severity of the armed confrontation and its consequences, as well as the need to commit themselves to peacebuilding. Consequently, the Commission promoted a dialogue to question and challenge the normalization of all types of violence, to dispel the fear that some social sectors have expressed for the truth and to avoid the re-victimization of those who have suffered from the armed conflict. The Commission sought that the victims could become citizens with full rights, and that those responsible could also participate in coexistence and peacebuilding by contributing to compensating society and the victims.

This objective sought to promote a collective reflection in two directions: one towards the past on the experience of the internal armed conflict and its victims, and the other towards the future on the social, institutional, political, cultural, and human mechanisms that should repair what happened and guarantee that it will not be repeated. For the development of the recognition process, the Commission designed a road map with its relevant spaces, actions, and moments. The principles that were to govern participation in these events were the commitment to truth, listening and dialogue, the central role of the victims, transparency, the promotion of recognition and the encouragement of coexistence and non-repetition.

RE COG NI TION

Photography: Truth Commission

CO EXIS TENCE

This other cardinal point consisted of promoting and strengthening coexistence processes in the territories through dialogue, trust-building, and agreements for coexistence. This meant contributing to the creation of a transforming environment for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and the construction of a democratic culture that cultivates tolerance and promotes empathy and good living. To this end, a mapping of coexistence experiences in the territories made it possible to identify lessons learned and make visible the processes of resistance and coping that the communities have promoted as a result of the conflict. Furthermore, dialogues were held wherein different stakeholders built agreements and commitments based on problems arising from the conflict that persists in the territories.

Within the framework of this objective, the aim was to make coexistence an equitable and sustainable source of cultural, social, and economic development wherein the environment and natural resources are protected, and diversity and the peaceful and legal resolution of conflicts are recognized.

Photography: Truth Commission

The purpose of this objective was to promote actions and processes, and to create inputs for recommendations that would contribute to lay the foundations for the non-repetition of human rights violations and breaches of IHL, as a fundamental requirement for peacebuilding. The Commission understood that for this purpose it was necessary to understand and analyze the factors that allowed the persistence of the armed conflict.

Within the framework of this objective, public, open, and participatory reflection on the non-repetition of the conflict was promoted in search of basic political consensus and concrete commitments from the participants. In these processes we worked with different stakeholders and sectors such as victims, territorial organizations, and local and national authorities.

The formulation of recommendations on institutional transformations in different areas was also promoted. Understood as a set of measures or calls to action for non-repetition, these recommendations addressed the Commission's findings and had clear recipients, and their development considered the contributions of all sectors that participated in the different mission processes.

In addition, it was essential for the Commission that both the existing resistance and coping processes, as well as those promoted during its mandate, were able to consolidate, maintain their dynamics and endure, with the support of key stakeholders from society, the institutional framework, and the international community.

We have seen up to this point how, from the Peace Agreement and Decree Act 588/2017, the mission and mandate of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth began to take shape with two main strategies: the clarification of the truth about what happened in the armed conflict and a broad dialogue with society to mobilize the search for this truth. In order to carry out its purposes of clarification, recognition, coexistence, and non-repetition, it was necessary for the Commission to have an organizational structure in harmony with its mission objectives. In the following chapter, this structure, and the roles whereby it was organized to achieve its mandate are described in detail.

NON-REPETITIÓN

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: María Paula Durán

PREPA RATIONS FOR THE MISSION

T hrough Legislative Act 01/2017[9], Decree Act 588/2017[10] and the ruling C-017 of 2018[11] As guidelines, the Commission began the processes necessary for its operation: the selection of commissioners, the creation of the agency's organizational structure and the drafting of the rules that would regulate it. The areas that would comply with the mandate were defined, with teams in charge of carefully monitoring the processes.

[9.] «Whereby a title of transitory provisions of the constitution is created for the termination of the armed conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace and other provisions are enacted».

[10.] «Whereby the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition is organized».

[11.] «On the nature, objectives, guiding criteria and mandates for the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition within the framework of the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace».
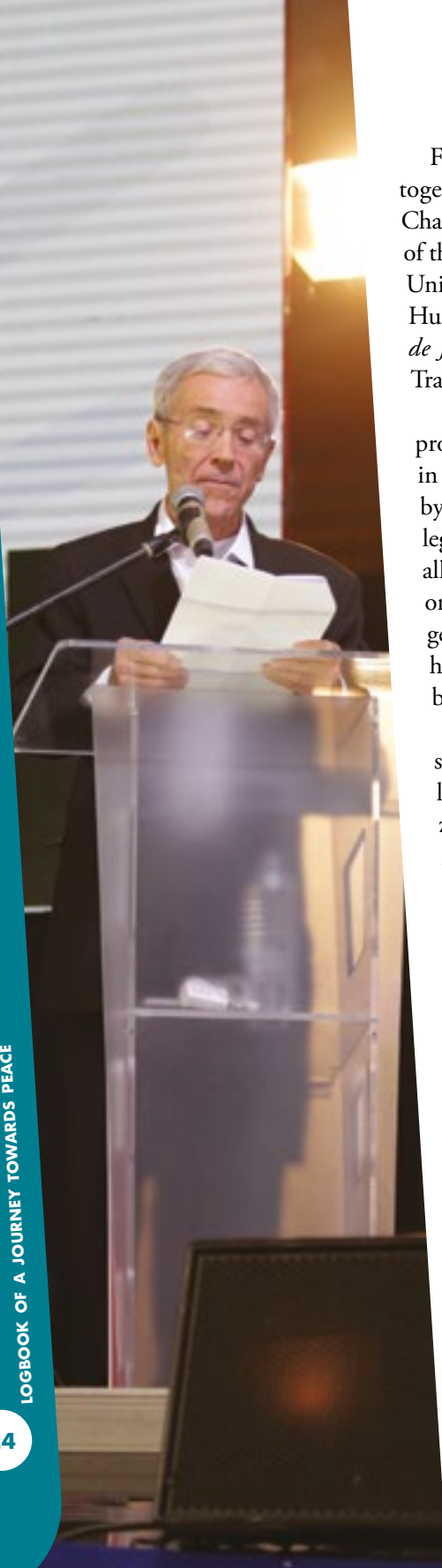
For the selection of the group of commissioners, it was decided in Havana to put together a selection committee comprised of a delegate appointed by the Criminal Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice, a delegate appointed by the Secretary General of the United Nations, a delegate appointed by the Permanent Commission of the State University System, a delegate appointed by the President of the European Court of Human Rights and a delegate appointed by the delegation of the *Centro Internacional de Justicia Transicional* (ICTJ, from its name in Spanish, International Center for Transitional Justice) in Colombia.

This committee sought to guarantee transparency and thoroughness in the selection process and to encourage citizen oversight and the participation of social organizations in the nomination of candidates. The selection methodology was developed jointly by the committee and inputs from civil society. This sought to ensure impartiality, legitimacy, and independence in the selection process. It was a pluralistic process that allowed the greatest number of sectors of society to be represented, especially victims' organizations. It was considered that the selection should be equitable in terms of the gender approach. Also, that there be regional representation and that the candidates have a track record in human rights issues. Consideration was also given to the possibility of electing international commissioners, with no more than three.

Six public calls for applications were made, to which more than 200 people applied, showing the social support that the Commission had from the beginning[12]. Once the list of nominees was available, a process was opened to receive comments from the citizens. The selection committee, after a thorough analysis, publicly interviewed 34 people in early November 2017. From among them, the selection committee chose five female commissioners, five male commissioners and the Commission's president.

In order to ensure the inclusion of the ethnic perspective, two of the eleven seats on the plenary of commissioners were offered to stakeholders representing indigenous peoples and Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero peoples. Several leaders representing these peoples applied and followed the same selection process. The candidates elected for these seats were Patricia Tobón, who had a collective nomination, submitted by the *Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia* (ONIC, from its name in Spanish, National Indigenous Organization of Colombia), and María Ángela Salazar (R.I.P), who had the strong support of the Departmental Working Group of Victims of the Armed Conflict in Antioquia.

The other elected commissioners were as follows. Truth commission experts Carlos Beristain and Alejandro Valencia. Carlos Beristain has special experience in psychosocial care, and Alejandro Valencia has a long career in the promotion and defense of human rights. Alejandra Miller, who has defended women's rights through the Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres (Peaceful Route of Women) and was nominated by women's organizations and

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[12] Semana Magazine, "The country urgently needs a Truth Commission".

part of the country's feminist movement. Saúl Franco, physician, «university professor and researcher of violence and the armed conflict and its impact on the life and health of individuals and communities»[13].

Marta Ruiz, a journalist with more than 15 years of experience covering the internal armed conflict, and Lucía González, a social and cultural manager with extensive experience in the formulation of projects related to art and culture for social transformation, also participated. Alfredo Molano (R.I.P.), sociologist and journalist recognized for his research on the origins and impacts of the armed conflict in the country also took part in this work[14]. Carlos Ospina Galvis, a retired Army major who has been leading the Colombian Association of Military Victims of the Armed Conflict (Acomivic O. V.) since 2013[15]. And finally, Jesuit Father Francisco de Roux, nominated by the citizens' movement La Paz Querida (The Longed-For Peace)[16], unanimously chosen as chairman by the committee after considering his background and contributions to peacebuilding in the country.

The commissioners were formally sworn in on May 8th, 2018. On this date, the agency's preparation period began, which lasted six months. During this period, administrative and methodological processes were structured, as well as the strategy for territorial deployment and listening and the definition of the work teams. Once this period was completed, on November 28th, 2018, the official mandate began, which for almost four years had as its central core the dignification of the victims[17].

In 2019 and 2020, the agency suffered two major losses: Alfredo Molano and Ángela Salazar passed away due to health complications[18]. Alejandro Castillejo, an scholar with a long history of research in memory processes in the territories, who has also participated in other truth commissions, and Leyner Palacios, a Choco leader (Original from the Department of Chocó) and survivor of the Bojayá massacre, who for more than 20 years has worked with the Pastoral Social and the Comisión Interétnica por la Verdad del Pacífico (Inter-Ethnic Commission for the Truth of the Pacific), as well as with Afro-descendant communities victims of the conflict, were chosen to hold these positions. Both went through a selection process by the full commissioners[19].

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[13] Truth Commission, "Saúl Franco".

[14] Truth Commission, "Los y las comisionadas (The Commissioners)".

[15] Ospina resigned on May 2nd, 2022, due to disagreements with the Final Report.

[16] Editing Oficce of EL TIEMPO, "*Postulan a Francisco de Roux a la Comisión de la Verdad* (Francisco de Roux nominated to the Truth Commission)".

[17] Truth Commission, "The eleven truth commissioners were sworn in by President Juan Manuel Santos"

[18] Molano died on October 31st, 2019, and Salazar died on August 7th, 2020.

[19] Alejandro Castillejo took office in April 2020, and Leyner Palacios in September 2020.

Photography: Truth Commission

ORGANIZATION CHART TRUTH COMMISSION

PLENARY OF COMMISSIONERS

- Interinstitucional Relationship Office
- Office of Cooperation and Partherships
- Coordination of communication and dissemination strategies

PRESIDENCY

SECRETARY GENERAL

- Legal and Contractual Management Office
- Planning and Projects Office
- Internal control office
- Internal disciplinay control office
- Administrative and Financial Management

Social Dialogue Directorate
- Coexistence Objective
- Objective of non-repetition
- Recognition Objective

Knowledge Directorate
- Knowledge Depurity-Directorate
- SIM Information System Coordination

Territory Directorate
- Macro-territorial Offices
- Territorial Offices

Ethnic Peoples DIrectorate

Cross-cutting

- The strategy: Participation and Sectors
- Cultural and artistic strategy and coordination
- Strategy Coordination of Pedagogy
- Coordination of psychosocial approach
- Coordination of genre approach
- Life cycle and disability approach coordination

Chart 3. Organization structure of the Truth Commission
Source: Truth Commission

Once in office, the commissioners undertook the task of setting up the agency that gave life in the country to a truth clarification process of this size. During the period of preparation, the general secretary of the commissioners was also involved in the process[20] and a team of legal and administrative experts from different disciplines who laid the foundations for the smooth operation of the Commission.

[20.] Elected by the plenary of commissioners, exercised the legal representation of the Commission and as authorizing officer of the expenditure, entered into the contracts, agreements, and conventions necessary for the proper operation of the Commission as per Art. 22 Decree Act 588/2017.

The budget that made the establishment of the agency and its processes feasible initially came from international cooperation. This represented an important backing for the transitional justice system, an economic and political support that boosted national and territorial processes, in force for almost four years of the agency's operation and a fundamental part of the networking with partners.

The first Certificate of Budget Availability (CDP, from its name in Spanish) was issued in May 2018. From that moment on, the Ministry of Finance was in charge of advising the Commission in its administrative processes. Then, in July 2018, *the process of populating* and entering into contracts for the people who joined the agency began. To make this possible, the necessary regulatory processes were previously advanced: obtaining the Taxpayer Identification Number (NIT, from its name in Spanish, TIN) before the National Tax and Customs Directorate (DIAN), registry in the Integrated Financial Information System (SIIF), and a Technical Study for the creation of the agency.

By August 2018, it was possible to have the first organizational structure of the agency, set up in the light of Decree Act 588/2017, an organization chart[21] which includes the plenary of commissioners, the president and the offices of inter-institutional relations and cooperation and partnerships.

Throughout its mandate, the Commission made several adjustments to its organizational structure, creating areas that coordinated processes and strategically changing teams, always in accordance with mission needs and proving its flexibility and adaptability to meet its mission objectives in an effective manner.

THE PLENARY

The Plenary of Commissioners, led by the President of the Commission, was the body for making and approving all the agency's decisions. The Plenary not only met regularly from the preparation stage, but also took on and decided the general guidance and methodology and, thereby, the way in which the development of its processes, the organizational structure and everything related to budget, and management would be carried out.

The concepts of extended plenary sessions also emerged, which included guests depending on the topics to be discussed, having as a principle the coordination with the people who led the processes in the Commission. In some cases, extended plenary sessions were held, consisting of several days of ongoing work. In order to develop in-depth and structural discussions, the extended and expanded plenary sessions were held simultaneously. The plenary rapporteur was the only person other than the commissioners who was present in all three settings, taking detailed and complete records of the discussions and decisions, both to make the decision-making processes transparent and to document the Commission's legacy.

[21.] Resolution 0006 August 24/2018 whereby the internal structure and staffing structure of the Commission is adopted.

PRESIDENCY

The main function of the President of the Commission was to direct the work leading to the achievement of the mandate, to be its spokesperson, to chair the sessions of the Plenary of Commissioners, to issue resolutions and acts in accordance with the decisions of the Commission and the rules of procedure. He had advisors who supported his decisions and tasks, some of them of a political nature, others of a legal and procedural nature. The social and political context surrounding the Commission influenced its work and relationships. For this reason, political and inter-institutional advice made it possible to build bridges of work and cooperation with different stakeholders at the national-territorial and international levels.

In addition, three offices were created. First, the Office of Inter-institutional Relations, which was in charge of guaranteeing interaction, cooperation, and the complementary nature of the SIP, where there were protocols for cooperation and information exchange, an Inter-institutional Coordination Committee, headed by this office, and a strategy for the delivery, ownership, and sustainability of the legacy of the Truth Commission built and implemented jointly with the JEP and the UBPD. In this scenario, the Commission undertook actions that allowed for the coordination and implementation of the provisions of the Final Peace Agreement. Particularly, a joint work with the components of the SIP. Alejandro Valencia was appointed commissioner in charge of this coordination, in accordance with Resolution 058/2017[22].

Second, the Cooperation and Partnerships Office was responsible for strengthening ties and building bridges between the mission teams and the different partners, since permanent coordination with social, public, and private stakeholders at the local, regional, national, and international levels was required to achieve the Commission's objectives and mandate. This effort consolidated political, technical, and financial support from the international community, diplomatic corps, multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies, private foundations, academia, and non-governmental organizations. In order to guide the management of allies and cooperating partners in a pluralistic manner, the Plenary decided to create a Cooperation and Partnerships Committee, with the purpose of analyzing financing possibilities from international cooperation for its processes and to serve as a space to advance in the formulation and follow-up of cooperation projects[23] .

[22.] «Whereby a commissioner is appointed for the coordination with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, the Unit for the Search for Missing Persons and other agencies of the Interinstitutional Committee of the SIVJRNR on behalf of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition»

[23.] Resolution 043/2020, p.1

Finally, the office of Strategic Coordination of Communication and Outreach was in charge of thinking about communication in a cross-cutting manner based on the Commission's mission objectives and needs. This office understood communication not only as the production of contents, messages, and information products, but also as a communicative and public strategy to mobilize society. Thus, communication was approached as the construction of meaning and, therefore, the focus was placed on narratives/stories that were built in a great social and public dialogue.

To this end, the office created a unified, but not centralized strategy, with clear criteria and guidelines, based on diversity of production sources within the agency, which implied a permanent effort of coordination and articulation. The main objective of the communication strategy consisted in promoting stories for the construction of joint meanings and not only in managing an informative process through different channels and media. Thus, the aim was to make sense of knowing the truth through narratives and stories, that is, through a social and public dialogue.

The communication strategy that was formulated was coordinated with the Commission's objectives from four dimensions that provided a guideline for action. The first was the organizational dimension that sought to «contribute to the coherence between the practical activity of the human team and the tenets and guidelines of the Commission, and to the coordination and integration among the four strategies». The second was corporate, where the purpose was to position the institution and make it visible from its mission, highlighting its thoroughness, plurality, and public ethics. The third was informative, which consisted of disseminating what it did do and promoting public conversations through social dialogue processes. Finally, the mobilizing dimension, which sought to «propose a collective imaginary (narrative) and new understandings of the past that would summon Colombian society to take on a road map (legacy) embodied in the Report to build a future of peaceful coexistence»[24].
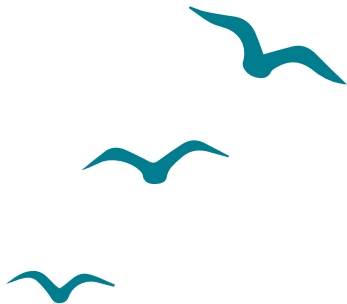

24. Presentation of communication strategy, 2020.

Photography: Truth Commission

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

In order for the Commission to operate properly, once the organizational structure and the manual of duties by unit had been agreed upon, it was necessary for each area to develop its own processes. During this first period, guidelines, protocols, procedures, manuals, and policies were drawn up with a view to implementing the Commission's mission. The General Secretariat, with its four offices, and the Administrative and Financial Directorate were responsible for organizing, coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating the work of the agency's departments. Their work consisted of providing guidance to the Commission to ensure strict compliance with the regulatory requirements for its operation.

The Legal and Contractual Management Office provided legal and extrajudicial advice and representation. This office was in charge of keeping up to date with current regulations and accompanying the Commission in the construction of procedures for contracting natural and/or legal persons who would provide services and goods for its operation. It was envisaged that, in order to preserve the autonomy of the ethnic peoples and organizations, their own organizational and administrative forms would be honored for the execution of contracts and inter-administrative and association agreements, in the cases and moments of the process to be defined.

The Planning and Projects Office advised and coordinated the «design, execution and assessment of plans, programs, projects and activities of the Commission»[25]. Each year, the office had to build, in coordination with the other departments, the route that contributed to the achievement of the mission objectives. In order to assess and follow up on the Commission's management, the Internal Control Office carried out a series of annual audits that made it possible to identify strengths and make improvement plans for the processes.

On the other hand, the Internal Disciplinary Control Office, in an autonomous and independent manner, was in charge of advancing the preliminary inquiry, investigating, and ruling on disciplinary processes against those employees who, as public servants, had engaged in behaviors that were contrary to the company's mission. This office offered an induction to prevent disciplinary misconduct, and created the disciplinary control manual, which was freely accessible throughout the whole process.

The Administrative and Financial Directorate (DAF) coordinated seven areas that together were responsible for «developing the processes related to planning, programming and budget execution, accounting control, procurement, administrative services and human resources administration, document management, citizen services and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) administration, to ensure the proper operation of the Commission at both the national and territorial levels»[26]. The Ministry of Finance, the Office of the Inspector General of the Nation and the National

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[25.] Truth Commission, "Manual of Duties".
[26.] Ibíd

Treasury provided regulatory guidelines for budget execution and administrative procedures.

The Information and Communication Technologies area provided the basis for the Mission Information System (SIM), as will be seen below. The website, the intranet, the arrangement of virtual servers and the mail with the Commission's domain were built with the best technological provision so that they would meet the contingencies and demands of the agency in an effective manner.

The Document Management team[27] had the specific task of putting together a strategic plan that would allow, at the end of the mandate, to safeguard for life the results of the mandate, namely, the Commission's archives. The plan was built since 2019 and was executed under the framework of national and international standards, as it was to be handed over to a depository agency to be the basis for future research. The document management area executed the plan and became specialized in the organization of all the archives built or contributed by different sources, in order to create the documentary fund for the agency that, once the mandate was completed, would take over the custody of the information gathered by the Commission.

The prevention and protection area was in charge of supporting employees in their travels to the regions and had the support of different institutions that ensured the safety of those who traveled to the regions[28]. This area kept a heat map on the intranet that recorded news of what was happening in the territories, in order to provide updated information to the investigators on the public order situation, with the aim of contributing to decision-making with regard to travel to the regions.

The area of resources and logistical support was key to the Commission's day-to-day operations: events and trips from all areas were managed from that area. A surveillance layout was also created that broke the paradigm used in Colombian institutional buildings: no one was ever friesked, neither at the entrance nor at the exit. The idea was to create an atmosphere of trust and familiarity, with the understanding that we were entering a peaceful environment. The result was very positive. Similarly, support was provided for the development of the different activities and processes carried out by the Commission. Protocols and guides were created to help employees manage their events.

The human resources area supported permanent employees in the hiring process. With the support of the ARL (Occupational Risks Management Office), they focused on finding the best practices to mitigate any occupational risk. For example, when traveling to the territories, different elements were considered, such as the safe traveler's kit, which guaranteed the provision of key safety tools and advice that should be kept in mind for

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[27.] It differs from the SIM in that the latter is an archive available for research, while the document management team reserves operation and functioning archives.

[28.] The Ombudsman's Office and its early warning system, the High Counselor's Office for Human Rights, the National Protection Unit, the Unit for Comprehensive Assistance and Reparation for Victims, the Police Unit for Peacebuilding, inter alia.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

both domestic and international travel, without exposing their teams to vital risks or impacts on their health.

Concerning social wellbeing, different venues were provided to motivate the participation of all the Commission's employees, both staff and contractors, in activities that changed their routines or produced entertainment, which worked to take breaks and care for the health of the staff. Several of these venues were also supported by the Commission's psychosocial approach, which provided guidance on how to treat or guide some of these spaces so that they would meet the objective of caring for the health of its employees.

The mission areas realized the need to integrate administrative personnel in 2020 to serve as a liaison with the Administrative and Financial Directorate for budget execution, which subsequently became the responsibility of the other directorates. This allowed the staff to delegate to their administrative staff the operational procedures in order to focus on the fulfillment of the mission of the company.

Some of the strategies used to disseminate responsibilities or procedures that helped ease the work and clarify roles were the publication of frequent communiqués and a large number of training sessions for employees, the creation of guides for contract supervisors and different types of procedures. Despite the different strategies developed and the particular efforts of the financial, human resources, resources and logistical support areas, this work met with resistance from the teams, and faced difficulties in administrative procedures throughout the whole process.

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TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

In order to guarantee the deployment, within the framework of a clear criterion of institutional presence in the territories and in view of the need to unify the interaction of these in a single area, a territorial directorate was created. On August 21st, 2018, the organizational structure for the implementation of the Commission was approved, which included the Directorate of Territories, with an outline of macro-territorial and territorial offices.

The Territories Directorate was in charge of coordinating, arranging, and developing the territorial deployment strategy. On a practical basis, this directorate was in charge of guiding the territorial research and the coordination with the other directorates, areas, and mission offices. This work always «considered the territorial dynamics of the armed conflict and the peculiarities of the impacted territories, seeking to guarantee the participation of diverse stakeholders and privileged access to the victims in the construction of the truth and the fulfillment of the mission objectives»[29].

Arising from the Directorate of Territories, the purpose of the macro-territorial offices was to design and implement deployment strategies in the regions based on the territorial approach that guided the agency's processes and sought to address the specific characteristics of each territory.

Based on cultural, ethnic and territorial criteria, and especially on the dynamics of the conflict, the resulting structure divided the country into eleven macro-territories under the responsibility of each commissioner: 1) Caribbean and Insular region, 2) Pacific Coast region, 3) Antioquia and Coffee Growing Axis region, 4) South Andean region, 5) Middle Magdalena region, 6) Northeastern region, 7) Central Andean region, 8) Orinoco and Amazon region, 9) Bogotá D. C. region, 10) territories of ethnic peoples, and 11) Colombian men and women in exile.

The last and most specific link in the structure of the Directorate of Territories was made up of the territorial offices, called *Casas de la Verdad* (Houses of Truth), from which the mobile teams were deployed in the territories to undertake the Commission's listening work. Their mission was «in addition to carrying out the mission roles of clarification, recognition, coexistence and non-repetition in the territory, to represent the Commission in the territory, being the institutional and political reference of the agency before the local stakeholders and organizations»[30].

The *Casas de la Verdad* (Houses of Truth) were places designed as safe spaces to share, listen and talk about the consequences of the internal armed conflict, their experiences, pains, and concerns. Much more than offices, they operated as cultural, social, political, and symbolic devices of truth[31]. The houses of truth also served as a scenario to make progress towards mechanisms for coexistence and overcoming the conflict.

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29. Truth Commission, "Manual of Duties".

30. Truth Commission, "Methodological guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding in order to transform".

31. Member of the Directorate of Territories, "Systematization Interview ".

Chart 4. Macro-territories

1. Caribe e Insular
2. Antioquía e Eje Cafetero
3. Magdalena Medio
4. Nororiente
5. Pacífico
6. Surandina
7. Centroandina
8. Orinoquía
9. Amazonía
10. Bogotá

Chart 5. Houses of Truth

1. Villavicencio
2. Cúcuta
3. Popayán
4. Barranquilla
5. Cali
6. Valledupar
7. Ibagué
8. San José del Guaviare
9. Sincelejo
10. Apartadó
11. Medellín
12. Quibdó
13. Florencia
14. Tumaco
15. Arauca
16. Mocoa
17. Puerto Asís
18. Buenaventura
19. Neiva
20. Pereira
21. Bucaramanga
22. Santa Marta
23. La Dorada
24. Pasto
25. Yopal
26. Monteria
27. Aguachica

Photography: Truth Commission

The 28 Casas de la Verdad (Houses of Truth) were progressively assembled in the territories. The team of the Directorate of Territories had a general directorate, a coordinator for each macro-territory, both missionary and administrative, a communicator and a mobile team that, in some Houses, had an ethnic liaison. The territorial teams included the office coordinator, a documentation team, members of the clarification team, Social Dialogue analysts and an administrative and public service person.

ETHNIC PEOPLES DIRECTORATE

From the beginning of the Commission's work until April 2019, there was an «ethnic working group» made up of five people. At the beginning of that year, during the prior consultation process (which will be described in detail in the following chapter), it was agreed to understand ethnic peoples from their territorial and cultural embodiment and the specific rights that have been constitutionally recognized for them, compelling public agencies to give them differential treatment. This led the Commission to rethink the way of relating to them.

It was therefore necessary to have a team knowledgeable about ethnic dynamics, with enough autonomy and capacity for decision making and dialogue with the other directorates in order to meet the objectives set forth. Hence, it was essential to have a complete directorate responsible for mainstreaming this approach with planning and follow-up mechanisms. During the preparation period, the ethnic peoples sought to set up their own directorate with a team that finally included a director, two national liaisons, one for indigenous affairs and the other for Afro-descendant affairs, a national mobile team of five people, nine liaisons belonging to ethnic peoples for the macro-territorial areas, analysts and advisors by approach and strategy. There were also territorial teams with regional analysts, analysts based in the Casas de Verdad (Houses of Truth), territorial and border liaisons, territorial liaisons for the women, family and generation approach, and translators, transcribers, and labelers for indigenous languages, as well as for the Palenquero and Creole languages. In addition, the development of a policy of inclusion of persons belonging to ethnic peoples in the different instances was requested..

DIRECTORATE OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The Social Dialogue Directorate was officially established in the second half of 2019[32]. By decision of the Plenary, the Directorate coordinated the processes carried out by the coordinations of the objectives of coexistence, recognition, and non-repetition; the strategies: participation and sectors, pedagogy, cultural and artistic, communication and dissemination; and approaches: gender, psychosocial, life path and disability, which initially operated in a fragmented manner.

The nature of its constitution was to meet in a comprehensive manner the need to engage in dialogue with people who have had a relationship with the armed conflict,

[32.] Resolution 72 of July 30/2019

either as victims or as responsible stakeholders, businessmen, institutions, or society overall. Its purpose was to listen to and include their contributions to the clarification of the truth and to contribute to the reception, support, and ownership of the Final Report, of the recommendations made for non-continuity and non-repetition, and of a narrative that would contribute to the denaturalization of the horrors of war[33].

In order to achieve its mission objectives, this Directorate developed five strategic working lines of action to guide its work – and which will be discussed in more detail in the chapter 4–[34]; an identification of stakeholders from different sectors that could contribute to the clarification of the truth was developed; methodologies were developed for the development of social dialogue processes and the strategic results sought to learn about and reject what happened in the armed conflict, promote the recognition of responsibilities, contribute to the dignity of the victims, promote capacities for dialogue and coexistence and contribute to non-repetition.

This work was carried out in coordination with the Ethnic Peoples and Territories Directorates, in such a way that mixed driving teams would meet the territorial dynamics, the local, regional, and national impact, and responsibilities would be distributed according to the capacities and experiences for the development of methodologies for dialogue[35].

DIRECTORATE OF KNOWLEDGE

In July 2019, the Directorate of Research and Knowledge Management was integrated with the Coordination of the Objective of Clarification, and as a result of this integration, the Directorate of Knowledge was born. This Directorate coordinated the Knowledge Route, namely, the investigation process for the clarification of the truth about what happened during the armed conflict. Two key areas were interconnected to lead and assist this process: the Knowledge Sub-Directorate and the SIM Coordination.

The Knowledge Sub-Directorate was in charge of providing technical, methodological, and operational support to the directorate. It had an administrative team and three teams that supported the research. *External documentary sources* were in charge of searching, receiving, collecting, and making available sources of this type[36] (files, reports, cases, databases, etc.).

A *Monitoring* team closely followed the processing of the information: it verified, cross-checked, and deepened the internal and external data for the investigation. It also activated alerts and prepared reports and recommendations on the status of the

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[33.] Truth Commission, "The Social Dialogue Process at the Truth Commission".

[34.] 1) Dialogue with victims and sectors of society for participation in the Commission's processes and their appropriation. 2) Dignification of the victims. 3) Recognition of responsibilities. 4) Consolidation and projection of recommendations for the non-repetition of the armed conflict and its causes. 5) Actions for coexistence and non-repetition.

[35.] See chapter 4.

[36.] Sources that were not produced by the Commission but contributed to the clarification exercise are referred to as such.

investigation, reminding the victims' core role in the investigative exercise, and supported interviews, especially with those appearing before the JEP, and the delivery of certificates[37].

Finally, the *Sistema de Información Misional* (SIM, from its name in Spanish, Mission Information System) was in charge of processing (sorting, classifying, standardizing) and making available all the Commission's mission information and integrating tools that allowed the transfer of the knowledge that the agency was producing, such as testimonies, databases, internal and external archive sources. The SIM was also in charge of strategies for visualizing and capturing information, and of analytical tools for research.

The system relied on the use of free software so that people, organizations, and institutions could have access to the work developed and, in the future, could own these tools and use them once the Commission's mandate was over. The SIM was then the coordinating structure between the document management and knowledge management routes[38]. SIM's work contributed to the digitalization, organization, description, and catalogue classification of internal and external sources, as well as to the integration of tools for the transmission and analysis of the Commission's knowledge.

This journey in search of the truth could be undertaken thanks to the plenary of commissioners leading this mission, in addition to an organizational structure that allowed the flow of processes and the administrative, financial, political, and communicative support to achieve its four objectives and the two main processes (social dialogue and clarification of the truth) together with policies of care and welfare for its staff and employees. The following chapter covers the period of preparation, six months wherein the commission not only thought and ensured the organizational structure described herein, but also embodied its processes thanks to its socially validated methodology, territorial, national, and international partnerships, prior consultation, networking with partners and the first actions. The deployment of this journey in the territories and what approaches and strategies it developed to guarantee research and social dialogue will be also described.

[37.] The appearing people were required to provide the JEP with this certificate as a sign of their willingness to contribute to the clarification process with confidential and exclusive information. The assessments were made at the end of the Commission's process with the objective of comparing them with the findings of the investigation, where the key instruments highlighted were the interview forms for interviewing participants, the assessment forms, and the model certificate for appearing people.

[38.] A participatory, dynamic, and plural route. Participatory because in all phases it had the active participation of the prioritized social sectors and the inhabitants of the territories mostly affected by the internal armed conflict. Dynamic, because it was under construction and validation by the research teams, the communities, official bodies, and other stakeholders, with a view to developing a cumulative process of knowledge for the establishment of patterns and explanatory contexts. Plural, because it collected, processed, and systematized multiple methods and diverse versions, sources, research techniques and participation processes. Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing, and understanding to transform". p. 35.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

A JOURNEY TO THE TRUTH

T he Commission sought the truth about what happened during the conflict through two main processes, as mentioned in Chapter 1. On the one hand, a broad dialogue with society in a national and territorial deployment to mobilize social sectors and society as a whole around the search for the truth. This dialogue was geared towards broad spaces for listening and participation, processes of recognition of responsibilities, strengthening the social fabric for coexistence in the territories and dialogues for the non-repetition of the conflict[39].

[39.] These processes will be described in depth in the following chapter

On the other hand, it sought the truth through the clarification of the causes, patterns and contexts that explain what happened during the conflict and the factors that have allowed it to remain. This process focused on national and territorial research, and thus the management of the knowledge that was produced, used, and transferred during the years of the mandate[40].

The two processes were the basis for guaranteeing the right to truth of the victims and the rest of society as a public good essential for democracy and the good life of current and future generations. Under this understanding, the Commission followed a series of ethical-political principles that guided its work during the almost four years of its mandate[41]:

1. The victims are at the center; therefore, they must be guaranteed a broad, inclusive, pluralistic, and balanced participation, which allows the satisfaction of their right to the truth.
2. Equity, equality, and non-discrimination must prevail over intolerance for reasons of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, origin, beliefs, diversity of thought, inter alia.
3. It is essential to recognize the human dignity of the victims, the perpetrators and society in general.
4. Impartiality and the absence of bias, preference or prejudice in the actions and decisions of the Commission.
5. Transparency must govern the actions of the Commission through clear rules for the exercise of its duties and accountability to the public.
6. Recognition of the plurality and cultural diversity of Colombian society as a whole.

Once the Commission was incorporated as a state agency and with defined principles, the commission developed its first actions during its preparation period and the first months of its mandate. During this stage, it focused its efforts on developing the methodology that would guide it, carrying out the prior consultation with the ethnic peoples, deploying its processes in different regions and abroad, putting together territorial, national, and international teams for the search for the truth, as well as undertaking the first actions for investigation and social dialogue. The following pages describe these first actions in the search for the truth.

[40.] Clarification will be described at length in Chapter 5.
[41.] Truth Commission, "Action Plan 2019", 4.

A SOCIALLY VALIDATED METHODOLOGY

Since December 2017, the members of the Plenary began the first discussions on what the Commission would be. During the first months of 2018, even before starting the preparation period, the planning of the research process began, based on plural listening and social dialogue. With a first mapping of documentary sources and preceding methodological experiences as a guide, and after holding throughout 2018 an intense dialogue with the country, the methodology of the Truth Commission was built: listening, recognizing, and understanding in order to transform. This methodology outlined how the Commission would proceed during the years of its mandate.

During December 2018, at the close of the preparation period, this methodology was shared with Colombian society through its website in a document that gathered the voices of multiple «communities, victims' organizations, businessmen, military, ex-combatants, women, ethnic peoples, scholars, churches, international experts and many other sectors that made recommendations, expressed their expectations and trust and pointed out paths» so that the search for the truth would be inclusive, comprehensive and compassionate[42].

PRIOR CONSULTATION

During this first period, ethnic commissioners Patricia Tobón Yagarí and María Ángela Salazar shared with the plenary the regulatory framework on the right to prior consultation[43], as well as requests from ethnic organizations for the Commission to enforce this right, understanding that its work would have a significant impact on these peoples[44]. It was agreed that during the second half of 2018 the ethnic methodology and the protocol for relations with the peoples would be consulted, recognizing the importance of their participation in all phases of the Commission's work.

The three agencies of the Comprehensive System for Peace (SIP) designed the proposed route for this prior consultation. They worked in a coordinated manner, which made it possible to streamline resources and meet one of the needs of the organizations

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[42.] Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding to transform", 3.

[43.] As a fundamental right of ethnic peoples in their capacity as ancestral peoples and collective ethnic subjects, it emanates from ILO Convention 169 ratified by Colombia through Act 21/1991 and is widely developed in the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court. Its status as a fundamental right is associated with the guarantee of the physical and cultural survival of such peoples, and the recognition of their value for humanity as bearers of ways of life and ancestral knowledge that must be protected. This right must be respected out of respect for their worldview and their own laws; and its close relationship with other fundamental rights: participation, autonomy, cultural identity, self-government, self-determination, and their irrevocable belonging to their territories of origin.

[44.] Among the background of the Prior Consultation carried out by the Commission with the three major ethnic peoples (1. indigenous; 2. blacks, Afro-descendants, Raizales and Palenquero; and 3. Roma people) it is worth highlighting two contextual elements to understand the characteristics of its development, such as: a) the issuance of the three decree acts that guide the work and specific measures of assistance, attention, comprehensive reparation, land restitution and territorial rights of the Unit for Assistance and Comprehensive Reparation to Victims (Uariv) to victims belonging to those peoples; b) the fast track process and the fact that decree 588/2017 had not been consulted with the ethnic peoples.

Photography: Truth Commission

representing the ethnic peoples and guarantee the system's comprehensiveness. This resulted in its effectiveness, legitimacy, and action without harm.

The consultation was carried out within the framework of the three ethnic bodies established by decree for this purpose: the Permanent Committee for Consultation with Indigenous Peoples and Organizations MPC (Decree 1397/1996)[45], the National Space for Prior Consultation of the Black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities ENCP (Decree 1372/2018)[46] and the National Commission for Dialogue with the Roma or Gypsy People CNDPR (Decree 2957/2010)[47].

These consultation scenarios were supported by the Attorney General's Office, the Ombudsman's Office, and international organizations whose mandates are aimed at preventing and protecting the rights of the nation's indigenous communities. The SIP carried out, between October 2018 and June 2019, the three prior consultation processes in three core stages:

- **Pre-consultation:** the SIP agencies met with the organizations and stakeholders representing the ethnic peoples in the three national committees (MPC, ENCP, CNDPR), and agreed on «how» they would carry out the territorial deployment, the consultation of the ethnic methodology and the protocol for relations with the communities.

[45.] Made up of the Ministry of the Interior (coordinator) together with the agencies related to the subject of consultation (in this case the Commission, the JEP and the UBPD), five delegates from each established macro-territory and three indigenous organizations: the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia (ONIC), the Organization of Indigenous Peoples of the Colombian Amazon Region (OPIAC) and the Tayrona Indigenous Confederation (CIT). The following organizations participated as permanent guests: Autoridades Indígenas de Colombia por la Pacha Mama ("Indigenous Authorities of Colombia for Pacha Mama", AICO), Gobierno Mayor-Autoridades Tradicionales de Colombia (Major Government-Traditional Authorities of Colombia), former constituents Alfonso Peña, Lorenzo Muelas and Francisco Rojas Birry, and the indigenous senators.

[46.] Made up of the Ministry of the Interior (coordinator) together with the agencies related to the subject of consultation (in this case CEV, JEP and UBPD) and 230 representatives of community councils and several organizational forms and expressions of the black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities, elected under the following criteria: 1) one delegate from the collective territories of each of the 32 departments and one additional delegate for each 150 thousand hectares with ownership deeds or undergoing process in each department; 2) one delegate from the urban areas of each department, another for Bogotá and one additional delegate for each 150 thousand inhabitants auto-recognized as Afro-descendants in each department and in Bogotá, according to the DANE census; 3) one delegate from each special tourist or port district (Cartagena, Barranquilla, Santa Marta, Riohacha, Buenaventura and Bogotá); 4) one additional delegate from the Raizales people of San Andrés, Providencia and Santa Catalina, another from San Basilio de Palenque and one more from each of the Harbormasters of Cauca; 5) one delegate for each of the population sectors of youth, women, victims, LGBTIQ+, people with disabilities and the elderly.

[47.] Composed of the Ministry of the Interior together with the agencies related to the subject of consultation (in this case CEV, JEP and UBPD), and representatives of each Kumpania (currently 11), their alternates and the legally constituted Roma organizations.

Photography: Truth Commission

- **Consultation:** the organizations, delegates and ethnic stakeholders, members of the three national bodies carried out the prior consultation process in the territories following the plan agreed upon in the pre-consultation.
- **Consensus, agreements, and protocols of the consultation:** the SIP agencies met at the national working groups with the ethnic organizations and stakeholders, who explained their proposals based on the inputs collected in the communities during the territorial deployment, developed the agreement between the parties and agreed on an ethnic methodology, a protocol for relations and other fundamental elements.

The main agreement was that the roadmap for the work and liaison with ethnic peoples would be the methodology of the ethnic approach and against racism, racial discrimination, and related forms of intolerance; the protocol for relations with authorities and victims of indigenous, black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, Palenquero and Roma peoples and communities, which included instructions for dealing with cases of gender-based violence in ethnic peoples, communities, and victims.

During the Consultation, it was also determined that the Commission would create a Directorate of Ethnic Peoples. This, as seen in the previous chapter, would provide the necessary and adequate technical, logistical, operational, and economic guarantees for the relationship, coordination and participation of the different and different ethnic peoples, communities, and organizations. It was also indicated that the Final Report would have an ethnic volume to guarantee the integration of the truth constructed together with the ethnic peoples, in accordance with their worldviews and ways of understanding the armed conflict. For the relationship between the Commission and the peoples, three types of working groups were established:

PRIOR CONSULTATION AGREEMENTS

- **Permanent working group with indigenous peoples and with black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal and Palenquero peoples,** as areas for dialogue on research progress on research and feedback to the working group, as well as on support agreements for the fulfillment of the agency's objectives.
- **Working group with the Special High-Level Body with Ethnic Peoples (IEANPE, from its name in Spanish),** with the purpose of guaranteeing participation and facilitating decision-making on ethnic issues. This body was created by the Peace Agreement as a consultant, representative and spokesperson of first order on ethnic issues associated with the implementation, follow-up, and verification of the Final Agreement. For this reason, when there was no agreement on decisions affecting ethnic peoples, the Commission would set up an Advisory Council made up of representatives of the IEANPE and experts on the issues under discussion, in order to enhance its criteria and facilitate decision-making.

Photography: Truth Commission
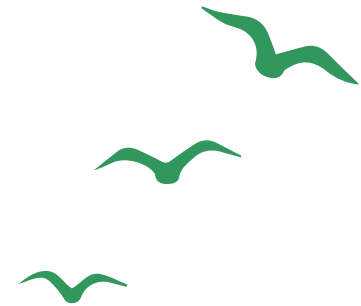
• **Permanent working group with women appertaining to ethnic peoples,** in order to ensure the effective incorporation of the gender, women, family and generation approach, as well as those proposed by the black people: psycho-spiritual, psycho-ancestral, and psycho-cultural.

With the Roma people, given their peculiarities, other agreements were reached. The Commission's activities with this people were carried out in the territories, and the agency supported each *kumpania* (group of the same roma lineage) in the development of interviews, particularly with the elderly, as well as in holding collective spaces. The confidentiality of the information was guaranteed both in these spaces and in the documents that emerged from them. On the other hand, audios and videos were recorded preserving the identity of the participants, namely, without showing their faces or elements that could identify them, unless the person stated otherwise.

For the recognitions, the Roma people focused on the visibility of their culture and their contributions to peacebuilding and did not participate in any scenario with responsible parties. In the case of coexistence processes, it contributed with the visibility of the *Kriss Romaní*, a fundamental institution for the peaceful resolution of conflicts of this people. And for non-repetition, he made recommendations with emphasis on the need to make his people visible.

All actions of the Commission with these people were coordinated with the representatives of the kumpania and the CNDRP. For the identification of the Roma people in the testimonies, they were asked to which *kumpañy* they belonged and to which *Vitzha* (lineage, clan), and the agency had to corroborate this information with the representative of each kumpañy and with the CNDPR. In the case of not being recognized by the *Kumpania* authorities, their testimony was taken as a person not belonging to their people.

When translators were needed, arrangements were made with representatives of the CNDPR, and they endorsed them. Family members could be interpreters for people who wanted to give their testimony.

According to the *zakono* (traditions and customs of the Roma people), if they wanted to include women in the processes, the meetings were held only with them, the Commission sent women to these meetings; the young women of the village were always joined by older women and no events against freedom, integrity, and sexual education in the *kumpañy* were addressed.

The prior consultation allowed us to reach agreements with the ethnic peoples, build trust between the parties and recognize the ethnic authorities on the same level as the authorities of the public agencies. In addition, it was the inauguration of the long road of clarification in the Commission, since the first large territorial deployment to several territories was carried out with them. Many of them were quite remote and had little security, but it was still possible to reach them, listen to the people and educate them

about the SIP, thanks to the joint work between the leaders of the ethnic peoples and the Commission's ethnic working group, which became the Ethnic Peoples Directorate. The territorial division of the Commission, presented below, also underwent important changes thanks to the agreements reached with the peoples during this period.

In a complementary manner, the development of a state-of-the-art work on the Colombian armed conflict was one of the first tasks led by the plenary of commissioners. The most relevant sources that in previous years addressed the causes and gave explanations of the armed conflict were studied and analyzed. A first clarification team was in charge of this exercise. It developed mappings of information sources, identified human rights archives[48] and analyzed extensive databases[49] on the conflict, as well as reports and court rulings[50].

The state-of-the-art work also established initial patterns, persistence factors and some origins of the conflict, based on a literature review[51]. It also outlined timelines of the milestones of the conflict. It also mapped coexistence processes and initiatives in the country[52] identifying coping processes, resistance and impacts that the armed conflict has caused in the regions, or positive transformations that have taken place in Colombia in the context of the conflict.

FIRST STATE-OF-THE-ART WORKS

[48.] The methodology for developing these mappings consisted of developing data collection sheets simplifying the model used for the Registro Especial de Archivos de Derechos Humanos (READH, from its name in Spanish, Special Registry of Human Rights Archives) of the Memory Center and the General Archive of the Nation and adding relevant topics for the Commission. Interviews and archive consultations were carried out to systematize the information gathered in the reports of meetings and interviews. This finally led to a matrix for assessing the sources that provided the relevant information to understand the access route and determined the value of the content to the Commission, the status of the archive, the role of the source, the correlation with the mandate and a first analytical summary of the source's contribution to the investigation.

[49.] For the database analysis exercise, mappings from different sources, Internet websites and interviews were reviewed, and the existence of 101 databases was identified. Interviews were necessary because the information required was handled internally by the organizations or agencies. A matrix was constructed to analyze the characteristics of the organizations and the information, and an analysis of their valuation.

[50.] With respect to the analysis of reports and rulings, the clarification team had the task of searching for the gray areas of information left by the Justice and Peace Act in relation to the voluntary confessions.

[51.] In relation to the bibliographic review, the State-of-the-Art Work analyzed 132 books that address the conflict, and classified them by authorship, description, time period and geographic coverage, population, and related responsible stakeholders. It also analyzed the relationship between its main subject matter and the Commission's mandate and the need for this relationship, the subtopics, the genre of the source, its approach, and the value for the Commission. This led to a first general assessment of its contribution to the investigation.

[52] Of the 47 initiatives mapped and systematized, the State-of-the-Art Work found that they were related to processes of citizen participation, democracy, and peacebuilding; community and grass-roots organizations; development and peace; Culture of Nonviolence, Peace and Reconciliation; artistic, cultural, and ancestral practices; Restorative Justice; and related to coexistence pacts and agreements.

Through this work, it was possible to consolidate an analysis that delved into the national and territorial dynamics surrounding the war, a fundamental input for the previous territorial deployment and the first listening exercises. This allowed the Commission to map a valuable archive for research, a primary source of analysis, comparison, and validation of the findings during its years of operation.

APPROACHING THE TERRITORIES

It was always clear to the Commissioners, especially following Alfredo Molano's recommendations in the Plenary, that «the Commission had to be very large at the regional level and small at the central level»[53]. The discussion then focused on how to materialize this conviction. From the beginning, the territory was understood as the place where the mandate, the mission, the processes, and the methodologies for this search for truth would be applied and become real.

To this end, the Commission proposed as its horizon a territorial approach inherited from the Peace Agreement, according to which it was evident that «peace is a territorial peace». Recognizing that peace is built in the territories meant recognizing that the armed conflict has not impacted all regions and all people in the same way; therefore, clarification implied, from the beginning, listening to the people in their territories. «The territorial approach implies considering and recognizing the needs, characteristics and peculiarities (...) of the territories and communities, in order to guarantee socio-environmental sustainability; and seeking to implement the different measures in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, with the active participation of the citizens»[54]. This approach was translated into a territorial deployment that sought to guarantee the broad participation of people in the territorial, national, and international spheres.

The territorial approach «speaks of the social, of the space shared with the different ways of life of nature, of the social history with reference to the place, of the heterogeneity of regional stakeholders, of a set of social relations that give rise to and at the same time express a shared identity and sense of purpose»[55]. These elements were the basis for understanding the dynamic condition of the conflict in each region and, in turn, the mobility and fluidity of territorial borders. Therefore, an effort was made to listen to all regions, to the hidden Colombia and to the outside Colombia, the one in exile.

To embody this approach, the regional teams approached the territory as the central place where processes made sense, decisions were made, and knowledge was built through a dynamic interpretation of the contexts. Based on cultural and ethnic criteria and the specific dynamics of the conflict, the Commission divided the country into macro-territories, managing to integrate this approach as an instrument for seeking the

[53] Member of the Directorate of Territories, "Systematization Interview".
[54] Government of the Republic of Colombia, Final agreement for the end of the conflict and the construction of a stable and lasting peace.
[55] Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding to transform".

truth: «It could not be otherwise: the voice is in the territories; the truth is in the territories, and so are the solutions»[56].

One of the first steps towards the territorial deployment of the Commission was the exploratory deployment, carried out between August and November 2018. During these months, the Commission sought to identify key stakeholders, build a map of community processes, and build trust with social, victims' organizations and institutions, in order to start its processes.

To carry out this deployment, the Commission decided that each of the eleven commissioners would be in charge of coordinating this territorial exploration in order to have direct knowledge of the current situation of the conflict and to identify organizations that would allow them to create the conditions to search for the truth[57].

The exploratory period preceded the territorial deployment that began with the Commission's mandate in December 2019. Through this, the Commission's processes in the territories also began. The deployment was adapted to a geographical division of macro-territories based on the intensity, dynamics, and effects of the armed conflict, as well as the geographical and political division of the country. In other words, it proposed a new territory mapping for the analysis of the conflict. This understanding was made through the state-of-the-art works, diagnoses of the armed conflict and participatory exercises wherein, as will be seen below, the information was cross-checked with the communities' help.

The *Atlas of the Regional Impact of the Armed Conflict in Colombia 1990-2013* of the President´s Advisory Office for Human Rights, the Basta ya (Enough is Enough) Reports of the Center for Historical Memory, the Post-Conflict Vulnerability Maps of the Peace and Reconciliation Foundation, and the Armed Conflict Impacts Index of the National Planning Department were some of the documents consulted to propose a first territorial division[58] that could be tailored to the dynamics of the conflict.

At the end of 2018, once this exploratory process was completed, the creation of the territorial teams began. The large territorial presence designed to approach the complex and diverse regional realities sought to bring the Commission closer to the communities and establish smooth communication channels with society.

Within the framework of the ethnic methodology, the indigenous peoples' own macro-regional division was also respected and implemented. Historically,

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[56] Member of the Directorate of Territories, "Systematization Interview ".

[57] Commissioner Saúl Franco, 2018

[58] For further information on how the state of the art of the armed conflict was developed for the search for the truth, see the systematization document Truth Clarification Methodology, Chapter 1: The Beginning of the Research. p. 19 to 25.

Photography: Truth Commission

ETHNIC
MACRO-TERRITORIES

10. Ethnic approach
11. Indigenous reservations
12. Community Councils
● Kumpanias

10.

11.

12.
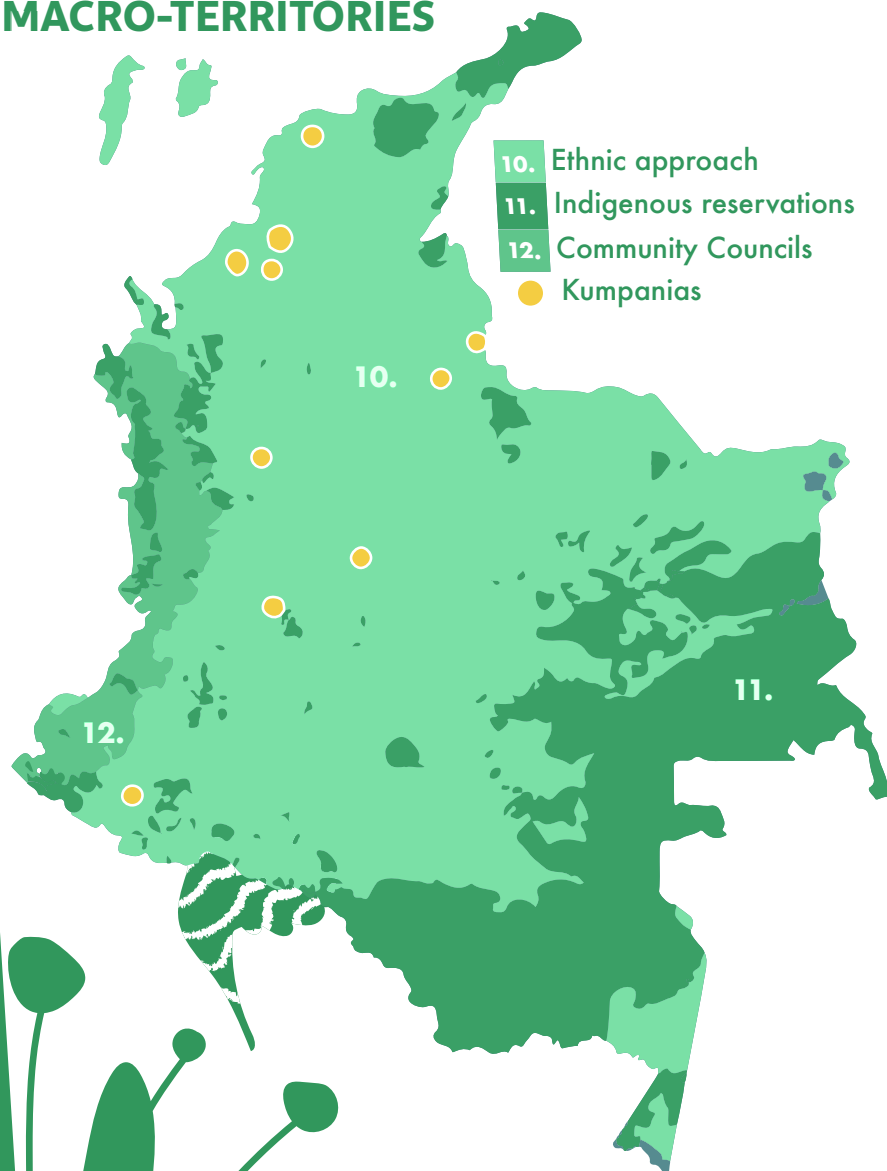
Chart 6. Ethnic macro-territories
Photography: Truth Commission

the indigenous organizations that make up the Permanent Working Group for Agreement with Indigenous Peoples (MPC) have worked under their own macro-territorial division, in order to avoid the fragmentation of the peoples, the ethnic territories and their organizational processes.

With regard to the division of the Commission, there were two substantial differences: on the one hand, in the indigenous macro-territories, Orinoco and Amazon regions were different macro-territories and, on the other, Putumayo was part of the Amazon macro-territory. For this reason, one of the requests of the organizations representing the ethnic peoples was that these two macro-territories should be changed, due to the fact that[59], Failure to do so would fragment the territorial and organizational processes of the Amazon peoples and would disrupt the analysis of the conflict over the phenomena of violence both in the Andean Amazon foothills and in the transition areas towards the Orinoco region plains and the Amazon region plain.

In this regard, the border areas of the Amazon region with Nariño, Cauca, Huila, Meta, and Vichada should also observe the criteria of reservations, territories, and indigenous organizational processes, as well as the nature of common use. Putumayo, on the other hand, should be analyzed on the basis of the

[59] The indigenous organizations of the MPC delivered these arguments to the Commission in the document: *Mandate of the Indigenous Peoples and Communities of Colombia in the development of the Prior Consultation of the SIVJRNR for the CEV component*, January 2019.

dynamics of three regions: Andean-Amazonian foothills, Amazonian plain, and transition and plains.

Adapting to the cultural contexts of each territory, respecting the agreement with the ethnic peoples during the prior consultation and guided by the territorial dynamics of the conflict, the deployment was implemented through a network of territorial headquarters called Casas de la Verdad (Houses of Truth). These were meeting places for communities, people, organizations, victims and those responsible to share, listen and understand the conflict from their experiences, impacts and resistance processes. «They are much more than offices, they are cultural, social, political and symbolic devices of truth»[60].

The Houses of Truth were also a scenario to advance towards the recognition of responsibilities and proposals for coexistence and overcoming the conflict. Between December 2018 and December 2019, 22 Truth Houses were opened: Villavicencio, Cúcuta, Popayán, Barrancabermeja, Cali, Valledupar, Ibagué, San José del Guaviare, Sincelejo, Apartadó, Medellín, Quibdó, Florencia, Tumaco, Barranquilla, Arauca, Mocoa, Puerto Asís, Buenaventura, Neiva, Bucaramanga, and Pereira. In 2020, the Commission increased its presence in the country, reaching a total of 28 Houses of Truth, including Santa Marta, Montería, Pasto, Yopal, Aguachica and La Dorada. There was «such a large participation, a very broad expectation was generated, it was a very broad participatory process». For the Directorate of Territories team «this was the most important and the most beautiful thing that was managed to produce from the territorial level: how the preparation of the opening of a House of Truth was consolidated as a process of listening and collective construction for a common purpose, to listen to the voices of the territory»[61].

The territorial teams consisted of a coordinator, researchers and support professionals, a communications expert, administrative support, and liaisons for social dialogue and for ethnic peoples. Mobile teams also supported research and social dialogue in the different regions.

Overall, each of the Houses of Truth managed to extend the territorial deployment through four major processes. First, pedagogical campaigns for the presentation of the Commission in the territories and its positioning, with emphasis on building trust with the communities. Second, an initial diagnosis to have timelines and a mapping of actors in each territory, the wind map. Third, participatory and community diagnoses as tools to compare the diagnoses and the state-of-the-art work of the conflict. From these exercises emerged, as a fourth process, the research routes for each territory.

Simultaneously, as a central element for the work of listening and for social dialogue, the Commission decided to highlight and recognize the victims of the armed conflict

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[60] Member of the Directorate of Territories, "Systematization Interview"
[61] Ibíd

Photography: Truth Commission

abroad. «The first thing that has not been said about exile in Colombia is that exile exists. There are hundreds of thousands of Colombians who had to leave the country because of the armed conflict»[62].

This great commitment to listen to and collect testimonies of the victims of the armed conflict not only within the national borders but also abroad was materialized with the program «Colombia outside Colombia». For the methodological preparation of the international deployment, an analysis of the existing figures of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on Colombian exile was carried out, in addition to work with key partners[63] that supported with financial resources and groups of volunteers. «A cooperative model had to be devised to be able to join these efforts, where, without a doubt, both the Colombian diaspora and the victims were key in terms of being able to join these efforts»[64].

The exile deployment was organized by cooperation networks, international nodes that brought together victims and volunteer organizations in five regions: North America, Central America, Andean Region, South America, and Europe. «Colombia outside Colombia» reached more than 25 zones around the world: Panama, Venezuela, Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Peru, Costa Rica, Mexico, Switzerland, France, Madrid, Germany, Spain (Andalusia, Catalonia, Euskadi, Valencia), Italy, Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, United Kingdom and Ireland, United States, Belgium, Canada, Sweden, and Australia.

ANDEAN REGION

NORTH AMERICA

CENTRAL AMERICA

SOUTH AMERICA

EUROPE

Chart 7.
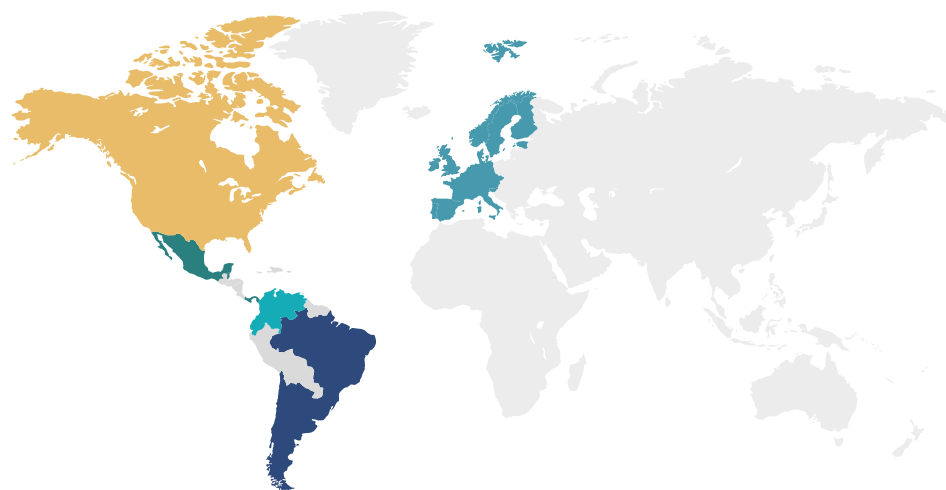Territories in exile
Source: Truth Commission

[62] Commissioner Carlos Martín Beristain, October 2021

[63] «Circles of trust, from different sectors: academia, universities, civil society, victims, diaspora, native people, sensitive and supportive of the issue of Colombia ». (Systematization Interview, Territory Management, 2022)

[64] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Territory, 2022

The exile deployment, financed by donor funds, began with training workshops on the Commission's methodology, its clarification instruments, and psychosocial tools. The nodes did not have permanent teams hired by the Commission; instead, through strategic partners (research centers, exile victims' organizations and cooperation agencies), the participation of representatives of victims' organizations, civil society, think tanks and churches was achieved. The training workshops were also attended by victims and foreign volunteers who wished to contribute to the collection of testimonies, thus becoming disseminators at the international level.

In addition to being the year of territorial, national, and international deployment, 2019 was a key year for the positioning of the Commission through the presentation and dissemination of the mandate in different scenarios to achieve recognition among social sectors, clarify expectations and start processes. As part of this great positioning effort, the macro-territorial offices carried out a variety of activities, especially educational workshops, inauguration events of the Houses of Truth, joint workshops with the SIP to explain its nature, mission, and mandates, as well as spaces for interaction with different sectors, such as the security forces, businessmen, NGOs, and research centers, inter alia. At the same time, local communication campaigns with a territorial approach, despite not having a large budget, achieved special coverage, chronicles, photo-reports and radio spots, including other strategies.

Once underway, the territorial deployment defined, as a strategic action, the construction of a local balance sheet called wind map. This tool, through an initial context analysis, had the purpose of establishing a representation of the territorial social reality, and thus establish strategies of relationship with the stakeholders. The wind maps collected information on local stakeholders, armed conflict timelines, conflict analysis, identification of coexistence experiences, and analysis of threats and opportunities, in parallel to the collection of documentary and bibliographic information. This was done through five components:

FIRST ASSESSMENTS OF THE CONFLICT: WIND MAPS

- **Historical contextualization of the conflict:** the most relevant milestones of the conflict in the regions were highlighted by means of timelines, outlining proposals for potential period mapping of the conflict to be investigated.
- **Map of stakeholders:** whereby the communities and institutions wherewith the Commission would relate and the first activities to be carried out in the territories to initiate the processes were identified.
- **SWOT analysis** of the weaknesses, opportunities, strengths, and threats[65] found in the regions, mapping the current situation for the deployment of the Commission.

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[65] Analysis of weaknesses, opportunities, strengths, and threats.

- **Identification of flagship cases** of the conflict in each region.
- **Identification of strategic actions** and objectives for each territory.

This first territorial assessment allowed us to address the complexities and peculiarities of each territory, obtain a clear representation of the social reality and cultural and ethnic criteria, as well as the dynamics of the conflict and the requests and requirements of the territories themselves. It also supported the establishment of relationship strategies with stakeholders and defined a clear strategy for territorial deployment.

Thanks to the wind maps, adaptations and modifications were made to the initial division of macro-regions, until a definitive structure of eleven large territories was established, including the international macro-region[66].

«The most important thing about the wind map is what it told us about the territory, the territory we thought we already knew. It taught us to learn, to understand the territory, and to achieve that, we first had to unlearn»[67].

FIRST LISTENING EXERCISES: PARTICIPATORY AND COMMUNITY DIAGNOSES

During the first six months of the Commission, the regional teams developed participatory diagnoses for the truth throughout the country, which became the first plural listening exercises carried out in the territories, and which sought to compare decisive information for the search for the truth. They had a broad participation of social and community organizations, non-governmental organizations and academic sectors from universities and think tanks.

The diagnoses cross-checked and validated different sources on the armed conflict in the territories based on the experiences and knowledge accumulated by the communities and the academic and organizational analyses existing in the territories. Based on this, the cores that coordinated and guided the investigation for the clarification of the truth emerged, which will be expanded in chapter 5. These cores were built thanks to the contributions, the experiences, the knowledge, the contexts, and dynamics of the conflict collected with the support of the communities.

These diagnoses were not only the first great social mobilization around the search for the truth and a space for the exchange of knowledge between society and the Commission; they were also an exercise for the collective definition of the topics and territorial priorities for the routes of investigation of what happened during the armed conflict in the country.

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[66] For further information, visit Truth Commission, *Así fue el despliegue territorial de la Comisión de la Verdad* (This is how the territorial deployment of the Truth Commission happened).

[67] Member of the Directorate of Territories, "Systematization Interview ".

In order to document and deepen the dynamics, origins, types, periods of the conflict and conditions that contributed or enabled the persistence of the armed conflict, other listening spaces, called community diagnostics, were developed. These focused on specific sectors and sought to document, through collective reflection exercises, the dynamics of violence associated with the conflict that has affected specific communities.

Through these participatory and community diagnostics, the contents of the wind maps were shared with the communities. The findings were disseminated, and their contributions were returned and cross-checked, which not only allowed to find the topic cores for the general research, but also to outline the routes for territorial research.

In addition to the territorial deployment, the first listening exercises and the state-of-the-art works of the conflict, as well as the creation of the methodology that would guide the course of this journey towards the truth, the Commission outlined different ways of relating to the plurality of communities and people in the country. To this end, it was important to establish accurate coordinates that would provide clear instructions for carrying out the different processes. These were the differential approaches that allowed to delve deeper into the different impacts of the conflict on different communities and individuals:

DIFFERENTIAL APPROACHES

Given that Colombia's ethnic peoples have suffered historical and systematic violence, recognized as a central point in the Peace Agreement, the Commission considered the national narrative of truth as an opportunity to be created with the voices, perspectives, feelings, and narratives of the ethnic peoples themselves. In addition, the Commission wanted them to expose the impact and violations of their rights in the context of the conflict, as well as their resistance efforts and their contributions to peacebuilding and the identity of the Colombian nation.

1. ETHNIC APPROACH TO RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND RELATED BIGOTRY

This was embodied in the ethnic approach against racism, racial discrimination, and related bigotry. This approach was based on the recognition that doctrines, policies, and practices based on the alleged superiority of certain peoples - based on reasons of nationality or racial, religious, ethnic, or cultural differences - are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally reprehensible, and socially unjust. And that discrimination and the underlying factors (economic, political, social factors) have been incorporated into the repertoires of violence of the armed conflict, worsening them and violating the collective rights of ethnic peoples on the basis of social logics and structures resulting from colonization, racism, patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality, and the colonialism of power.

This led to a perspective that contributed to the transformation of the conditions of discrimination, exclusion and marginalization associated with the armed conflict, which could have been the cause of victimization and expanded inequality gaps for these peoples.

In view of the above, the Commission adopted a comprehensive, historical, complex, and differentiated approach, wherein the analysis of the armed conflict transcended the individual view of IHL and human rights; instead, it incorporated a collective dimension in light of collective, economic, social, and cultural rights, wherein life and survival as peoples integrated into their territories are central. For this reason, the approach weaves five dimensions under which the Commission's processes were developed.

On the one hand, the guarantee of the rights recognized to ethnic peoples, such as self-determination, autonomy, self-government, participation, consultation and free, prior and informed consent, identity and social, economic and cultural integrity, rights over their territories and resources, recognizing their ancestral practices and those associated with the special indigenous jurisdiction that recognizes the power of their authorities to settle conflicts within their communities, in accordance with their procedures, traditions and customs.

The material recognition of cultural diversity was also considered, addressing their differential needs related to their geographical, linguistic, and cultural contexts, as well as those associated with their worldviews, narratives, and their own ways of transferring knowledge.

On the other hand, the development of assertive actions under the principle of non-discrimination, and their embodiment at several levels and in different fields: (a) in the institutional architecture by having established a directorate for work on ethnic affairs with the same status as the other directorates for decision-making and execution, (b) in the differentiated methodological approach with protocols for relations with the traditional authorities, which was agreed upon with the ethnic peoples, (c) in the creation of work teams made up of members of the different ethnic peoples, d) in the inclusion of peculiarities, needs and differentiated situations of the ethnic worlds in the Commission's regulations, as well as in the administrative, operational, contractual, planning and budgetary procedures, and e) in the construction of an ethnic volume within the Final Report, which is framed in a long-term time frame for the comprehensive understanding of the armed conflict as part of a continuum of violence historically suffered by these peoples.

In addition, the understanding of peoples, ethnic communities, and their members as political, collective and rights subjects (not as objects of assistance). Finally, the recognition of ethnic authorities as actors with the same status as institutional authorities, which should be evidenced by an interconnection in accordance with this status.

All this contributed to the dignification of ethnic victims, to the transitional justice process of truth, justice, and reparation, to overcoming the gap between formal recognition of rights and their embodiment, and to the transformation of the relationship between institutions and ethnic peoples. All of the above contributes to the symbolic reparation of historical damages suffered by ethnic peoples.

Nestor Raul Cabrera Pache
Desaparecido
Zarzal - Valle del Cauca
Noviembre 8 de 1986

DESAPARECIDO:
LEIDY JOHANA ROBAYO VILLAMIL
Simijaca, Cundinamarca
19 de Agosto de 1994

Photography: Truth Commission

As part of the ethnic approach, this emerging and permanently under construction approach was set forth in the Final Agreement, and was a proposal mainly made by the indigenous women of the country. In the Final Agreement, it should be understood that the balance and harmony between the different worlds that make up the indigenous worldviews is possible thanks to the complementary forces of the female and the male natures (neither is above the other) that are in the territories and in each of the elements that make it up: human beings and other animals, plants, spiritual beings, mountains, jungle, lakes, rivers, seas, deserts, trees, fruits, thunder, sun, rain, etc.

This comprehensive and relational concept - wherein all beings are alive, interconnected and made up of male and female forces, including women - determined an approach that goes beyond the gender vision of those who are not indigenous. In this perspective, moreover, women have a different relationship to spirituality and territory than men.

This is an approach that has contributed to understand that women have not only suffered individual impacts in the context of the armed conflict, but that there have been collective, cultural, and territorial impacts that also concern them, their families, their community, all generations, their territory, and their spiritual balance. It is not possible to separate the individual from the collective and the territorial nature, because the impacts have occurred according to the position that women hold in the community and the social relations that define them as belonging to an ethnic collective subject.

In many indigenous peoples, family is the people who share blood and community ties, that is, it includes animals, plants, trees, rivers, spiritual beings, and everything that makes up the territorial environment. Its dimension is both physical and spiritual.

Thus, to attack families in the context of the armed conflict means not only to harm their individuals, but also to damage or steal the family's productive work, burn their plots of land, prevent family participation in rituals, restrict access to medicines and markets for family and community food, affect their own schools, etc.

In these communities, the family is also the school, a space of protection led by women, where they care for and learn by observing, listening, doing, and complying with the daily responsibilities associated with work, production, sowing, community life, preservation of the territory, mother earth, culture and all its knowledge. The school is also a set of learning, awareness and cultural ownership processes that strengthen identity and become spaces for the creation of leaderships.

Today's indigenous women have sought differentiated spaces in organizational processes in order to raise their own reflections that transcend their role as caregivers, protectors, and givers of life. Their interest is to delve into their experiences as indigenous

WOMEN, FAMILY, AND GENERATION FOR ETHNIC DIFFERENTIAL ANALYSIS [68]

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[68] Colombo-German Institute for Peace CAPAZ, "Enfoque de género, mujer familia y generación. Aportes para su comprensión (Gender approach, women, family and generation. Contributions for its understanding)" Document resulting from the consultancy to the Ethnic Peoples Directorate of the Commission.

women within the productive, organizational, self-government, cultural, community and personal dynamics.

Under this understanding, then, indigenous women had to be understood as a family, as a school, as a territory and as a collective that, in the context of the armed conflict, had suffered a *continuum* of violence, including the forced changes experienced by their peoples.

The term *generation* has been incorporated as an analytical and political perspective to understand how each stage of life is a sowing effort that fertilizes the collective path. Each life cycle plays a role that contributes to the balance and harmony of the people.

Hence, for them, the effects of the armed conflict on the different generations have been a structural affront to the spiral of life. For example, the childhood stage in many peoples is called the seed *of life*. Children represent the hope of survival, the continuity of their struggle and the renewal of their political project. If they are attacked, the desire for resistance is cut off and the community is severely impacted in the medium and long term. On the other hand, to attack the youth is to cut off a potential political project. This new generation that is in transition feeds the resistance and the survival of its community.

Likewise, adulthood means preparation, so the term mayor o mayora (adult man and adult women) does not necessarily refer to age, but to experience and wisdom. It is the stage where political leaderships achieved through preparation and learning acquired over time are consolidated and recognized. Finally, old age is the representation of the accumulated memory that guides the path of those who follow.

Under these understanding, this perspective allows us to see that the conflict had a differential impact on each stage of life and, at the same time, on the community. Examples of this are: a) violence against the elderly as an affront to memory, a cleavage in the resistance projects that are sustained thanks to their experience; b) girls kidnapped for sexual exploitation, as acts of humiliation and defilement of two functional roles for the communities, that of women co-caretakers and guardians of life and that of girls as hope for the future; c) the recruitment of young people, as evidence of the intention to sever learning processes and take away from the community the possibility of keeping sprouting leaderships and struggles.

These multiple dimensions of being *racialized* women exposes them to an intersection of discrimination based on their culture, sex, gender, and class, inter alia. It was therefore very important, when carrying out the Commission's work and activities, to weave this multiple approach with the inter-sectional and holistic approach, since rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible, so it was necessary to: a) place violence in a continuum that encompasses interpersonal and structural violence; b) account for individual and structural discrimination, including structural and institutional inequalities; and c) analyze the social and/or economic hierarchies among women, and between women and men. Only this framework allows for a comprehensive understanding of the disproportionate and specific impacts of the armed conflict on racialized women.

Photography: Truth Commission

Since the beginning of the peace process, the negotiating teams have included several women, but none of them as plenipotentiaries[69]. The absence of representation in the decision-making body of the peace process was evident to feminist and women's organizations. In response to this situation, they decided, as in previous negotiation and transition scenarios[70], to unite even more efforts and commit to having new partnerships and meetings to determine the route for the implementation of the agreements. Initiatives such as *Mujeres por la Paz* (Women for Peace), *Juntanza* (Huddle Together), the (Cumbre Nacional de Mujeres y Paz y Cinco Claves) *National Summit of Women and Peace and Five Keys* emerged during the negotiation process to make their proposals known as organized women.

These organizations, meanwhile, brought together hundreds of feminists, women's, indigenous, peasant and Afro-descendant groups, victims, artists, trade unionists, defenders, and women leaders in general from practically all over the country. The purpose was not only to arrive in Havana and be represented as women in the peace process, but also to be heard and have their proposals incorporated into the agreement. As a result, the gender approach was explicitly enshrined in almost every point of the negotiation[71], and at the same time it became a fundamental coordinate that would be seen in a cross-cutting manner in the mission work of the Commission and the incorporation of a Gender Approach Group.

This group had permanent interaction and work with organizations and collectives of women and LGBTIQ+ people, mainly, and whose members are women with important work and life backgrounds around the visibility, mobilization and research of gender and feminism. This allowed the definitive mainstreaming of the approach in all the work of the agency and the incorporation of feminist ethics from their specific actions, and even influenced the inclusion of a volume on the subject in the Final Report. This group also incorporated the demands of women, feminist movements and LGBTIQ+ people. This is the first commission in the world to place special emphasis on the clarification of reproductive violence and specific violence against LGBTIQ+ people.

This approach was a tool of analysis that recognized the differential impacts of the conflict on the lives of women and girls as a consequence of the violence that armed actors exercised against them due to their gender, as well as on the lives of LGBTIQ+ people due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Under this framework, the Commission established the necessary mechanisms to ensure the inclusion of methodologies, categories, research questions and specific

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[69] For example, Elena Ambrosi, at the time director of the Human Rights Office of the Ministry of Defense, and Lucía Jaramillo Ayerbe, of the Office of the President, who appear as alternate plenipotentiaries; and Sandra García (known as Sandra Ramírez) of the FARC Delegation, appear as signatory witnesses to the Framework Negotiation Agreement in 2012.

[70] For example, the peace process with the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia, which began in 2002, during the first presidential term of Álvaro Uribe Vélez.

[71] ONU Mujeres (UN Women), 2018.
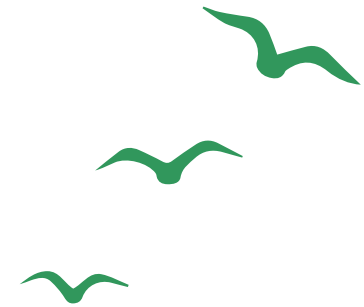
hypotheses to understand how and why women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people were especially victimized. The pattern of sexual violence was key in this process, as one of the most representative and callous forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in the context of the armed conflict[72].

In addition, several of the women who were members of the Commission, both in the regional and national teams, were involved in training or participation in women's or feminist initiatives for peace.

3. LIFE CYCLE AND DISABILITY APPROACH [73]

The life cycle and disability approach was an analytical-methodological element based on the recognition that, from birth to death, human beings are in a permanent process of development and biological aging within the framework of a context, a social group, and a particular history, where individual, family, work, and social life trajectories are configured. The approach helped to understand and tell the story of what happened to children, young people, and the elderly in the context of the conflict from a broad and transcendent perspective: the life journey, the meaning attributed to the events and the impact on their life and development[74].

At the same time, this approach recognized disability as the result of the interaction between people with specific conditions (physical or motor, sensory, cognitive, or psychosocial conditions), which increase their difficulties in adapting to life, as well as to environments that impose physical, behavioral, and communicative barriers, preventing them from participating and exercising their rights in the personal and community spheres. Therefore, it was necessary to expand the understanding of the conflict and link, from this common human experience, people who have had different forms of participation in it.

4. PSYCHOSOCIAL APPROACH [75]

The last coordinate to guide the journey was the psychosocial approach, which was understood as a field of knowledge and interdisciplinary action to understand the impact of socio-political violence on individuals and collective groups, wherein psychological, psychiatric, and emotional perspectives converged and complemented with social, political, cultural, sociological, and anthropological perspectives. It also served to design processes of care and assistance that, both inside and outside the Commission's activities, were based on the criteria of action without harm, as well as to contribute to the self-care processes of the work teams.

The approach went beyond mere psychological assistance at specific moments. It was proposed as the development of methodological and understanding frameworks

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[72] Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding to transform".
[73] Ibíd.
[74] Ibíd.
[75] Ibíd.

that allowed for an approach of participation as a process. The transforming potential of the approach had to do with the experience being endowed with meaning and being different from other previous experiences, often re-victimizing experiences[76]

The Commission promoted strategic actions to develop its processes embedded in four cross-cutting strategies: participation and sectors, pedagogy, cultural and artistic sector, and communications sector. Through these, there were processes of mobilization, social ownership, and search for the truth. Each of these strategies is described below.

The participation strategy guaranteed a broad and plural presence of different sectors of society in all the processes undertaken by the Commission. The objective was the promotion, design, and implementation of actions to guarantee the participation of different people and communities in the search for the truth and the social mobilization around it, which, conversely, resulted in spaces and processes for dialogue, reflection, and social deliberation.

As a process, participation sought to transform the historical power relations that support regional, national, and international dynamics surrounding the conflict through educational, cultural, artistic, and communicative activities. In an exercise of ongoing contact both with the communities and with the different sectors of society and those accountable for the armed conflict, a territorial, national, and international relationship was ensured.

This was done through two lines of work; on the one hand, advocacy participation, whereby the subject was dignified and his or her contributions to the Commission's processes were recognized, considering the capacity of the participants as political and social actors. On the other hand, *restorative, and dignified participation*, which sought the participation of opposing actors in spaces for dialogue and reflection to promote plural listening and symbolic actions as scenarios for clarification and recognition.

The national and territorial participation exercises were embodied in spaces for plural listening, wherein not only symbolic actions for the search for truth and social mobilization were promoted, but also the recognition of the dignity of victims, the construction of coexistence processes and conditions for non-repetition.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS [77]

1. PARTICIPATION STRATEGY AND SECTORS

[76] Truth Commission, "*Legado: ¿cuáles enfoques transversales y poblacionales aseguró la Comisión y cómo?*" Presentación de diapositivas (Legacy: what cross-cutting and population-based approaches did the Commission ensure and how?" Slide Show).

[77] Truth Commission, "Methodological guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding in order to transform".

2. PEDAGOGY STRATEGY [78]

The Commission promoted social mobilization processes around the country's need to know the truth, to recognize the armed conflict and the dignity of the victims, as well as to strengthen capacities for peaceful coexistence and help raise awareness of what must change in Colombia so that the war is stopped and not repeated.

Through this strategy, the Commission placed the debate on the search for truth and the recognition of accountability on the political agenda. It also promoted work with educational and practice communities, networks of children and youth, women, the elderly, and members of educational communities. Through shared social understanding, this strategy deepened truth as a public good. To this end, the following educational principles were established[79], The aim was to establish learning communities around the truth, promoting the empowerment of individuals and organizations by promoting not only teaching processes that met the needs of the communities from the territories, but also training in life skills, such as assertive communication, conflict resolution, teamwork, stress and emotion management, empathy development and creative thinking.

The education strategy also encouraged processes that integrated ethical, aesthetic, and emotional languages and practices, giving special importance to art and culture in order to manifest and make visible forms of resistance, memory, and identity.

The strategy was aimed, on the one hand, at ensuring that society understood the work carried out by the Commission, through dialogues with different audiences that defend diverse interests, and on the other hand, at promoting the clarification of a truth that would allow us to be touched, outraged, and feel solidarity through genuine listening exercises, broad debate, and the acceptance of the other, together with the purposes of coexistence and non-repetition.

3. CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC STRATEGY

The internal armed conflict is also expressed in culture and artistic practices, which have served both as a field of response and as a way to overcome the conflict. Hence, art, artistic practices and culture were conceived by the Commission as fundamental elements both for the construction, reconstruction and strengthening of the social fabric and for the mobilization of expressions derived from the armed conflict. These were key not only for the understanding of the conflict and its effects in the territories, but also to stimulate emotions triggered by the conflict, as well as to make visible and learn from the different forms of resistance that the communities in the territories wisely developed.

Through the networking of partners, the Commission focused on three main lines of work. The first consisted of identifying the cultural contexts wherein the conflict unfolds. This allowed to define those cultural expressions rooted in the cultures that have caused the armed conflict to have the intensity, quality, and duration that it has

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[78] Truth Commission, "*Lineamientos de pedagogía (Educational guidelines)*".
[79] Truth Commission.

had, and that in several regions it still continues. It also meant identifying the cultural issues that need to be strengthened and those that need to be modified, together with the imaginaries on which the naturalization of violence, discrimination and exclusion are based

The second was based on revealing the positive and negative transformations produced in cultures by the actions and effects of the internal armed conflict. To achieve this, the focus was placed on exploring, specially, the impact of the cultural trauma produced by the forms of political, security and economic control that, in response to the pain and generalized indignation caused by the conflict, have dominated the emotional, symbolic and assessment world of individuals and communities. The third focused on recognizing and making visible cultural and artistic expressions that have gone hand in hand with the experience of war, either as proof or symbolic reparation or as an expression of resistance, memory and defense of values and identity. The aim was to position the value of truth as a fundamental public asset and to stimulate the transition from a tragic to a hopeful account of the war. Likewise, there was interest in contributing to the understanding of the social and cultural practices that define the populations and of those expressions of transformation of the conflict, as well as in promoting public dialogue from creative languages; in contributing to the recognition of the value of the communities to describe what happened, resist and overcome the aftermath of the war; in stimulating the social adoption of the Final Report, its recommendations and laying the foundations for the transformations that the country must carry out.

This strategy sought the truth through poetic, artistic and cultural languages. To this end, it deployed calls for the production, activation and visibility of artistic expressions related to the mission and mandates of the Commission; supported the design and development of agreements for the truth, within the framework of the cultures of each community; participated in artistic and cultural events; participated in national festivals and popular festivals with content fostering the Commission's objectives and mission;

LINES OF WORK

- **Identification of the cultural contexts in which the conflict unfolds**

  To define the issues rooted in the cultures that have allowed the armed conflict to have the intensity, quality and duration that it had, one that continues in several regions. Identify the cultural issues that must be promoted, strengthened or modified, alongside the imaginaries on which the naturalization of violence, discrimination and exclusion is established.

- **To unveil the positive and negative transformations in different cultures, caused by actions and effects of the internal armed conflict**

  Most especially explore the cultural impact trauma produced by forms of political control, security and economical control. In response to pain and widespread outrage over the conflict, they have dominated the emotional and symbolic worlds of people and communities, discrimination and exclusions.

- **To recognize and make visible the cultural and artistic expressions that have accompanied the war experience as a testimony.**

  As proof or symbolic reparation and as expressions of resistance, memory and defense of values and identity.

Chart 8. Main lines of work of the Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

contributed to the recommendations for non-repetition; managed strategic partnerships for the production, dissemination, distribution and ownership of both the awareness of cultural issues that must be transformed or strengthened and of the Final Report, in different media and formats through art and cultural expressions.

Three main projects were designed for the development of this strategy. On the one hand, the «Poetic Truth» project, wherein cultural and artistic initiatives and experiences of different organizations and collective groups were strengthened and supported, which, through their works, provided contributions to coexistence and non-repetition in different territories and which were framed in local processes. «Poetic Truth» was developed in three phases. The first was to raise awareness, identify and categorize cultural and artistic initiatives of dignity, resistance, and coping. The second phase consisted of supporting and strengthening cultural and artistic initiatives, and the third of cooperative work and visibility.

The second of the main projects was «Talking about the territory of culture», which promoted the mobilization and association of different stakeholders in the arts and culture sector in the territories so that they could create a support network that would promote the dissemination and knowledge of the Commission and its mission. Likewise, a dialogue was established about these local knowledge and experiences and the Commission so that local work in the areas of coexistence and non-repetition would also be recognized.

Finally, in «Houses of Truth with Meaning», the third of the main projects, the Houses of Truth were conceived as a space to provide a broader dimension to the truth, not only testimonial, but also through cultural and artistic components, whereby the expression of individual and collective pain caused by the armed conflict, its impacts, transformations, and ways of resisting and coping was facilitated. These spaces strengthened the work and mission of the Commission through its territorial deployment and promoted Social Dialogue, recognizing the truth, providing resistance and social transformation leading to coexistence and providing recommendations for non-repetition. This process was developed with 36 partner organizations of the Commission in seven territories: Apartadó, Arauca, Buenaventura, Cali, Cúcuta, Florencia, Medellín and Quibdó. This was achieved thanks to the dynamics that arose at the local level from the spaces of culture and art. In 2021, the process was completed with another six experiences: in Vista Hermosa, Turbo, Ciénaga and Cartagena, with two experiences in the latter two towns.

The Truth Commission undertook communication and dissemination as a strategy to give public life to stories, accounts, and testimonies about what happened in the context of the armed conflict in the country. In addition to the truth of the conflict, it sought to introduce the processes of listening and dialogue that would contribute, among other things, to the recommendations to stop it, overcome it and build a future in peace[80]. The communications strategy made processes visible at the local, regional, and national levels, and even managed to cross borders by showcasing the experience of Colombians in exile. During its mandate, the Commission had to overcome several situations and adjust its strategy in order to respond effectively and show transparency in its work. Particularly, given that the pandemic forced to virtualize many of the processes, digital channels became very important to achieve a greater reach and facilitate the participation of many more people.

In the first organizational structure, a process was proposed in the strategic component to be in charge of communication and dissemination of the agency's progress and developments. Based on this, a team was put together which, from the recruitment stage, responded to the needs in this area. The team was made up of experts in different formats: digital editing, press work, sound production, so that, according to the demands of the Commission's teams, this strategy would address the construction and production of content (brochures, infographics, photographs, videos, podcasts, press releases, etc.) to make visible and disseminate the progress and development of processes at both the territorial and national levels.
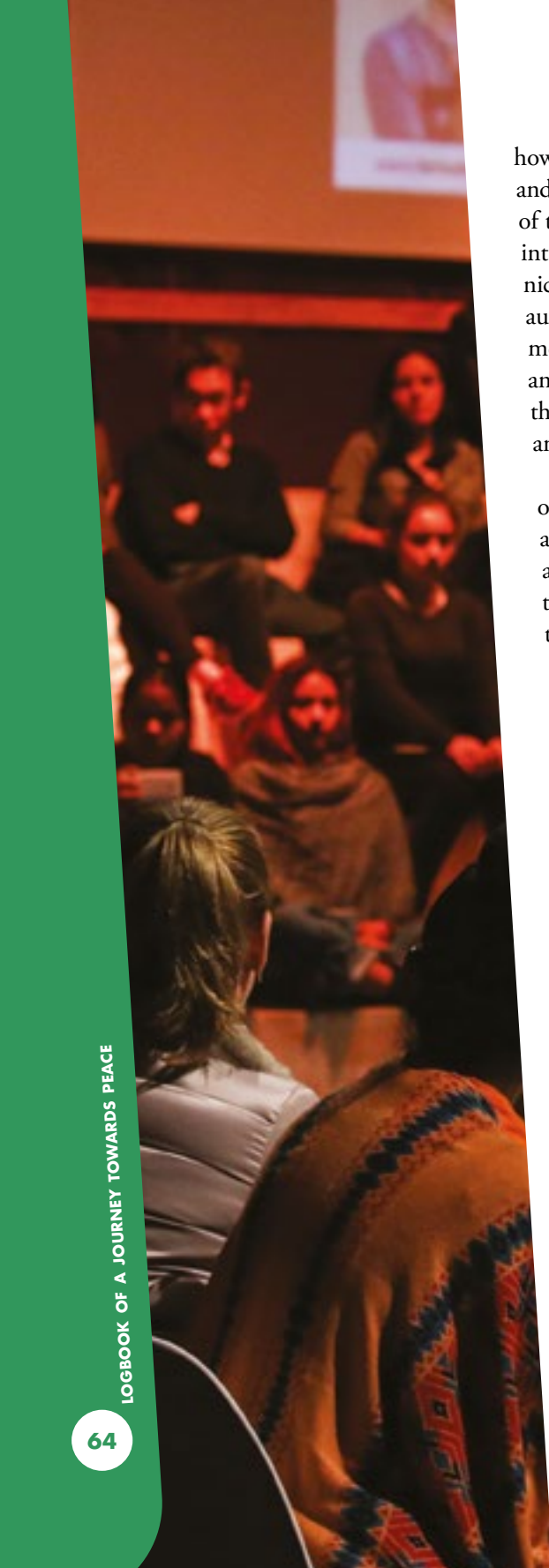
At the beginning of its mandate, one of the Commission's first challenges was to position itself publicly as an agency that, together with the JEP and the UBPD, was part of the Comprehensive System for Peace. The challenge was to tell the country what its work consisted of, how it differed from the other agencies in the system, who its members were, and so on. In other words, it had to convey to the country its existence and the mission designated by the Final Peace Agreement. To do so, it had to design its institutional image, a web page where the contents would be uploaded, its social networks on different platforms and establish partnerships with the media to transmit the first signals.

By November 28th, 2018 - the date on which the Commission's mandate began - a strenuous process had been made that involved a campaign of expectation to achieve wide coverage of the event and to make visible the path that would begin to be traveled. The first of several sound productions published by the Commission, *Solo la verdá* (Only the truth), was released at this event. This and other songs that were featured in important milestones of the Commission became part of its soundtrack and identity.

From the beginning to the end of the mandate, we sought to answer several questions: how to speak to a divided country, how to awaken the interest of the indifferent,

4. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY: COMMUNICATING TO MAKE THE TRUTH COMMISSION VISIBLE, RAISE AWARENESS AND POSITIONING THE COMMISSION

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[80] Truth Commission, "Profile of the communication and dissemination process".

how to demonstrate that the work is plural and inclusive, how to maintain coherence, and how to make the Commission's work more coherent. Thus, along the way, the spirit of the Commission and its own narrative were built, which helped to summarize and introduce the work. A thorough study was also carried out wherein experts in communications and journalism were consulted to define innovative actions differentiated by audiences, trying to reach those people who remained apathetic to the agency and its meaning. Since the communication sought to be in permanent contact with people and to be remembered, content was shared on the Commission's official website and through Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Tik-Tok, thus disseminating the mission among different audiences.

Starting in 2020, we sought to adjust the strategy and focus it on the concept of public communication for social mobilization. Being strategic in communication allowed the communications team to be in the spaces where the strategy was discussed, and thus ensured a better understanding of the mission. In fact, the decision was made to move the team from the Social Dialogue Directorate to the Presidency and to allow the coordinator to be present in some key spaces such as the Technical Council.

Meanwhile, the idea that this was a unified, although not centralized, strategy was consolidated. Therefore, it was important to have unity of criteria and clarity with regard to institutional guidelines. The schedule nature of the communications office was reiterated, but also its service qualities, given its guidance, advisory and coordination components. While carrying out its own production, it was also coordinated with the communications activities of other directorates and territories, in synergy with the strategies and approaches.

Conceptually, communication was approached as the construction of meaning. Therefore, we sought to focus on narratives/stories that are constructed in a large social and public dialogue. The strategy considered that narratives had rational arguments, but also emotions, and therefore, communication should adequately balance these aspects. Under the public communication approach, it was then decided to work in four dimensions.

The first dimension was organizational and consisted of contributing to the coherence between the practical activity of the human team and the tenets and guidelines of the Commission, and to the coordination and integration among the four strategies. The second, corporate, placed the Commission in a position (what it was and what it was not) and made its mission visible (why and for what purpose it existed), highlighting its independence, thoroughness, plurality, and public ethics. The third, informative, disseminated what the Commission did and thought (its work); it set up and nurtured public conversations based on the processes of social dialogue, in tune with the social, political, and economic situation of the country and the world. The fourth, the mobilizing one, proposed a collective imaginary (narrative) and new understandings of the past, which summoned Colombian society to take on a road map embodied in the Report to build a future of peaceful coexistence.

Finally, (public) interlocutors and lines of action were identified. In order of greater to lesser closeness to the Commission, the audiences were divided into friends, apathetic and adversaries. As for the lines of action, these were: mass media (public opinion), digital platforms, mobilization, and micro (closer communication, wherein there is a knowledge of the interlocutors).

There was a national team that strategically assisted major events of the Commission that, together with the cooperation and partnerships office, were able to obtain resources to carry out specific projects, such as the publication in 2021 of the book collection *Futuro en tránsito* (Future in Motion). This team had ongoing contact and coordination with corporate media for the coverage and transmission of events or programs such as *Hablemos de verdad* (Let's talk about truth) or *Frente al espejo* (In front of the mirror), which won the India Catalina award for the best journalistic program in Colombia in 2021, the TAL award from the Association of Public Television in Latin America in the Democracy category and in 2022 was selected for the INPUT exhibition, which highlights the best of public television at a global level.

One aspect worth highlighting is the team's achievement in forging partnerships with media outlets that support its mission and are committed to highlighting the importance of the truth and its value as a public asset. This enabled the transmission of a sense of the Commission's work and a careful coverage, ready to support the Commission's work.

In addition, considering that there was a national strategy that was executed in a decentralized manner, it is important to highlight the communications work developed in the territories. Partnerships were established with community radio stations from which products developed by the Commission were shared; for example, the radio program *Voces de la verdad* (Voices of Truth), the campaign *Hay futuro si hay verdad* (There is future if there is truth) and, through podcast platforms, the digital radio series *Luz de noche*

Photography: Truth Commission

(Night Light) was broadcasted. Through them, not only were communities and sectors invited to participate in the plural listening process, but also the work carried out was made visible, thus contributing to the recognition of what happened in the context of the conflict through multiple voices. Communication professionals were also active in the macro-territorial areas to cover the different initiatives that arose in the regions.

An effort was made to build joint narratives at both the national and territorial levels. Workshops were held wherein the construction of specific lines of work was sought, and processes were coordinated. However, the multiple demands for coverage of events, activities and processes increased during the pandemic. The communications team served as an equalizer allowing, when these events occurred at the same time, to prioritize issues of greater relevance and public impact.

The Commission was assured of its path during the journey of truth thanks to its ethical-political principles as a guide and to the main actions for its readiness as a base, as well as to a territorial deployment that went beyond geopolitical borders, and proposed a new regional mapping of the armed conflict for plural listening, complying with legal mandates, such as prior consultation and a differentiated relationship with approaches that addressed the peculiarities of the people and strategies that ensured a broad, plural and inclusive participation. The following chapter describes how the Commission carried out this great national dialogue that mobilized society for this historic search.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: María Paula Durán

PROCESSES FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE

The Truth Commission mobilized Colombian society around the search for the truth through a great national dialogue that amplified the voices of the deep Colombia, and which are capable of enunciating truths about the human rights violations and breaches of International Humanitarian Law that the armed conflict has left in its wake. These voices gave an account of what happened, why, how, and what factors allowed the conflict to continue.

The social dialogue -that great national dialogue- took place in meetings of deep listening, thanks to which silences were interrupted, difficult questions were addressed, expressions of resistance were made visible, transformations were unleashed to recompose links and coexistence agreements were sought to promote a stable and lasting peace. In these spaces, Colombia was able to

recognize the existence, origin and causes of the conflict, as well as the dignity of the victims and the processes of resistance and coping that communities have developed in response to the conflict and to those people who voluntarily acknowledged that they were the causing agents of the war.

In addition, during these same events, the Commission convened and listened to former presidents, businessmen, former commanders and law enforcement officers, communities and territories, LGBTIQ+ people, critics and opponents of the peace agreement, as well as state institutions, artistic movements, journalists, media, trade unionists, businessmen, religious community, health sector, academia, civil society organizations, women's and feminist organizations, children, adolescents and youth, elderly and disabled people, indigenous, black, Afro-Colombian, Raizal, Palenquero and Roma peoples.

The following are the three main processes of social dialogue: events for plural listening, meetings for truth or acknowledgement of accountability, and coexistence processes.

THE EXPANSION OF THE SNAIL SHELL

Having as a guiding principle the central importance of the victims and their dignity, the social dialogue processes promoted great efforts to guarantee a broad and plural participation of both victims and accountable parties, but also of society in general.

Therefore, this process sought to create dialogues with victims, different sectors of society and organizations, such as the National Working Group for Effective Participation of Victims, to define joint agendas and working routes to undertake processes of plural listening and search for the truth. The processes had to be restorative, so the proposed methodologies were supported by a psychosocial approach: each dialogue had moments of preparation, considering the well-being of those who participated in them. The work routes were developed in joint plans that included the analysis of lingering factors and the collection of testimonies.

Dialogues were also held with ex-combatants of the FARC, other guerrilla groups and the AUC, members of the law enforcement agencies, State agents and those appearing before the JEP[81]. These were held in public and private meetings to recognize the responsibilities of those who, by action, omission, complicity, or negligence, caused harm to the dignity of people, deprived them of their fundamental rights or used violence in the context of the conflict. Statements on the truth of what happened, their responsibilities and individual and collective impacts on groups, sectors, and regions, were some of them. The Commission sought a sincere and genuine contribution, clarifying the causes, motivations for their actions and the benefits they gained from

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[81] The Commission had tools that encouraged the participation of those appearing before the JEP and eased their contribution to the clarification of the truth and social dialogue, benefiting them with special treatments. The production of contribution certificates was established by Decree Act 588 /2017 as incentives for their participation in the processes of the Commission.

them. That they acknowledge the damage caused and ask for forgiveness without appealing to heroic speeches or turning the responsibility over to the victims.

Finally, there were dialogues between different stake-holders and sectors to foster transforming environments in the territories and at the national level to promote peaceful coexistence. This work sought to denaturalize violence as a form of conflict management and to influence the trans-formation of collective imaginaries of stigmatization and downgrading arising from the conflict. With active citizen-ship and a democratic culture that invites peaceful conflict management, the understanding of coexistence as a social process that encourages respect, enforceability and guarantee of human rights was pursued. To this end, processes of coe-xistence, experiences of resistance and processes of positive transformation, namely, processes that have faced or resis-ted the conflict, were made visible. All this allowed streng-thening the social fabric together with the communities in different territories of the country.

The way in which the Commission carried out these types of dialogue is described below.

Plural listening events allowed the Commission and society to meet in order to contribute to the clarification of the truth[82]. During the mandate, more than 50 listening sessions were held with conscientious objector victims, vic-tims of the National Army, women, LGBTIQ+ people, the law enforcement, religious sectors, indigenous, Afro, Raizal and Palenquero communities, journalists, artists, peasants, political parties, children and adolescents, universities, and other sectors of society[83].

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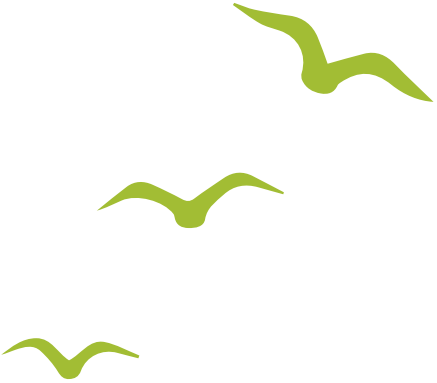
[82] The mandate is related to the clarification and promotion of the recog-nition of the impact of the conflict on those who participated directly in the conflict as combatants and on their families and environments. This exercise allowed to go beyond the story and memories, as it provides the possibility of engaging in self-reflection and deep collective reflection on the explanations, which leads to the construction of an interpretative account of the armed conflict *(Commission. Concept - Events for plural listening. 2020).*

[83] See complete information about the listening events in: Listening Events. *Photography: Document of events DDS. Directorate of Social Dialogue. 2022*

PLURAL LISTENING EVENTS

Photography: Truth Commission

Through these events, conversations were activated, contributions were made to the truth and a broad and balanced participation process was promoted wherein a plurality of voices, given their location in the armed conflict, their backgrounds, and their relationship with different institutional, territorial or community processes, were heard, and contributed to the construction of a narrative that overcame the normalization of violence, the mechanisms of horror and indifference[84].

The methodology for the development of the dialogues included five moments. Prioritization and definition of the people, sectors and communities that would participate, the topics of the mandate to be discussed and guiding questions. And also, a prior assessment of the contexts and risk factors of the event to determine its public/private, national/territorial, and territorial nature.

Subsequently, there was an initial approach to those who participated. There, the scope of each listening event (or events), the agenda to be developed and joint actions resulting from these meetings were defined.

This initial approach led to a preparation process where the mission of the Commission was clarified and a psychosocial preparation was carried out prior to the meeting where doubts were answered, expectations were accepted and clarified, and agreements were reached. The participants prepared their individual testimonies, on the basis of which the listening event was designed.

The meetings, meanwhile, were public or private, national, or territorial events, wherein victims or accountable parties shared their testimonies and established an almost always open dialogue about their experiences. Some of these spaces were supported by the commissioners. At the end of these events, an assessment of the process, expectations and results was made.

From all of them, the Commission gathered individual and collective voluntary testimonies for the clarification of the truth and, after the meetings, carried out processes of analysis and comparison of the information provided.

An example of these meetings was the «Listening Event with Members of the National Army and their families, victims of anti-personnel landmines and improvised explosive devices (IED)». On November 23rd, 2020, the Commission promoted a dialogue meeting with members of the National Army, victims of unexploded ordnance (UXO), anti-personnel landmines (APM) and improvised explosive devices (IED)[85].

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[84] Truth Commission, *"Events for plural listening"*.

[85] RC-EP, the Commission has ratified its commitment to the security forces. According to the director of Social Dialogue, in the first two years of its mandate, the Commission received more than 50 reports from the Armed Forces and the National Police, which have been incorporated as a fundamental input for the construction of an explanatory and comprehensive account of the armed conflict in Colombia» Truth Commission, "Armed listening event".

LISTENING SPACES STAGES

PRIORIZATION AND DEFINITION

1

- Participant actors and sectors

- Topics of the mandate to be dealt with

- Listening criteria

- Questions based on the differential approaches, according to the research's parameters and developments, and the sensitivity for listen to diverse explanations about what happened in the armed conflict.

- **LISTENING SPACE**
  Public or private event, in which the victims share their testimony according to the order agreed between them in the collective preparation.

- **CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS**
  Contributed to the other lines of the Social Dialogue strategy and the Final Report.

INITIAL APPROACH TO ACTORS AND SECTORS

2

- The scope of the work between the Commission and the interested parties was defined.

- The projection of a scenario catalog that was adaptable to the sectors or actors.

- Joint definition of a conversation agenda.

- Pedagogy for Commission's legacy appropriation, regarding the process, seeking to build joint routes of proposals and results.

- **SPACE WITH COMMISSIONERS**
  This space sought to establish as a close conversation with testimonials.

- **CLOSURE SPACE**
  Its purpose was to investigate about perceptions and the experience of testimonials through the listening process; evaluate the process, goal compliance and of the expectations manifested at the beginning

PREPARATORY PROCESSES

3

- **PEDAGOGY SPACE**
  It was intended to let the the testifiers know and understand what the Truth Commission is, its mandate and mission objectives. These sessions also provided greater clarity about the listening spaces and their objectives.

- **SPACE FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL COLLECTIVE PREPARATION**
  It sought to identify the doubts to the process, accept expectations and concerns, and generate a respectful environment. It used a first approach to the narrative thread of testimonials, starting from common ideas that were looked to be positioned, to those particular elements of each experience.

- **INDIVIDUAL PSYCHOSOCIAL PREPARATION**
  A space in which the witness is listened to individually and ideas in common are identified.

Chart 9. Etapas de los espacios de escucha
Source: Truth Commission

The objective of this event was to foster a listening scenario that allowed for a deeper understanding of the social and human impacts on the lives of the members of the National Army who were victims of UXO-APM and IED, their families and surroundings[86]. This meeting helped to highlight and reject this IHL violation and its different dimensions before the country and to receive proposals and inputs in terms of clarification and guarantees for the non-repetition of this type of violations. It was a public event and broadcast live with a resonance so high that it made visible the impacts and damages suffered by military victims[87].

RECOGNITION AND MEETINGS FOR TRUTH

The Commission promoted dialogues for the recognition of responsibilities during the armed conflict. These dialogues were based on three dimensions of recognition: the dignity of the victims, the responsibilities of persons directly or indirectly involved, and the role played by society during the war[88].

In these processes, the victims were the key players, and the accountable parties -from the recognition of their responsibilities- answered the questions and addressed the pain of the communities. The Commission listened to those accountable, guided the interview with questions and guaranteed the conditions for the process to take place before, during and after the meeting[89].

During the Commission's mandate, these events for dialogue were carried out in three ways[90]. First, Recognitions, with the participation of victims of sexual violence, women and family members searching for missing persons, peasant, and indigenous population, LGBTIQ+ people, children, youth, and adolescents. Second, Meetings for the truth, with the participation of Afro-descendants, exiles, indigenous people, and people whose health was affected by the conflict. And third, Recognitions and contributions, with the participation of former presidents, members of the Colombian National Army, accountable parties, victims of extrajudicial executions, exiles and third parties[91].

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[86] Truth Commission, "Document of systematization of the processes developed by the Directorate for Social Dialogue: analysis and reflections from the psychosocial approach of the events for listening to victims of the security forces and their families".

[87] Truth Commission, *Listening Event: Army members victims of anti-personnel landmines.*.

[88] «In an extrajudicial context, this objective allows a collective reflection on the experience of the internal armed conflict and its victims towards the past; and, towards the future, a reflection on the human, social, political, cultural and institutional mechanisms that must repair what happened and ensure that violence does not continue and is not repeated».

[89] Truth Commission, "Methodological Guidelines. Listening, recognizing and understanding to transform".

[90] Truth Commission, 25.

[91] 21 processes of recognition of responsibilities of ex-combatants of the FARC- EP, AUC and Public Forces were carried out, three processes of recognition of the dignity of the territories and their victims in Valle del Cauca, Carmen de Atrato (Chocó) and Luzón (Putumayo), two processes of contributions to the truth; two recognitions led from the territories (The truth from the universities and the countryside tells the truth)

The Meetings for Truth were «communicative, participative and educational tools for the rest of society, which frequently lived unaware or had never known many of these situations»[92]. The public event allowed to know the experiences lived because of the conflict from the testimony of the victims, stories of organizations and sectors «that contributed to the humanization of the other and to the social recognition of the injustice and the situation of impunity wherein many of these actions were found»[93].

For the development of these meetings, a number of processes were established, depending on whether they were public or private. The private scenarios consisted of dialogue meetings with stakeholders, victims and different sectors that were ethically and politically oriented to clarify and recognize what happened, as well as the responsibilities regarding the violent acts, damages and impacts caused to the victims, the communities, the territories, and the accountable parties themselves. Based on the definition of the scenario, the span of the meetings was divided into three main moments, composed of a number of stages: before, during and after.

«Before» was the moment of preparation of the Meetings for Truth, when the victims were summoned as main stakeholders, the objectives, the methodology and the activities to be developed were designed. The «during» was the moment when the Commission recognized the history of the victims, their pain, and their actions of resistance, as well as the responsibility of the State and the armed actors in the violence perpetrated. The «after» were the closing and assessment processes of the event, and the follow-up scenarios with the participating victims, always with the assistance of some of the commissioners.

The Meetings for Truth in public contexts were made up of five stages. First, the identification of the victimizing event, understanding, together with the investigative teams and the clarification process, the set of damages and impacts on specific territories and communities, and the stakeholders involved.

Second, the readiness by means of three documents that launched the process: one on the profile wherein the objectives were identified, focused on potential partners, cases, and victims; if there was recognition of accountability, this document considered which actor or actors were called upon to make the recognition, in order to enter into a direct dialogue with these individuals. Another document on contexts, wherein the framework in which the victimizing event took place was explained, as well as the current moment when the recognition process was being carried out. And a third document called project, wherein the intention of the recognition was established and the scenarios to develop it were assessed, in which city, who would participate,

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[92] Promotion Processes and Contribution to Recognition 11.03.2020. Recognition Objective. Understood as the «Processes for Promotion and Contribution to Recognition with emphasis on responsibilities». Internal work file of the Commission. CEV. (March 11th, 2020).
[93] Ibíd

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

which cases would be worked on, which witnesses would be incorporated and the required resources to build the project.

Third, participatory construction. This stage was based on a private process that used the mirror methodology to work between victims and accountable parties in order to create a *fabric of truth*, a shared narrative of recognition. In each of the sessions there was a private dialogue between victims and accountable parties. In this dialogue, the social, political, economic, but also family, community and territorial impacts were discussed. The same was carried out simultaneously with the accountable parties about the stories of the victims and their willingness to acknowledge and to what extent. At this stage, there were also open dialogues not only with different sectors of society, but also with all the stakeholders directly related to the recognition process or who could have an impact on the process.

Since the victims' participation was a voluntary process, they signed an informed consent form wherein they stated that they agreed with the methodology used and expressed that they were aware of the whole process, who would participate and who would acknowledge their responsibility.

The fourth was the public stage of the process. It consisted of developing a communication strategy to share with society the reflections, lessons learned, challenges and persistence factors that had been identified during the process[94]. And the fifth, the assessment and follow-up stage. In this process, recommendations that were made in relation to the recognition, information retrieved therefrom, and data collected as a source for the Final Report were inputs gathered.

At each stage, the processes sought to take a dignifying path for both the victim and the accountable parties. For example, in the meeting «Truths that set free: recognition of responsibility for kidnapping by the FARC-EP», where many of the victims felt that the event did not develop according to their expectations, two subsequent processes were carried out. On the one hand, we worked with the psychosocial approach team to collect the emotions that arose during the meeting. On the other hand, a collective assessment meeting was held to review what contributions were made, to what extent they were made, what was still missing and what would be needed to complete the dignification process.

When the recognitions were private, the following methodology was developed. In principle, the objective of the recognition was shared, as well as the progress achieved, its reading, and what the Commission did in relation to the process. This narrative was constructed jointly with several teams of the

[94] In all the processes, the testimonies of the victims, with whom worked was carried out previously in the private route, took place.

BEFORE

ENLISTMENT

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW VIOLATIONS

VICTIM ENCOUNTERS

INTERNAL ARTICULATION AND EXTERNAL COORDINATION

MEETINGS WITH RESPONSIBLE PERSONS

COMMISSION

DURING

PARTICIPANTS

VICTIMS + **RESPONSIBLE PERSONS** + **COMMISSION**

DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE

ENCOUNTERS FOR THE TRUTH

TRUTH COMMISSION

GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE ENCOUNTERS

PROJECT DOCUMENT CONSTRUCTION

CONFORMATION OF THE DRIVING GROUPS

COORDINATION

PLACE - DATE - PLACE

DIALOGUES

RESPONSIBLE PERSONS RECOGNITION

COMMISSION LISTENING AND RESPECT

CALL TO RECOGNIZE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL ACTORS OF SOCIETY

VICTIMS TESTIMONY

KEY PLACES

SYMBOLIC ACTS EXPERIENCES AND DEMANDS

IMPORTANT DATES TIME

9 ABRIL

DESPUÉS

CLOSURE AND EVALUATION OF THE ENCOUNTERS

FOLLOW UP

Chart 10.
Stages of the Recognitions
and Meetings for the Truth
Source: Truth Commission

TENÍA 10 AÑOS DE
FORZADAMENTE EN E
CUNDINAMARCA.   ELL
ESTUDIO.

COLABORABA MUCHO C
VEREDA A QUIENES AYUDA

LA DESAPARICION SE
ECONOMICOS PORQUE PRIN
A LA FAMILIA UN RESCATE E
SU MADRE PAGO.

JAMAS LA ENTREGARON. PO
HUBO   UN   CAPTURADO
RESPONSABILIDAD PERO JAMAS
DE SU CUERPO.

Commission in a coordinated manner, as well as with the other objectives, with communications and with the commissioners. After this activity to share information, the process focused on the expectations of recognition and truth. At this point, the willingness to acknowledge those responsible was identified, and from there, the victims decided whether or not they wanted to continue participating in the process.

The third moment was for the preparation of these private dialogues. Led by the victims, structural elements of the conversation were addressed: what topics would be discussed, what questions would be asked, and what recognitions would be made by the perpetrators. During the meeting, the Commission served as a facilitator of the dialogue and contributed to the facilitation of the event. Finally, the meetings were closed and assessed. As in the public meetings, this stage sought to highlight and identify achievements, difficulties, lessons learned and challenges, in order to gather relevant information and lessons for the organization of future meetings.

The development of the recognition processes underwent changes in the structure of its work. In 2019, the emphasis was on the recognition of victims and the harm suffered. In 2020, the Plenary defined that the emphasis should be on the recognition of responsibilities as an event for the construction of meaning about the past and the future, not only for the victims and those accountable, but also for the institutions and society as a whole, which involved and appealed to several human dimensions, such as emotional, symbolic, educational, and political dimensions.

Another change addressed the resurgence of violence in the territories, which directly affected the participation of the victims. As a result, the potential risks for the people who were participating were identified. Aware of this information, they were sent an invitation to the process, which was assessed collectively with the Commission. If the risk analysis determined that their safety was endangered, it was decided to forego their direct participation and other alternatives were sought that would allow both their participation and their protection, such as anonymity through letters, radio podcasts and videos.

In 2018, the recognition plan was explained to the Plenary, wherein the need to hold a meeting for the truth about the impacts of the conflict on children and adolescents that would expose the lesser-known phenomena of the conflict, bringing together different voices, was raised. Because of the conflict, children have been one of the stakeholders who have suffered the most. Both in the past and today, the Commission believed that it was essential to make this recognition with the objective of «making society aware of and rejecting the impacts of the internal armed conflict on children and adolescents, through the presentation of the explanatory contexts, the impacts experienced and the processes of coping and resistance»[96].

For the development of this meeting, the commitment of those accountable was sought, in order to give testimony about the victimizing acts committed against children and young people in the context of the armed conflict. This group of accountable individuals was able to disclose information on the generations and types of affected populations[97].

This recognition took place in different stages that illustrate the aforementioned. The first was exploratory, in which cases, opportunities and risks were identified with the AUC, FARC, military personnel appearing before the JEP, police and other guerrilla groups. Then came the preparatory stage, during which previous meetings were held with commissioners who assessed the testimonies of responsibility and private meetings with organizations that have worked with children and therefore know the impact they have suffered. This was followed by the meeting stage, which was attended by the Commission. And, finally, the subsequent phase, which involved the relationship with the research team and in-depth study of testimonies for the Final Report.

The development of this meeting was supported by the psychosocial approach, gender and territorial, cultural, and artistic and communications strategies. The communication approach was able to develop a narrative wherein the processes of resistance, coping and protection, both urban and rural, were recognized for their work with children and adolescents. On the other hand, the gender approach contributed to the production of audiovisual pieces, raising awareness about their voices.

In all the «Meetings for Truth» the logistical component was key. There was a great willingness of the production of the event to arrange the physical events and other logistical requirements that served as preparation for the testimonies and assistance during the events[98].

NO MORE CHILDREN INVOLVED IN WAR [95]

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[95] Truth Commission, "No more children involved in war".

[96] Truth Commission, "Reflections and Contributions to the Final Report".

[97] Ibíd.

[98] CEV. (2020). File name: Mercedes. [Audio file]. Commission's internal work file.

COEXISTENCE PROCESSES

According to items 12 and 13 of the Commission's mandate[99], The Commission has promoted and strengthened processes that contribute to «the transformation of social, political, cultural and institutional relations in order to strengthen active citizenship»[100]. To this end, the Commission promoted events for dialogue between different stakeholders, communities and sectors affected by the conflict to build agreements with perspectives for the future in view of the conflicts existing in the territories. The Commission also made coexistence experiences visible through a mapping that provided inputs and recommendations for the non-continuity of the conflict.

In order to carry out these processes, it was necessary to reach an agreement on how coexistence was to be understood. This led to understanding it as a number of conditions for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and for respect and tolerance to become non-negotiable values; namely, democratic coexistence as a guarantee of human rights, the active exercise of citizens' rights and the construction of proposals for transformation in the territories[101].

This concept segregation led to a coordinated work with the other processes of the Commission and the territorial teams to recognize the experiences of coexistence and nonviolent resistance in the territories. It was also useful to identify the factors of persistence of the conflict and, within them, the coexistence processes that emerged in recent years. All this contributed to the construction of recommendations for non-repetition.

The coexistence processes were divided into two moments: agreements for coexistence and good standards of living and learning to live together. The following is a description of how these processes were carried out.

1. AGREEMENTS FOR COEXISTENCE AND GOOD STANDARDS OF LIVING

Estos buscaron impulsar procesos de diálogo entre actores y sectores alrededor de problemáticas presentes en los territorios para construir acuerdos que dieran respuesta a la construcción de entornos de convivencia. Los procesos contaron con grupos de voluntarios, líderes y miembros de la comunidad que no solo lideraron los procesos e incentivaron a otras personas y sectores para participar y ayudaron a construir las metodologías, también facilitaron los diálogos y se comprometieron con el seguimiento de los acuerdos.[102]

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[99] «The Commission's mandate will be to clarify and promote the recognition of the processes of strengthening the social fabric in the communities and the experiences of individual or collective resilience. The processes of positive transformation of organizations and institutions throughout the conflict». Decree Act 588/2017.

[100] Procedure for the construction of dialogues and agreements for coexistence and good standards of living.

[101] Coordinator and member of the Objetivo de Convivencia (Coexistence Objective), "Interview".

[102] For the development of this methodology, inputs were drawn from the mapping of experiences of Learning for Coexistence, which documented methodologies of dialogue, negotiation and mediation for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Ver 4.2.4.2.

Six processes were developed to reach agreements for coexistence and good standards of living in prioritized areas[103], those where the armed conflict has had the harshest impact. The aim was to reach agreements between different stakeholders and sectors in order to establish a joint work agenda for the solution of problems. These dialogues were developed in five phases, which were implemented in a particular way in each region, due to the dynamics of the territories and the will and commitments of the stakeholders and sectors involved, as well as the distances caused by the pandemic and the national strike. This required great flexibility by the territorial teams, which were also carrying out other actions within the framework of the fulfillment of the mandate.

The first phase was a readiness phase. In this phase, thanks to the coordinated work with the Commission's territorial teams, an analysis was made of the conflicts existing in the territories, the stakeholders involved, and the peacebuilding experiences were identified in order to prioritize the places where the dialogues would take place. Once the territories were prioritized, additional analyses were carried out to study the feasibility of the process, to explore whether there was a willingness to carry out the process and to assess the conditions that could facilitate or hinder its implementation. A third stage consisted of approaching the territories and communities to establish a relationship with the Commission, identify interests and expectations of participation, and build a driving group that was responsible for promoting the process.

This was followed by sessions to deepen the dialogue and consensus building. A methodological route was built, with work plans and timetables, in order to acquire commitments regarding the embodiment of the events for dialogue with the different stakeholders and sectors, which resulted in the definition of agreements for coexistence and good standards of living. The last phase of this methodology was to follow up on the commitments acquired. The aim was to create a number of letters for the communities to continue the work that had been done. This phase was part of the legacy strategy that, based on networking with partners, joined efforts to keep alive the processes undertaken by the Commission[104].

An example of these dialogue processes is the one carried out in Magdalena Medio. After the identification of different problems in this territory, priority was given to the impact on the Magdalena River as an ecosystem due to the armed conflict. Based on this, a group of people interested in working for the recovery of the river (fishermen, institutions, private companies, and cultural organizations, inter alia) was summoned. Subsequently, a driving group was established, which was very active in the territory and, based on this, dialogues were promoted for the construction of the agenda. In addition, a manifesto of commitment was signed, and a public event was held wherein an agreement for coexistence and its work route was established.

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[103] Magdalena Medio, Nariño, Norte de Santander, Antioquia, Southern Bolívar, Bogotá.
[104] Truth Commission, "Puerto Legado (Legacy Port)" See chapter 7.

Photography: Truth Commission

Another of the major processes promoted was the consolidation of the Great Agreement for Coexistence in September 2021. More than 25 territorial experiences of non-violent resistance participated in this process and provided the basis for the construction of the agreement. The Commission promoted the signature of the representatives of these experiences, some commissioners, the president of the Commission, representatives of the committee promoting the Week for Peace, representatives of different international organizations and some public figures.

2. LESSONS LEARNED FOR COEXISTENCE

Based on a thorough quantitative and qualitative research exercise, this methodology sought to build a narrative in the Commission as a contribution to the clarification of what happened during the armed conflict. This narrative focused on making visible the work that the communities have done to ensure coexistence in the context of the conflict. Its objectives were:

- To give political and social recognition to the work carried out by different social sectors in the promotion of coexistence and peaceful conflict management.
- To make an analysis of lessons learned and good practices highlighted in the experiences (…)
- Contribute to the construction of a narrative of hope and coexistence in communities affected by violence.
- Contribute to the Final Report of the Commission regarding what happened during the conflict, in terms of coexistence, non-violent resistance and transformations for peace.
- To showcase the experiences and methodologies of and for coexistence in order to inform the country of the lessons learned and best practices[105]

Initially, the goal was to build a database wherein these experiences and their methodologies would be mapped and profiled. After reflecting on the categories that make up the database, it was decided that this mapping would be complemented by a more in-depth exercise that would delve into the lessons learned on how to build peace in the territories, how they had resisted through nonviolence and how they had created mechanisms for transformation and peaceful conflict management[106].

The methodology had two working lines, one quantitative and one qualitative. With the help of external partners and the national and territorial teams of the Commission, the quantitative line sought to map experiences in the promotion of coexistence carried

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[105] Truth Commission, "Guía metodológica procesos de aprendizajes para la convivencia (Methodological guide for learning processes for coexistence)".
[106] Interview with member of the Coexistence Objective. 2021

out in the context of the armed conflict[107]. To this end, national, regional, and local efforts were reviewed and recorded in a database wherein more than a thousand experiences were mapped. Their analysis allowed the identification of trends and patterns of coexistence in time, territory, subject matter, and population terms[108].

The qualitative line, on the other hand, sought to expand the understanding of the efforts -social, political, economic, and cultural efforts, led by different stakeholders- to promote coexistence in the territories, and the methodologies and tools used to achieve their objectives[109]. Based on selection and prioritization criteria, illustrative experiences of collective cases that were relevant to the country's current context were identified. A little more than 100 cases were selected, which were analyzed in depth based on a review of existing information in different formats (videos, reports from social organizations, university theses, press releases) and conversations and workshops were held with the representatives of the experiences, beneficiaries, community members or institutions that had some kind of relationship with the experience[110]. The results of this process were systematized, recorded in an in-depth database, and subjected to thorough analysis, and based on this, research reports were produced and then shared with the Plenary and the Knowledge Directorate as input for the Final Report.

During the research process, a communication strategy was developed that sought to showcase «untold stories of stakeholders who, amidst the conflict, have engaged in dialogue, transformed their territories and managed to resist violence»[111]. For the construction of these pieces, it was necessary to approach the key players, to build trust, thanks to which it was possible to learn about the history of the organizations and to recognize the Commission's participation there. It was also important to assess the continuity of the conflict in some territories, which required some important considerations for the work, so that the security of the people with whom contact was established could be ensured.

Virtuality promoted flexibility in the development of methodologies. The construction of digital instruments that could be filled out by the communities without the need for the physical presence of the Commission was promoted. One of the difficulties that were overcome was the removal of some face-to-face

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[107] The research included documentation on processes of identification and systematization of positive experiences amidst the conflict carried out by universities, think tanks and civil society organizations.

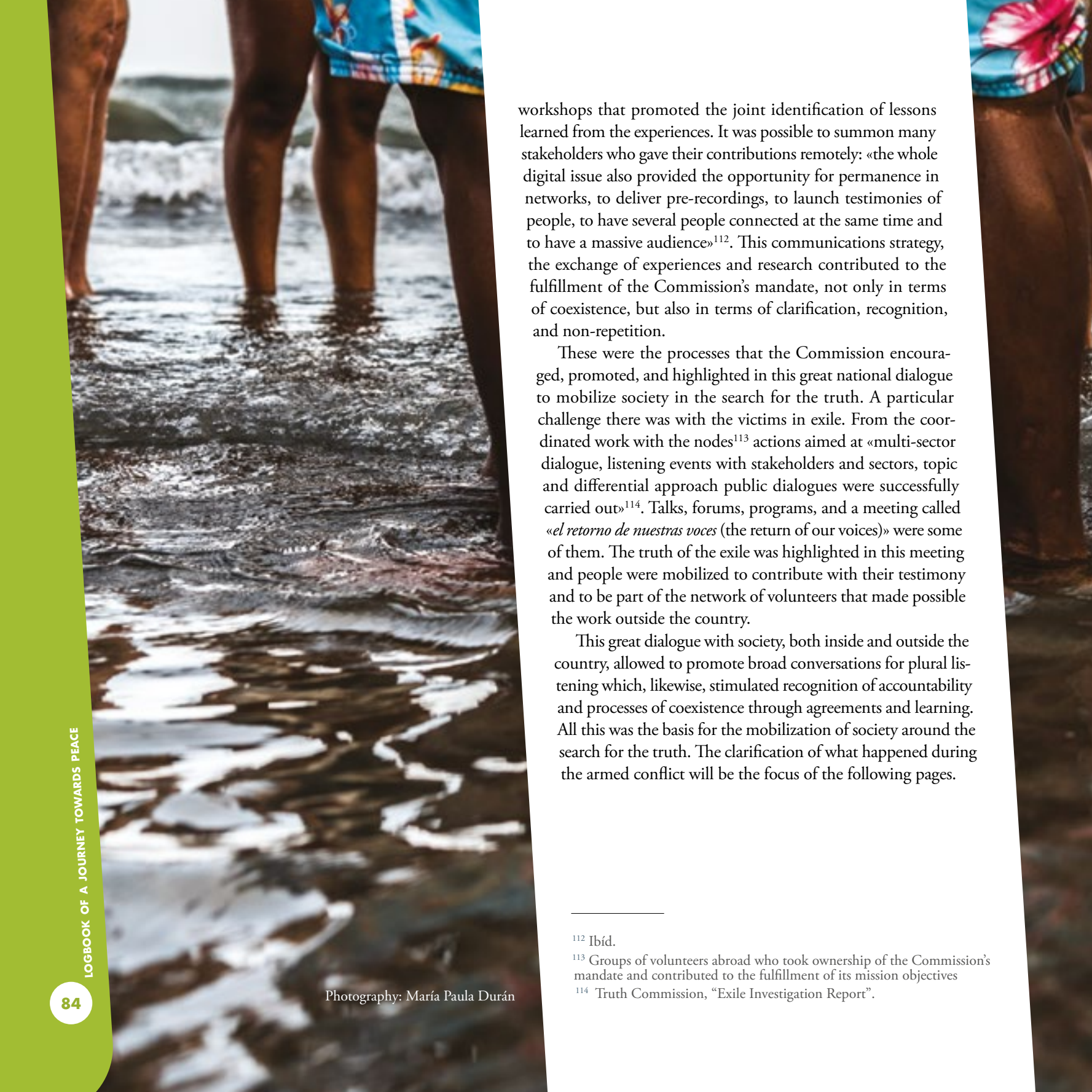[108] Truth Commission, "Methodological guide to learning processes for coexistence".

[109] Truth Commission.

[110] Collective experiences were recorded, including social organizations, victims' organizations, women's organizations, the extractive sector, the National Police, inter alia. Attempting to map cases from each sector.

[111] Interview with member of the Coexistence team. 2021

Photography: Truth Commission

workshops that promoted the joint identification of lessons learned from the experiences. It was possible to summon many stakeholders who gave their contributions remotely: «the whole digital issue also provided the opportunity for permanence in networks, to deliver pre-recordings, to launch testimonies of people, to have several people connected at the same time and to have a massive audience»[112]. This communications strategy, the exchange of experiences and research contributed to the fulfillment of the Commission's mandate, not only in terms of coexistence, but also in terms of clarification, recognition, and non-repetition.

These were the processes that the Commission encouraged, promoted, and highlighted in this great national dialogue to mobilize society in the search for the truth. A particular challenge there was with the victims in exile. From the coordinated work with the nodes[113] actions aimed at «multi-sector dialogue, listening events with stakeholders and sectors, topic and differential approach public dialogues were successfully carried out»[114]. Talks, forums, programs, and a meeting called «*el retorno de nuestras voces* (the return of our voices)» were some of them. The truth of the exile was highlighted in this meeting and people were mobilized to contribute with their testimony and to be part of the network of volunteers that made possible the work outside the country.

This great dialogue with society, both inside and outside the country, allowed to promote broad conversations for plural listening which, likewise, stimulated recognition of accountability and processes of coexistence through agreements and learning. All this was the basis for the mobilization of society around the search for the truth. The clarification of what happened during the armed conflict will be the focus of the following pages.

[112] Ibíd.

[113] Groups of volunteers abroad who took ownership of the Commission's mandate and contributed to the fulfillment of its mission objectives

[114] Truth Commission, "Exile Investigation Report".

Photography: María Paula Durán

Photography:
María Paula Durán

WINDS OF CLARIFICATION

In addition to promoting the appropriation of the search for truth, the recognition of responsibilities and the strengthening of coexistence, through a national dialogue involving society as a whole, the Commission sought to provide a comprehensive explanation of what happened in the armed conflict. It sought to satisfy the victims' and society's right to the truth, understanding truth as a public good and as everyone's right. Ultimately, the Commission sought to advance actions so that the conflict would not continue, and it would be possible to build a peaceful Colombia.

In order to achieve this purpose, a rigorous research process was developed that allowed for a narrative built together with the communities, the victims and those accountable for the armed conflict. A Final Report narrated from their voices, their experiences, and their own questions. A story *with* them, not *about* them.

The following is a description of the clarification process developed by the Truth Commission.

PREPARATION

During the preparation period (2018), the Truth Commission focused on understanding the experience of other commissions around the world that also set out to study in depth what happened during the war, and thus, give answers to the people - in their countries - as to what happened[115]. The commission also studied those efforts of memory, truth, justice, and reparation previously undertaken in Colombia, in order to understand where to start from.

Moreover, a state-of-the-art study of the country's research on the armed conflict was proposed. To this end, the Commission researched the most important documentary sources that had been developed so far -also in a rigorous manner- its own account of the conflict. This research allowed it to understand the extent to which the thirteen points of its mandate had been explored. This research included archives, databases, publications and sentences, milestones of the armed conflict and coexistence initiatives; in short, an extensive bibliography.

This not only gave it the basis for the general methodology required to fulfill its mission, but also led to a new cartography that divided the country based on the territorial dynamics of the armed conflict. This regionalization, which transcended national borders and was deployed in about twenty-three countries around five continents, was the basis for the processes it developed. This was complemented by the development of methodologies, guides, and instruments to reach the different corners of the country.

Several territorial experiences were their example, especially those that had listened in depth to the history of the conflict. Therefore, while a team of seven people went into this task, the rest of the Commission sought to reach the different territories through an unprecedented territorial deployment ever seen in a truth commission.

Listening in a broad, participatory, and pluralistic manner was at its core. Listening to as many people, groups, organizations, and sectors of society as possible. Listening attentively, actively, and carefully. The investigation carried out by the Commission was thus "a big ear", a big conch that echoed the stories of thousands of victims of a war that lasted more than 60 years.

The listening process promoted a plural and inclusive participation and a permanent disposition to recognize and understand, from respectful and trusting relationships, the people who shared their testimonies and their experiences of the internal armed conflict. This active listening principle constituted the guiding principle of the research methodology[116].

THE COMMISSION

LISTENED TO MORE THAN

28,000 PEOPLE

ACHIEVING

14,000 TESTIMONIALS

CROSS-CHECKED

600 CASES AND
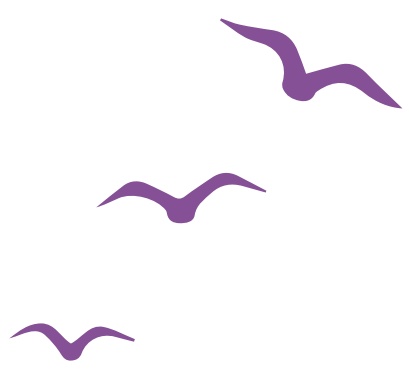
1.800 REPORTS

Chart 11. .Listening figures
Source: Truth Commission

[115] For a deeper understanding of these learnings, see Chapter 1.
[116] Truth Commission, "Management Report I Semester of 2019".

Photography: Truth Commission

Based on all these experiences, the first research team designed multiple listening instruments, which focused on individual and collective interviews not only with victims, but also with armed actors, witnesses and collective subjects, among others; on the reception of cases of the armed conflict; on reports created by organizations, civil society and public institutions; and on judicial sentences and reports by State entities on human rights violations and breaches against international humanitarian law.

In an unprecedented act in Colombia, the Truth Commission was able to access legally mandated information of a public, reserved, classified and intelligence nature of the Colombian State. This gave it the possibility of requesting and accessing information that in similar exercises had not been made available. Nevertheless, this task was not easy, and on many occasions, there were impediments, such as the figure of legal reserve that, even against what was decreed by law, hindered the learning of serious violations of human rights and IHL.

These methodological guidelines, processes for receiving external information and for the access, custody, and protection of this information, were used to structure and kick off the research.

DEFINING THE APPROACH

During 2019, in parallel with the territorial deployment, the Commission held meetings with key stakeholders and participatory exercises with national and international communities. Together with key stakeholders, it identified proposals and initiatives to support the clarification work and made progress on joint projects through agreements and conventions. In collaboration with the communities, it carried out the first listening exercises, participatory diagnoses, and also territorial state-of-the-art studies to understand the conflict in the regions.

The Commission needed to reflect in depth on its investigative approach, that is, not only on what it would focus its attention on, but also on the method it would use to achieve that goal. In order to develop an investigation based on listening from the territories and seeking an explanation of the testimonies of those who participated in or were affected by the conflict, five lines of investigation were initially proposed based on the main human rights violations and breaches of IHL, which were a translation of the mandate. These lines, although they followed a rigorous method, were based more on the hypotheses drawn up by experts than on the listening that was emerging; therefore, they were later replaced by research cores resulting from listening in the territories.

Thanks to the preliminary listening exercises and the territorial assessments of the armed conflict (Wind Maps), where it was possible to compare and agree with the people, communities and sectors on the issues that needed to be investigated, the Commission formulated ten thematic cores[117] that included the questions, demands

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[117] 1. Democracy and armed conflict. 2. The role of the State and its responsibilities. 3. Armed actors and other participants in the dynamics of war. 4. Development models. 5. Land dispossession and forced displacement. 6. Drug trafficking and the armed conflict. 7. Resistance, social struggles, and positive

and explanations that the victims needed. These were also related to the thirteen points contained in the mandate. The work on the thematic cores made progress on the draft texts of the research, which later fed into what would eventually become the books of the Final Report.

Thus, the research approach was inductive, meaning that it started from what was heard and was later compared with other sources (reports, cases, databases, and documents). This ensured that the story to be told to the country would start from the people, from the hidden Colombia and the voices that have not been heard in relation to the history of the armed conflict.

Over two years and under the core structure, the results of the listening process were sorted, classified, and standardized within the Mission Information System (SIM) for the use of the research teams. The system emerged during 2019, thanks to the lessons learned from the experience of the Guatemalan commission and was faced with large volumes of information coming in quickly, added to the need to process knowledge in real time and the urgency to develop technology for research processes. Such system was developed internally, as this was the only way to respond to the permanent needs of research. A series of tools were developed to allow the research teams to search and filter the thousands of testimonies and millions of external sources received for analysis. The SIM was developed through free software tools so that people, organizations, and institutions could later have access to this pool of information, appropriate it and make it available for new research or investigations.

The integration, articulation and arrangement of these processes and tools for document organization was called the knowledge management route, that flow between primary information (testimonies and knowledge gathered internally) and secondary information (cases, reports, databases, and external documents). The organization of this information, the processes for its classification, protection, and disposal, together with the use of technological tools, provided solidity to the analysis and contrasting processes.

This knowledge management route was formalized in the second half of 2019, thanks to several articulation exercises of both national and territorial research teams.

Hence, the methodology for truth clarification was structured in four phases: listening and information systematization, analysis, contrasting and information deepening, preparation and drafting of the Final Report, the editorial process, dissemination, and legacy. These phases were developed in parallel during the almost four years of the Commission's mandate, which represented a challenge for the different teams and resulted in several trial-and-error processes. Up to the last moment (June 2022), the Commission continued to receive testimonies, reports, and cases, and at the same time continued systematizing, contrasting, and analyzing information, as well as producing inputs and texts from the thematic cores for the Final Report. Once the first drafts of the documents were ready, an editorial team reviewed them in real time while the research was being completed. The following pages present each phase of this methodological route.

transformations. 8. Impacts on the cultural and territorial integrity of ethnic communities. 9. Armed conflict, society, and culture. 10. The international dimensions of the armed conflict and exile.

RESEARCH FLOWCHART

Chart 12. Knowledge management route flowchart
Source: Truth Commission

ACTIVITIES

REDESIGN I METHODOLOGICAL

STRUCTURE BY NUCLEI AND TEAMS TERRITORIAL
July 2019 to February 2021

1. Definition of subtopics and questions.
2. Review of the state of the art.
3. Development of methodological datasheets and territorial research routes.
4. Review of data collection instruments and formulation of a series of questions by thematic core.
5. Construction of a tree of codes for inforamtion laneling.
6. Construction of a glossary of concepts.
7. Systematization of the needs of external documentary sources.
8. Definition of information access policy: levels of confidentiality and access.
9. Identification of needs to be covered by external projects.
10. Prioritization of needs and search for financing for external projects.

REDESIGN II METHODOLOGICAL

STRUCTURE BY CHAPTERS
March 2021

Plenary of commissioners:
General guidelines to the research director, discuss and approve the final report.

Director of Research (Appointment March 2021):
Lead the research; guidance on methodology, thematic emphasis and action path, monitor quality and lead the quantitative methodology.

Final Report Group GIF (Appointment April 2020):
Build together with the research director, the methodological guidelines, review the texts in a first stage, and adjust the route and schedule.

Teams by chapter:
• 11 chapters

Directors per chapter:
Lead the research of their chapters according to the schedule.

LISTENING AND SYSTEMATIZATION OF INFORMATION (2019 - 2022)

Own sources
Call or assistance to victims or other actors who want to contribute to the truth. Explanation and signing of consent.

Interviews:
• Individual interview to victims, family members and witnesses.
• Armen actors.
• In-depth interviews and life histories of civilians.
• Collective interviews.
• Community diagnoses.
• Collective subjects.
• Publicly requested.
• Children anD young people.
• Social dialogue scenarios.

Recording into the Mission information System - SIM
• Filling out of long and short data sheets.
• Entry in the information system.

Transcript if interview. Information labeling.

Delivery of coded information for analysis – NVIVO.

Review and study of information coded primary information for thematic or territorial cores.

External sources Delivered to the Commission (Reports and cases of actors external).
• Assistance in their construction, delivery and formal reception.
• Official delivery to the SIM for custody and processing.
• Systematization and analysis. Catalogue complilation and avaliability in the repository.

Managed by the Commission (Files, reports or databases)
• Management before agency or owner of the archive.
• Access and use requirements: agreement and compliance with rules.
• Reference gathering – context of source or organization of archives according to criteria of timelines and relevance
• Consultation of documents in situ, without copying.
• Selection of files to de copy.
  - Copying of electronic or analogous files.
  - Delivery to SIM for custody and processing.

ANALYSIS CROSS-CHECKING DEEPENING (2019 - 2022)

Accompaniment from commissioners

• Processing and analysis of primary and secondary information.

• Processing and analysis of structured and cartographic data.

• Profiling of patterns, findings and explanatory contexts.

Analysis of Illustrative cases.

• Validation and feedback of findings with internal and external peers.

• In-depth interviews for cross-checking.

• Cross-checking of information with external sources.

DEVELOPMENT AND WRITING OF FINAL REPORT (2020 - 2022)

1. Drafting of documents, preliminary texts by chapter.

2. Staggered deliveries to the plenary of commissioners.

3. First review, reading and comments by the plenary of commissioners

4. Incorporation of adjustments to the final report (team by chapter).

5. Second reading, review and comments by the plenary of commissioners.

6. Fact-checking process.

7. Drafting of the final version of the report (teams by chapter).

8. Approval of the final report by the Plenary of commissioners.

9. Drafting of summary and key messages of the report.

10. Delivery of the Final version for the editorial process.

EDITORIAL PROCESS- DISSEMINATION AND LEGACY (2021 - 2022)

• Proofeeading of the report.

• Checking of maps, charts and photographs of the report.

• Translation.

• Layout of the report in PDF.

• Printing of the report.

• Public presentation.

• Disclosure, distribution and dissemination of the report.

• Process for delivering the legacy

DATA PROCESSING

COLLECTION

The process of receiving and collecting data

TRANSCRIPT AND LABELING

Organize it, describe it in a record

CATALOGUE CLASSIFICATION

UPLOAD TO SIM

LOADING...

Data Collection Modulecaptura

Module of cooperation catalogue

Ckan Module www.ckan.org

META-SEARCH

Allowed the query of this information

The collaborative cataloguing module: the Commission´s teams shared your archives.

The Ckan microdata catalog module made it possible to store and publish data collections.

Chart 13. Interview processing

Source: Truth Commission

PLURAL LISTENING AND KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMATIZATION

The first phase of the research, known as "listening and information systematization", integrated the processes of taking interviews, receiving documentation on the armed conflict and its systematization and arrangement within the SIM.

In addition to the methodological and analytical procedures for establishing relationships - based on differential approaches - with women and LGBTIQ+ individuals; children and adolescents; indigenous people; black, Palenquero and Roma communities and people with disabilities, as well as for the incorporation of psychosocial actions in all processes, the Commission conducted individual and collective interviews with victims, family members, witnesses, armed actors, collective subjects and any person who wished to provide a testimony.

These interviews, together with cases, reports, documents, databases, and judicial sentences were transcribed, labeled, and classified according to the events, the accountable parties, the Human Rights violations, and breaches of IHL, the research cores, their causal relationships, dates, among other relevant data for the analysis. The labels, proposed by the investigative teams and boosted by the SIM teams, allowed the search, analysis, custody, and safekeeping of an archive for clarification.
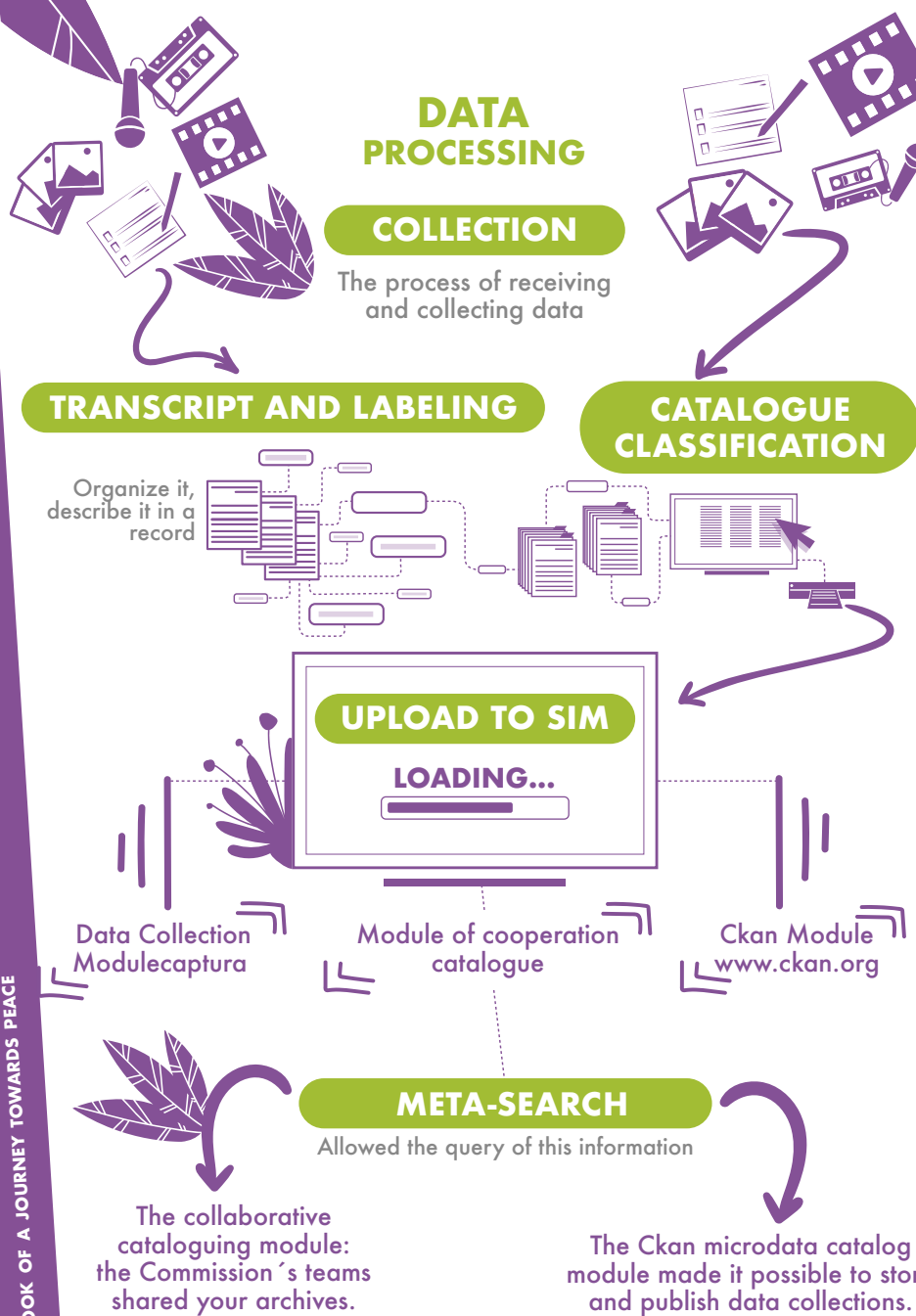
The information responded to an access scheme for people linked to the Commission divided into four levels in relation to its use. This meant that information that could represent some kind of risk - either to national security or to a person who gave testimony - was kept with restricted access only to those researchers who really needed that content. At the conclusion of the first year of its mandate (2019), the Plenary asked the research teams to prepare the first assessment on the research and the listening process. Both the territorial and national teams carried out this task. These exercises resulted in territorial reports on the findings obtained and analyzed by the teams in periodic research meetings, and national reports on each thematic core from the national exercise.

Both assessments requested a deeper analysis: the territorial teams were asked to delve deeper into the dynamics that characterized and constituted a new regionalization of the territory as a result of the conflict, beyond the official administrative division by departments and municipalities; the national teams were asked to delve deeper into the listening, since this first delivery was more akin to a state-of-the-art approach to the conflict. These suggestions highlighted the need for analytical agreements for the second phase of the research.

In 2020, although the pandemic produced by covid 19 implied listening reduction, derived from social isolation, this also allowed the processing of interviews and the classification of reports and cases to advance exponentially. In addition, the flow of reports, cases, sentences, and documents from social and grassroots organizations, international cooperation and some state entities also increased. All this made easier to start the analysis, contrast, verification and deepening of what was collected in the first assessment.

PROCESSING OF INTERVIEWS

TESTIMONIAL

Audio of testimonial

Audio of testimonial

Accounts (collective)

Prior consent

Annexes

LONG DATASHEET

TRANSCRIPTION

LABELING

Dataturks Manual data notation Tool

Tree of labels

Transcription logbook

Thesaurus Repository of terms in a systematic and hierarchical may

1 2 3

CATALOGUE INDEXING
Source organization and description

THE DATA COLLECTION MODULE
Web application with testimonials

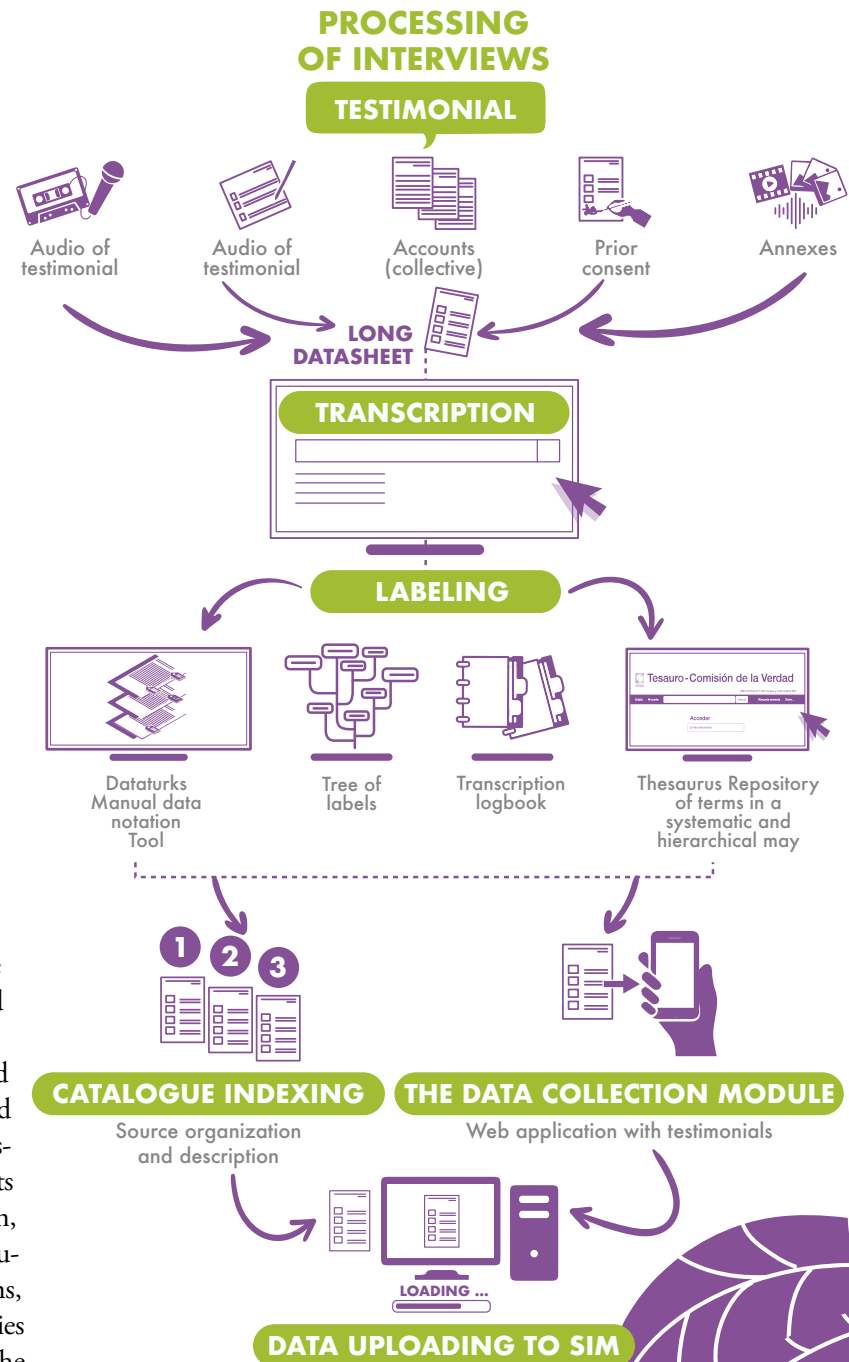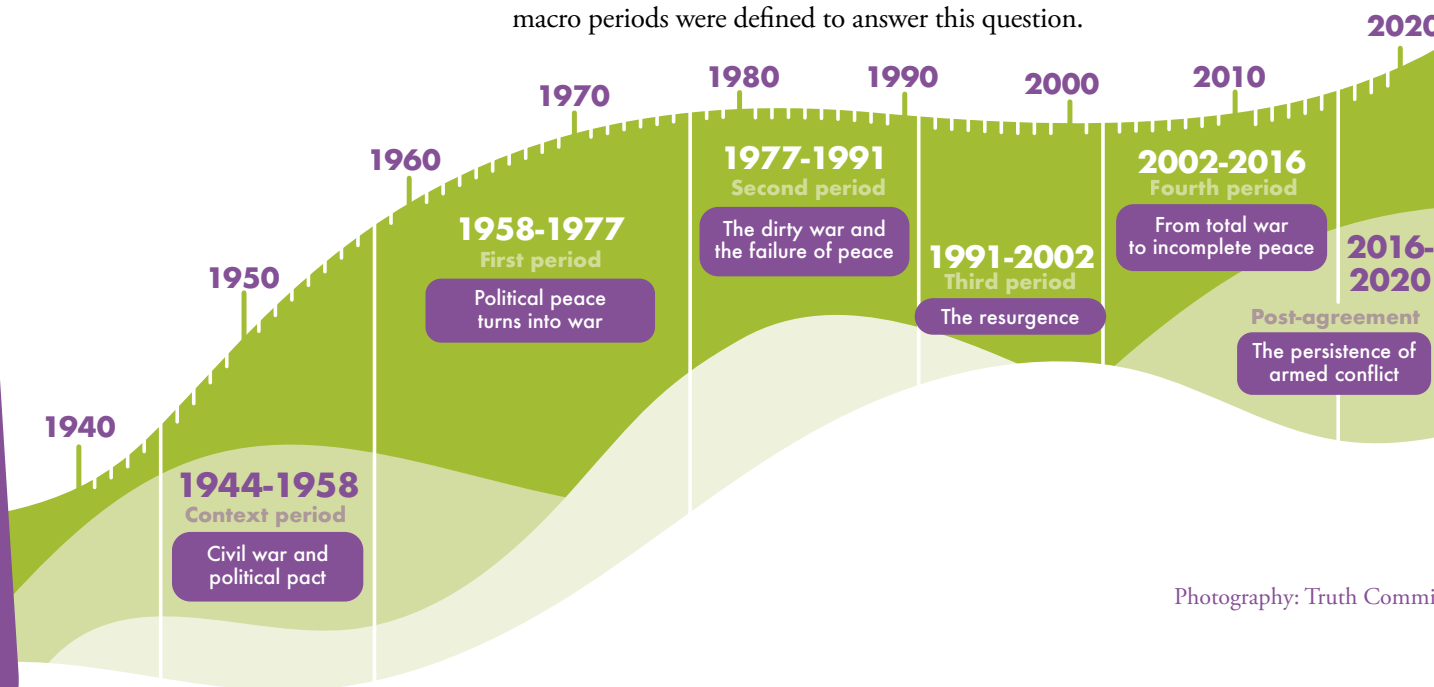LOADING ...

DATA UPLOADING TO SIM

Chart 14.
Information processing
Source: Truth Commission

RESEARCH VERIFICATION, ANALYSIS AND CONTRASTING

The second phase of the research route on verification, analysis and contrasting involved studying what was heard and identifying which dynamics were outlining patterns to explain what happened during the conflict, as well as which specific contexts encompassed such dynamics, and even which specific cases -which although they illustrated what was happening in different regions in a contextualized manner, responded to a web of interests, benefits, dynamics and factors- have allowed the war to continue.

To this end, a narrative emerged as a way to question society in ethical and political terms. Victims should be able to see themselves reflected in it, and those who did not experience it firsthand should be able to connect emotionally with these stories. Its objective was to reach all sectors of society and to encourage dialogue and emotional experiences. Its construction had to be based on a clear, direct, and precise language that was close to the people, where explanations were given and the voices of those who gave their testimonies were not obscured, but, on the contrary, amplified and dignified. In short, a language that was descriptive to narrate the facts and analytical to offer explanations.

The *periodization* from which the research was developed was also established, marking 1958 -the end of the bipartisan struggle- as the starting point, and 2020 as the final year to analyze the post-agreement period. Nevertheless, preceding, and fundamental turning points were considered, such as *El Bogotazo*, the death of Gaitán and the period of *La Violencia* (The Violence period). These periods were considered as circumstances in which political, military, economic, social, and cultural factors interacted and were decisive in the clarification of the armed conflict, and from them the narrative of the story was constructed. The periodization responded mainly to one question: why has the democratization process in Colombia been confronted with persistent violence? Six macro periods were defined to answer this question.

1940

1944-1958
Context period
Civil war and political pact

1950

1960

1958-1977
First period
Political peace turns into war

1970

1980

1977-1991
Second period
The dirty war and the failure of peace

1990

1991-2002
Third period
The resurgence

2000

2010

2002-2016
Fourth period
From total war to incomplete peace

2016-2020
Post-agreement
The persistence of armed conflict

2020

Photography: Truth Commission

Reflection on the cases and patterns emerged along with the *narrative* and *periodization*, which were the analytical basis to support the findings. These were finally the answer to the explanation of the persistence factors, to those dynamics that have prevented the conflict from ceasing.

Cases are those specific events that have a particular dynamic, cover a specific community and context, and demonstrate a violation of human rights and infringement of IHL. Given its extrajudicial nature, the Commission did not focus on clarifying specific cases, since the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) is in charge of investigating, judging, and establishing responsibilities. However, since there are events that share important characteristics and elements that illustrate phenomena or patterns, some were chosen to study them in detail and, through them, to deepen the findings of the investigation.

The analysis of more than six decades of armed conflict has shown that there are cycles, forms, and dynamics, as well as recurrences and similarities between violence that resemble each other in terms of the types of victims, victimizing events, territories where they occur and population groups they affect, among other criteria. These are the *patterns*[118] that enabled the Commission to explain the origins of the armed conflict, the characteristics of its development and the factors of persistence. On that basis, 15 patterns were defined -in September 2020- that were key for the analysis, contrast and deepening of the information derived both from the listening and from the study of other secondary sources.

This analysis was accompanied by explanatory contexts (May 2020). Their analysis made it possible to delve deeper into the roots of the cases and complement what was derived from the patterns. For instance, delving into the search for the conditions for an event to occur, which are usually interrelated and are linked to tensions and power struggles over political, economic, cultural, or territorial issues, or in understanding the reasons of those accountable, their intentions, decisions, and strategies; or in the coping and resistance processes of the victims, witnesses and society, and the measures adopted by the State.

Moreover, this made possible to understand how the armed conflict has - at the territorial level - different forms, intensities, motivations, and purposes; to understand that there is a web of relationships that, although the events and their effects correspond to one territory, may connect some territories with others, either for historical, political, economic, or military reasons, inter alia. And that all this, in turn, is contained by even larger and more complex national explanatory contexts.

Following the methodological guidelines that made it possible to organize the information collected to better understand what, how, why and the purpose of the conflict,

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[118] Truth Commission, *What are the patterns of the armed conflict?* Each pattern was composed of a context, in which the causes, antecedents and persistence factors were identified; some facts or modus operandi; some accountable parties, from which the why and for what they did it are investigated; some impacts, which delve into the causes of violence; and some factors of positive transformation.
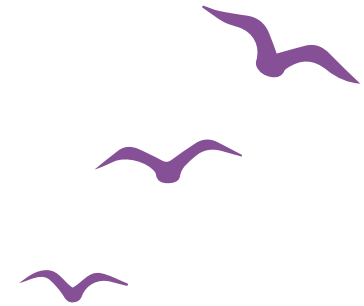
the Commission then began the task of verifying, cross-checking, and deepening on the information obtained from different sources[119].

Verification involved checking the validity of information; contrasting was used to compare the arguments, voices and views provided by different sources; and deepening allowed us to delve deeper into the sources to obtain more precise and detailed information. These three methods were articulated in a triangular manner, since it was understood that by verifying, one contrasts, and by contrasting, one verifies and deepens. The methodology to advance in this process was divided into three phases: source selection and weighting, source triangulation, and evaluation of findings, statements, and final results. Each phase was related to the research questions or hypotheses that arose from plural listening.

VALIDATION, CROSS-CHECKING AND DEEPENING

TOOLS

ASSESS ATTRIBUTES

Relevance (Pt)
Reliability (F)
Coherence (Ch)
Clarity (C)
Sufficiency (S)
Depth (D)

STAGE 1 — SOURC SELECTION AND WEIGHTING

ANALYZE TYPOLOGIES

SET OF SOURCES A1
RESULTS

STAGE 2

TRIANGULATION

TOOLS
Methods
Sources
Perspectives

FINDINGS PRELIMINARIES
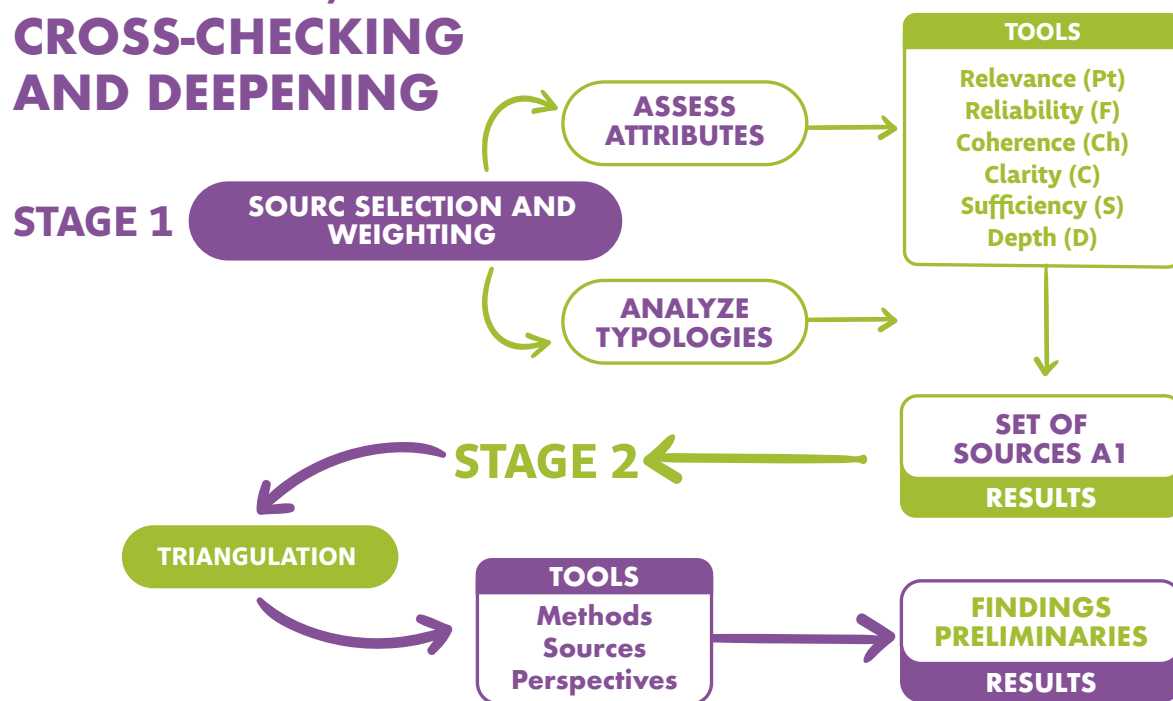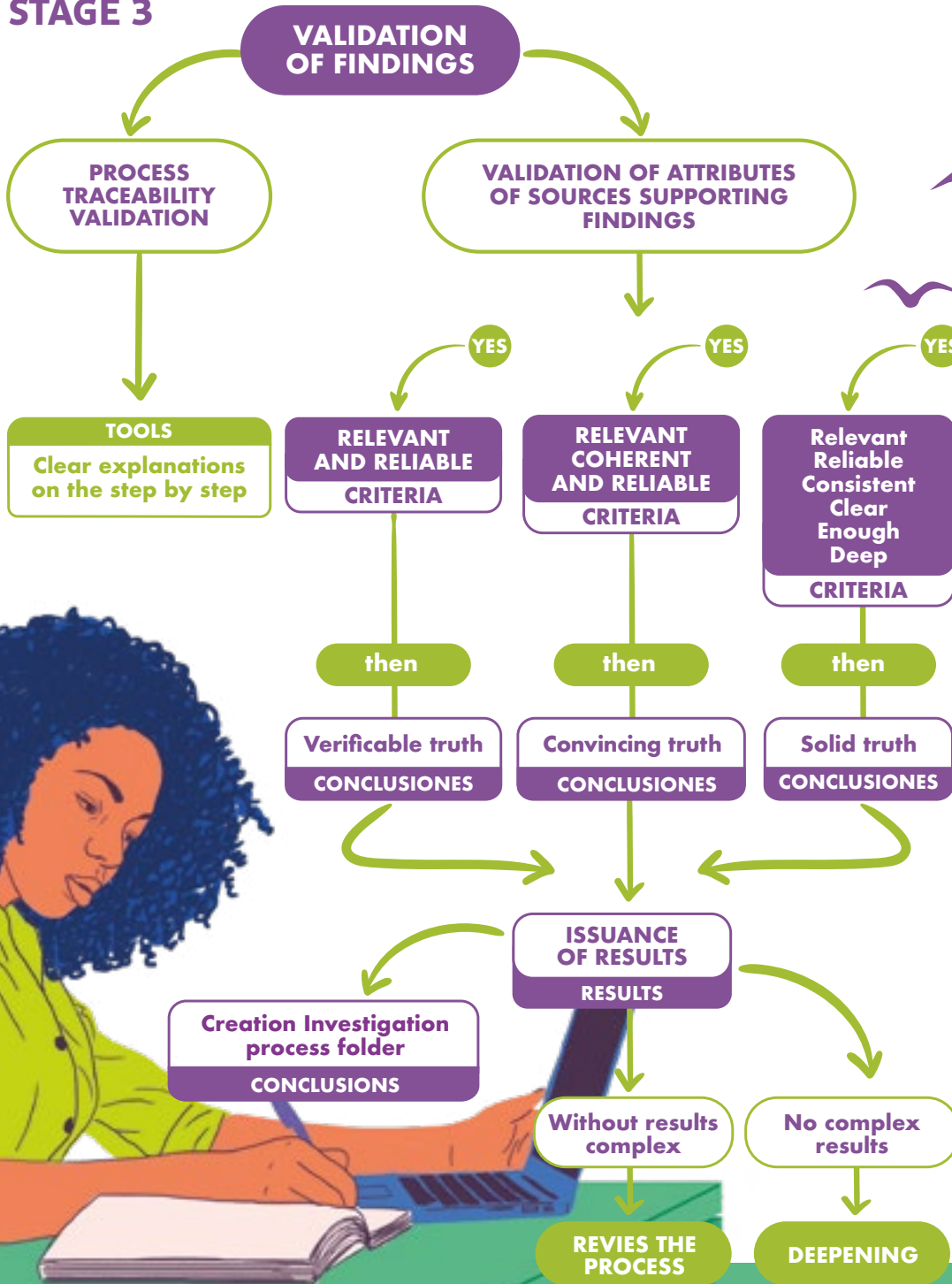**RESULTS**

Chart 15. Fases de la validación, contrastación y verificación   Fuente: Truth Commission
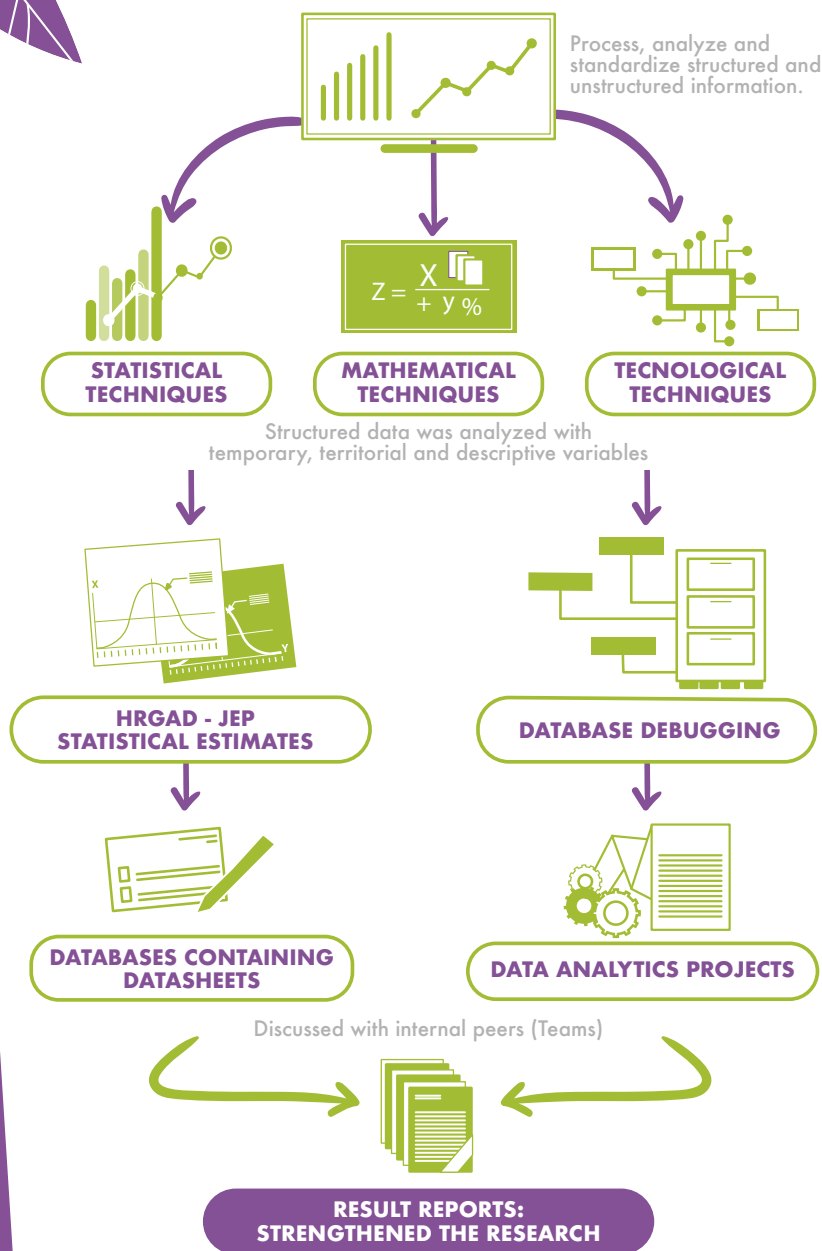
[119] This process was carried out through the Verification, Contrasting and Deepening of Information Methodological Guide.

STAGE 3

VALIDATION OF FINDINGS

PROCESS TRACEABILITY VALIDATION

VALIDATION OF ATTRIBUTES OF SOURCES SUPPORTING FINDINGS

TOOLS
Clear explanations on the step by step

YES

YES

YES

RELEVANT AND RELIABLE
CRITERIA

RELEVANT COHERENT AND RELIABLE
CRITERIA

Relevant Reliable Consistent Clear Enough Deep
CRITERIA

then

then

then

Verificable truth
CONCLUSIONES

Convincing truth
CONCLUSIONES

Solid truth
CONCLUSIONES

ISSUANCE OF RESULTS
RESULTS

Creation Investigation process folder
CONCLUSIONS

Without results complex

No complex results

REVIES THE PROCESS

DEEPENING

DATA ANALITICS

Process, analyze and standardize structured and unstructured information.

$$z = \frac{x}{+\ y}\ \%$$

STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

MATHEMATICAL TECHNIQUES

TECNOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES

Structured data was analyzed with temporary, territorial and descriptive variables

HRGAD - JEP STATISTICAL ESTIMATES

DATABASE DEBUGGING

DATABASES CONTAINING DATASHEETS

DATA ANALYTICS PROJECTS

Discussed with internal peers (Teams)

RESULT REPORTS: STRENGTHENED THE RESEARCH

The Commission worked with large volumes of information. In order to make the best of them, in accordance with the methodological guidelines defined to understand dynamics, contexts and persistence factors, in addition to the research team's qualitative analysis exercises, a quantitative data analysis process was carried out to strengthen the findings. The research was nourished by more than 500 databases related to multiple phenomena that help explain the armed conflict. Some databases are directly related to the conflict in areas such as violence, security, defense, coexistence, or justice, while others address economic, social, cultural, and environmental contexts, among others. The data analysts were in charge of processing and analyzing the information from primary and external sources - in some cases with external consultants, supporting the researchers with strong elements for the analysis, cross-checking and verification of the qualitative findings.

The following were developed during the research: the Multiple Systems Estimation project (consultancy led by Patrick Ball in alliance with the JEP), own statistics from interviews, database cross-checking on the armed conflict and research projects for the writing of the Final Report. The analytical research also incorporated differential approaches as an analytical criterion. This made it possible to delve deeper into the impacts according to different types of people. These processes led to work with both structured and unstructured data[120] to reveal patterns using these methods as well.

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[120] Structured: databases. Unstructured: large volumes of data that are not in databases.

Chart 16. Data analytics process

Fuente: Truth Commission

In this second phase of the investigation, the Commission extracted a series of findings with hypotheses that explain the development and persistence of the armed conflict. Most of them emerged, on the one hand, from the analysis of the patterns of violence, cases, testimonies, and reports, and on the other hand, from the deepening of the first assessment of the listening process throughout 2020. These findings (February 2021)[121] were the route to reach the conclusions on which the Final Report was written[122].

The Commission entered the final stretch for the preparation of the Report based on the needs derived from this assessment and translated into these guidelines that allowed for the smooth development of the second phase of the investigation and strengthened the task of clarification.

In this context, the Final Report Group (GIF) was created, comprising the Knowledge Director, the Territories Director, the Ethnic Peoples Director and two Commissioners. This group was created to coordinate the research and articulate the work of the national teams with the territorial research. The articulation required building bridges between the thematic analysis of the patterns that were made from the national level and the specific particularities of each territory, through national meetings, in-depth seminars, and shared readings among the teams. Nonetheless, despite these actions, national thematic research, and territorial research with emphasis on the regional dynamics of the conflict were permanently parallel until the end of the mandate.

Thanks to in-depth research seminars, the drafting of the final texts corresponding to the books of the Final Report began in April 2021. These texts were based on the inputs produced by thematic lines and cores, the exchanges between national and territorial researchers and the listening balances, as well as their subsequent analysis, verification and contrasting, and the work of the other areas of the Commission in charge of social dialogue, differential approaches, and strategies. Additionally, the teams that had carried out the research were rearranged at this point to meet the requirements of writing in books.

Since 2021, the GIF built the methodological guidelines for the Report, reviewed the final texts in a first level of analysis, led the exercises to deepen the findings, patterns and explanatory contexts, followed up on the route and schedule of the investigation, defined the new organization of volumes in books and formed a group called the expanded GIF, with internal peers from the Commission who read the documents and joined in the analysis and validation of the progress.

The books, under the responsibility of commissioners and directors, also had a coordinator, who provided thematic guidelines for the preparation of the documents.

DRAFTING THE FINAL REPORT

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[121] These initial findings are contained in the internal document Preliminary Findings.
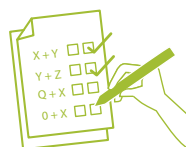[122] Truth Commission, Findings and Recommendations of the Truth Commission.
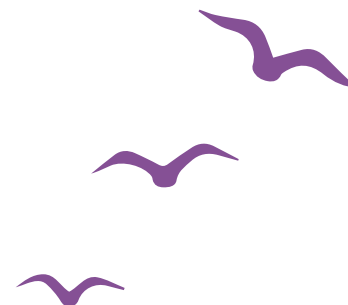
DATA AUDITING OR *FACT-CHEKING*

Review, standardize and ensure the replicability of the quantitative information in the chapters of the Final Report

By means of:

Numbers check

Checked that all databases used and standardized.

Interpretation of the data

Review of the consistency of the figures.

Audit

Precedents and dependents have been tracked, errors have been checked, formulas have been evaluated, or sources have been adjusted.

Affirmations in the chapters of the Final report verified, contrasted and substantiated with data.

Chart 17.
Fact-checking process
Fuente: Truth Commission

The directors, together with the coordinators and their teams, presented the proposed contents and developed the books. In February 2021, Commissioner Carlos Beristain was appointed as director of the research, who was in charge of guiding the methodological route.

The directors reviewed their preliminary documents for the approval of each book. Then, they presented them to the GIF, which analyzed and systematized them to guide the Plenary's discussions. Finally, the Plenary reviewed and requested adjustments for approval; this was done in a step-by-step manner. During the last round of reviews, the *fact-checking* process was included, which entailed reviewing, standardizing, and ensuring the replicability of the quantitative information that led to the statements made in each volume. A statistical annex was included in each book, describing the data analysis processes, the standardization of sources, the calculation of the figures presented and their interpretation, visualization, and consistency, to make the review more fluid. Fact-checking was divided into three phases: figure review, data interpretation and final audit.

Durante la segunda mitad del 2021 se conformó un equipo editorial para consolidar los criterios con los que se redactaría cada volumen del Informe [123]. The team's first task was to create a style manual, which was based on some documents and guidelines that had been produced in previous stages of the process.

This was followed by a phase of diagnosis of the status of each volume, in which diverse editorial processes were defined in response to particular needs. The editors, together with each research team, built collaborative work plans that allowed for smooth progress in the writing, which was developed along with the editing process.

Aside from the particular work of each team, within the editorial process there was also a general strategy involving three stages. The first was a macro edition to check that the main elements of the structure of each volume worked, the handling of testimonies, the depth of the information and the narrative line of the text, among others; the second was a micro edition, which focused on a line-by-line analysis of the story: here they checked that each sentence contributed to the structure, that it had the correct meaning and that there were no redundancies or gaps. The third stage was proofreading and style correction, as well as the revision of proofs on the already formatted books.

In addition to internal peers in different areas of the Commission, the research also had external readers from various disciplines, with extensive experience related to the armed conflict, who read, reviewed, and commented on the books of the Report.

Anonymization was a parallel process to the writing of the Final Report. This consisted of anonymizing the data of the testimonies cited, those that appear in the Digital Transmedia and those used publicly. Anonymization is a tool to minimize the massive use of personal data, to avoid the identification of individuals and the risk that this may entail. In this order of ideas, the testimonies provided to the Commission were classified as public information, since the end of the mandate.

After long consideration of the name of the report, this was entitled *Hay futuro si hay verdad* (There is future if there is truth) and is divided into eleven books that respond to the points of the mandate[124] and to the clarification of the truth. The inputs on which its writing was based were collectively built they were discussed, revised, transformed, delved into, and validated during more than three years. These books are:

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[123] These criteria had already been created previously by several commissioners, with Carlos Beristain leading as director of the investigation. These were: a) Suggestions for the testimony analysis process (July 2020) b). Categories to consider when reviewing the cases (March 2021) c). Some basic rules for writing the final report (May 2021) d). Features of truth commission texts (May 2021) e). Key concepts, definitions, or criteria to consider in writing (May 2021) f). Alert on guidelines for making liability mentions (June 2021). And a series that includes eight videos created by the director of the investigation, divided into: 1. Models of Investigation, 2. Source Review, 3. Terms of Reference and Levels of Analysis, 4. Report Writing Process, 5. Video Examples of Impacts on Democracy, 6. Use of Testimonies I, 7. Use of Testimonies II and 8. Use of Reports.

[124] For further information on the books of the Final Report There is future if there is truth | Truth Commission Final Report
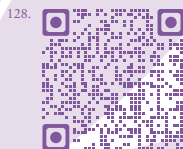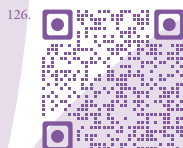
1. Call for a great peace. Statement of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition.

2. Findings and recommendations. Findings and recommendations of the Colombian Truth Commission.

3. When the birds did not sing: Stories about the armed conflict in Colombia. Testimonial volume.

4. Not a lesser evil: Children and adolescents in the armed conflict.

5. Colombia outside Colombia: The truths of exile.

6. Thou shalt not kill: Historical account of the armed conflict.

7. Suffering war and rebuilding life: Impacts, coping and resistance.

8. My body is the truth: Experiences of women and LGBTIQ+ people in the armed conflict.

9. Resisting is not enduring: Violence and damages caused by the armed conflict to ethnic peoples in Colombia.

10. Even war has limits Human rights violations, IHL breaches and collective liabilities.

11. Colombia from within: Collection of territorial stories of the armed conflict.[125]

Over and above the written text, the report is intended to be appropriated by society and to be expanded through different formats and to different populations. Hence the idea of establishing a Transmedia version of this story.

THE RISE OF TRANSMEDIA

Overcoming the challenge of the Final Report being consulted only by a niche group of people interested in investigative reports, the Commission decided that, in addition to the development of the written report, a digital transmedia[126] with multimedia and multimodal content would be produced, in order to promote its dissemination and appropriation.

124.

126.

128.

[125] The book Colombia from within is made up of 14 volumes that compose the territorial book of the Final Report and construct the story of this long war with a territorial perspective. This is the most spatial - and the most geographical - of the volumes that make up the Report. For this purpose, the Commission divided the country into eleven regions that respond to the dynamics of the armed conflict in each of them. These eleven regions are: Central Region, Orinoco, Middle Magdalena, Northeastern Border, Caribbean, Antioquia, Nariño and southern Cauca, Valle del Cauca and northern Cauca, Pacific, Amazon, and Coffee Area. Preceded by an introduction that seeks to systematize and analyze the dynamics of the war in the territories, this book adds a glance at the urban dynamics of the conflict, and another one, as an epilogue, to the effects on the peasant movement, a major victim of the conflict, which has tirelessly sought to be recognized as a political subject and incorporated into the nation's elusive democratic processes.

[126] For further information on transmedia, Truth Commission

Creative workshops were held since 2020, with the objective of defining an expanded narrative for the Final Report. In addition, a conceptualization and inventory of ideas was carried out for the protection of narrative strategies and the construction of stories, and the teams participated in the Hackathon Creative Challenge, which brought together virtually 8,000 actors from the cultural sector in Latin America; this made it possible to develop a route for the construction of this expanded narrative[127].

This digital complement to the Final Report opens the horizon so that, through other languages, more people can learn about and interact with the story of clarification. There is content designed for children and young people, for ethnic peoples, for the exiled population, among other specific sectors, although there is also, of course, for a broad and diverse audience that, without the need to be an expert in the memory of the conflict, can learn about and emotionally connect with what happened.

This is the first truth commission report in the world that was designed as a platform for mass participation and circulation, and transmedia is a key input to expand, disseminate, contextualize, and promote its appropriation. Although the great achievement of the Commission was the delivery of the Report, its dissemination and appropriation, as well as the opening of its contents to the whole society, put it in a central place in the national dialogue and in the cultural imaginary[128], even at the international level[129].

The path ahead must be based on the memory of what happened, on not letting people forget, on the appropriation of this truth built collectively from the territories, which is, above all, a public good belonging to society. It is a story that reflects the pain of what happened, told through the voices of those who suffered the devastation of war, although it also contains stories of coping, resistance, and struggle. This was born of a path laid out by the Colombian Truth Commission, which sought first and foremost to respond to the demands of the victims, but also to incorporate the contributions of those accountable and to add great efforts to dignify the stories, mobilize society and strengthen a historically fragmented social fabric.

129.

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[127] Truth Commission, "Management Report 2020".

[128] The Truth Milestone

[129] Ambassador of Belgium to Colombia speaks on the Final Report of the Truth Commission.
Ambassador of Spain to Colombia speaks on the Final Report of the Truth Commission.
Ambassador of Norway to Colombia speaks on the Final Report of the Truth Commission.
Ambassador of Poland to Colombia speaks on the Final Report of the Truth Commission.
Ambassador of the EU in Colombia speaks on the Final Report of the Truth Commission
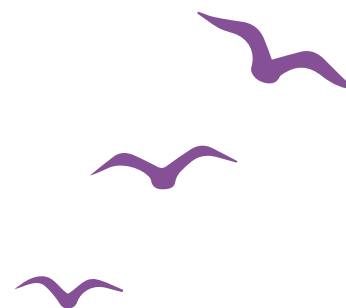
The Final Report is only the beginning of a path for transformation and the search for a stable and lasting peace. During the coming years and in the face of such a complex panorama as the Colombian context, this truth can only be sustained if it is deeply anchored in the different social processes, in the economy, in politics, as well as in the wide range of cultures and peoples present throughout the territories of the country.

The Commission's legacy to the country is the inheritance of its lessons learned, the tools to reflect on the patterns, contexts, cases, and factors of persistence, from which finally emerged the recommendations to turn the truth into a collective knowledge that opens the way to transform the conditions under which violence has persisted. The following chapter will address how these recommendations emerged in territorial and national dialogues to reflect on the non-continuity of the armed conflict.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography:
María Fernanda
Arevalo

DIALOGUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NON-REPETITION[130]

Clarifying the truth concerning what happened during the armed conflict and mobilizing society in the search for it implied extensive listening processes, a thorough investigation, and a national conversation to nurture a socially validated account of the conflict. These central processes for the Commission promoted actions and built inputs to reach conclusions built jointly with the communities, which allowed laying the foundations for the non-repetition of human rights violations and breaches of IHL.

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[130] Although the concept of "non-repetition guarantees" is used in Transitional Justice, during the Dialogues for Non-Repetition promoted by this team of the Commission, the need arose, particularly since 2020, among participants and some commissioners, to speak of "non-continuity" instead of "non-repetition". This is due to the fact that in many territories the effects of violence are not yet over. Thus, in this text we will speak of "non-repetition" to describe the process, and of "non-continuity" to describe the dialogues that took place.

Upon recognizing that the conflict and the presence of armed groups in the territories has been a difficult dynamic to overcome, the Plenary made the decision to create the objective of non-repetition. This implied going beyond compliance with the decree that created the Commission, which established "promoting coexistence in the territories, with the clarity that all its actions must contribute to the non-repetition of the armed conflict" and creating a human team capable of carrying out actions that would lead to conversations that would result in learning focused on not repeating the patterns of violence in force up to that moment. As a fundamental requirement for peace building, the Plenary sought to understand and analyze the factors that allowed the armed conflict to persist in order to propose steps for its transformation.

According to Father Francisco de Roux, «Non-repetition is the conclusion of the mission, and consists of the things that must be done, as a result of the investigation and the social dialogues, so that intolerable events are not repeated»[131]. As a result, the following key points were included in the work plan drawn up by the Commission to fulfill this mission. First, to achieve the greatest possible participation of different sectors, thereby strengthening the other mission objectives. Second, not only to focus on identifying recommendations, but also to open a public dialogue on the issue, recognizing that recommendations for non-repetition have already been proposed in the country. Third, facilitate conversations on non-repetition in some of the following areas: justice, democracy, education, land, media, security, drug trafficking and reincorporation processes. Fourth, to promote the rupture of imaginaries and patterns that allowed or encouraged violence, as well as to seek the reconstruction of social fabric and the projection of shared futures.

During 2019, various dialogues were held with experts to identify recommendations, and work was done on the construction of a recommendation mapping from reports and other documents related to the Colombian armed conflict, which resulted in 1,200 recommendations. In order to resume work on recommendations the following year, the Plenary established that this process would be carried out around five thematic axes: land, security, drug trafficking, justice, and education.

Chart 18.
Measures to guarantee non-repetition

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[131] Commission. Context document: "Dialogues for Non-Repetition and Non-Continuity 2020 Process", 30.06.2021.

MEASURES TO GUARANTEE NON-REPETITION

● **Measures and educational reforms for non-repetition**
Focused on the generation of institutional and community spaces for reflection on the changes required by the country's curriculum for peace-building education, including ethnic narratives and their contributions to nation building.

● **Institutional strengthening**
In order to facilitate ethnic peoples' access to rights, through training in public services and building of institutional capacity to incorporate ethnic perspectives in the areas of justice, relations with authorities, fundamental rights to health and education, prevention and protection, territorial rights, among others.

● **Symbolic actions of historical reparation**
As a contribution to: the elimination of all forms of structural discrimination; the non-repetition of victimizing acts; public acceptance of the acts; public forgiveness; the restoration of the dignity of the victims - particularly women - of the ethnic peoples and communities that promote historical reparation and awareness of the value of ethnic and cultural human rights.

In 2020, 48 reports were systematized[132]. to find the main factors of persistence of the conflict. This systematization resulted in the identification of 174 references on persistence factors which, after an analysis exercise, were classified into seven major categories: simultaneous existence of democracy and repression, violent territorial control for political purposes, violent territorial control for economic purposes, drug trafficking and other illegal economic dynamics, differentiated presence of the State, State responsibilities, and racism and ethnic-racial discrimination. The scope of these categories was defined according to the Commission's findings during the years of its mandate[133].

The analysis resulted in proposals for institutional reforms to guarantee the non-repetition of the conflict at the regional and national levels, such as guarantees and promotion of social participation, measures to strengthen inclusive education, cultural programs, and psychosocial strategies. A document on the continuity of the conflict emerged, with emphasis on the issues of the mandate and the factors of persistence in each territory. The continuum of gender-based and sexual violence was addressed, as well as violence against ethnic peoples, children and adolescents, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Next, a plan was defined to carry out a wide variety of private and public dialogues - within the territory and at the national level - around the questions raised in the document, as well as on the progress of the research and the dialogue with the different entities and actors in society. Eventually, spaces for these conversations were developed. The dialogues took place with social and ethnic organizations, law enforcement, state institutions, businessmen and victims, in order to build plural stories about what was happening in the territories.

To do so, preparatory spaces were facilitated with institutions and other sectors of society. Timelines and analysis of territorial contexts were constructed in these spaces, and the thematic axes of the conversations were defined. Similarly, entities and business groups reviewed their experiences, analyzing what worked, what did not and what was needed from each sector to contribute to non-repetition. Subsequently, meetings were held with experts on the topics prioritized in the conversations, and public dialogue activities were included around the results obtained from these meetings.

Some of these conversations opened space for consensus-building on changes in the exercise of politics, as well as in the ways of resolving conflicts. Along the same lines, symbolic acts, reflections, and public debates were promoted to agree on the transformations required to stop violence and guarantee the free exercise of politics and democracy. This was done with people who had sufficient authority

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[132] The methodology was based on the contrast and analysis of information.
[133] Truth Commission, "The Social Dialogue Process in the Truth Commission".

Photography: María Paula Durán

to make political decisions, but also with those who made the recommendations visible in each sector. Finally, a follow-up exercise was carried out on the commitments and conclusions derived from the dialogue spaces.

Regarding the clarification, the positive transformations (coping and resistance processes of the communities) and the specific recommendations were made visible. These were further elaborated in relation to the research findings on the steps to be followed, those responsible for their implementation, the management indicators and the outcomes that should be associated with each recommendation.

During the dialogue processes, participation was horizontal and equal; in other words, the contribution of an ex-combatant was as important as that of a member of an assembly of deputies. Consequently, the aim was for the participants to feel that they were in inclusive and safe spaces to talk - on an equal footing - about the situation they experienced in the territories. In the case of the businessmen and ex-combatants, as is to be expected, there was a certain amount of prevention in speaking with the Commission, but when they realized that the entity was simply a bridge to facilitate these conversations, thus creating safe spaces where dialogue was encouraged.

Some dialogues were conducted on a territorial basis and sought to identify those factors that contributed to the persistence of the conflict based on specific cases. These provided specific data and ideas, but above all perspectives on what to do in the short, medium, and long term. Meanwhile, at the national level, a number of dialogues for the transition towards peace were held, which sought to convene opinion leaders, decision-makers, and political, economic, cultural, and social elites, among others, for a dialogue on the persistence factors and the future of Colombia.

The members of the Commission's Advisory Council constituted a first important group, which included experts, opinion leaders and key decision-makers for this process[134]. The methodology used revolved around meetings between opposing actors, called improbable dialogues, which provided a level of depth to the dialogue on the future that would allow solid commitments to be reached for the non-repetition of the armed conflict and its causes.

Naturally, there were also dialogues with institutions and organizations, and these were held to reflect on the transformations of the State and the structural reforms needed to guarantee non-repetition and non-persistence. The starting point focused on point thirteen of the mandate, i.e., on the processes of positive transformation of organizations and institutions throughout the conflict. There was a dialogue on what can be built and what must be transformed, and some recommendations were proposed.

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[134] This dialogue established a base of committed decision-makers and potential members of the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee to ensure that the Commission's legacy would have an impact on the reality of the country after the Commission's end.

Photography: Truth Commission

Public dialogues were not the only tools that the Commission fostered to contribute to non-repetition. There were also contributions to non-repetition, namely spaces focused on opening conversations with former presidents, former commanders, and former ministers, among other powerful figures, and processes of collective construction among actors with the capacity to influence concrete transformations.

The articulation between the different teams of the Commission was very important in these conversations, especially between the differential approach teams. This made it possible to understand the impacts from different perspectives and with different population groups, as well as the different narratives and territorial dynamics.

Throughout 2020, the communities not only insisted on the non-repetition of the conflict, given that it had not ceased in several territories, but also proposed looking for alternatives for its non-continuity.
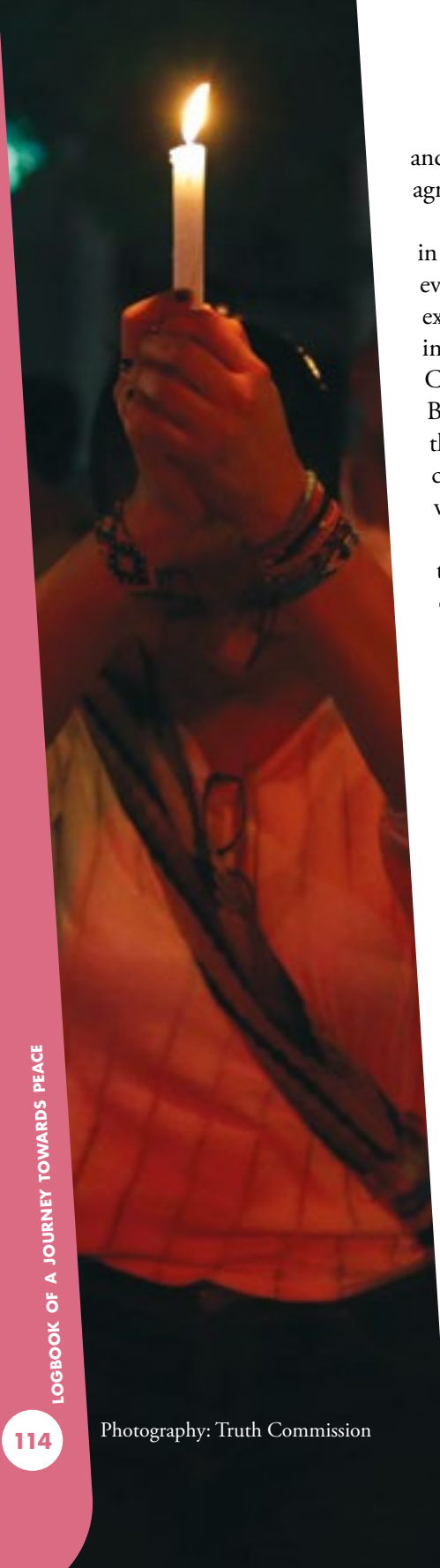
The methodology of the dialogues for the non-continuity of the conflict sought to promote -through questions posed by the Commission- a reflection with different stakeholders and sectors participating in the decision-making process. These conversations were guided by the recognition of the victims and society as a whole about the facts of the internal armed conflict, the generation and reaffirmation of consensus on the understanding of what happened, its impact on contemporary events and the changes required to prevent its persistence through institutional and social actions.

Current problems were analyzed during these dialogues in light of the transversal approaches of the Commission's work and its mandate, the way was paved for the reception of the Final Report and the recommendations for non-repetition, the purpose was to learn about and condemn what happened in the conflict, and to build capacities for dialogue and the construction of recommendations was promoted. All this with the challenge of addressing the issues associated with the commitment to non-repetition in a context where the conflict continues and, in some cases, has escalated.

For 2019, these dialogues focused on the systematic attack on men and women who were social leaders and human rights defenders. The Commission had identified that -between 1986 and 2018- at least 4,759 male and female leaders had been killed or went missing in the country, with an increase in the numbers in the years 2003 and 2018. Thus, the development of dialogues for non-repetition was carried out under the premise that attacks on social leaders have a profound impact on democracy and community and territorial dynamics, since they are the ones who collect and represent the voice of the communities and social sectors and make known the collective voice of the territories.

Conversations were held with entities in charge of monitoring and registering these affectations in order to establish the reasons for this increase in the figures. The Commission also spoke with leaders in territories prioritized for their spatial location and their involvement in the armed conflict, as was the case in Arauca, Montería, Barrancabermeja and Quibdó. These dialogues helped the Commission to identify that the origin of the attacks

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

and murders against social leaders was directly related to the implementation of the peace agreement, which means that they were not "isolated" incidents.

Two dimensions were prioritized in 2020: the level of intensity of violence experienced in the territory as a result of the conflict and the weak presence of the State, which was evident both in the violence against FARC leaders and former combatants and in the existence of vulnerable groups and the affectation of ethnic communities, particularly indigenous communities. The Commission carried out these dialogues in four zones: Catatumbo, in Norte de Santander; Bajo Cauca Antioqueño and Bajo Atrato Chocoano, Bajo Cauca and the department of Cauca. These dialogues sought to delve deeper into the factors and conditions that facilitated or contributed to the persistence of the armed conflict[135], identifying cases that would make it possible to understand why these factors were reactivated or strengthened in some regions.

This process was carried out based on its documentation and resulted in an account that provided important elements to the investigation. Dialogues that led to public debate on the guarantees of non-repetition were also possible and led to the identification of key sectors and actors. This resulted in a national dialogue that unfolded as follows: documentation, dialogue with external parties, road map, process registration, systematization, monitoring and evaluation, a national closure, and the development of a narrative as the final product.

Documentation was prepared in a phased manner throughout the dialogue processes and included: initial analysis of the context, in-depth analysis of cases and consolidation of a final document. A work agenda was defined with different interlocutors and through different virtual formats in the dialogues with external parties.

The dialogue process for the non-continuity of the armed conflict had a road map that included the following phases: progress review, formation of the mixed driving group, dialogue profile construction, and launching and implementation of the dialogues with external parties. The systematization was built on the basis of public and private events in which the victims shared their testimonies. Based on the dialogue profile, criteria were established for monitoring the process in general, as well as indicators associated with the results. This included assessments of methodologies, participation (quality and relevance) and commitments in relation to the Commission's objectives.

Once the regional agenda was developed in the four territories, a national space was held, where different actors and sectors participating in the process were convened. This was a space for national reflection to share conclusions related to the persistence of the armed conflict in the four prioritized territories. Eventually, a narrative was presented including a historical perspective of the armed conflict and the violence derived from it, as well as the persistence factors, specific cases that explain these factors, analysis of the differential impacts and recommendations.

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[135] Truth Commission, "Armed conflict and land: persistence factors proposed as a key to non-repetition".

STEPS FOR DIALOGS

DOCUMENTATION

This lane is developed staggered over the course of the processes of dialogue and contemplates:

- Initial context analysis
- Deepening of cases
- Consolidation of the final document

DIALOGUES WITH EXTERNAL PARTIES

- Work agenda with different interlocutors through various virtual formats
- Multiple dialogues with stakeholders and sectors
- Mechanism for citizen participation

THE ROADMAP

The dialogue process for the non-continuity and non-repetition of the armed conflict comprises the following phases:

- Review of progress
- Formation of the mixed driving group
- Construction of the Dialogue Profile
- Launching and implementation of the dialogues with external parties.
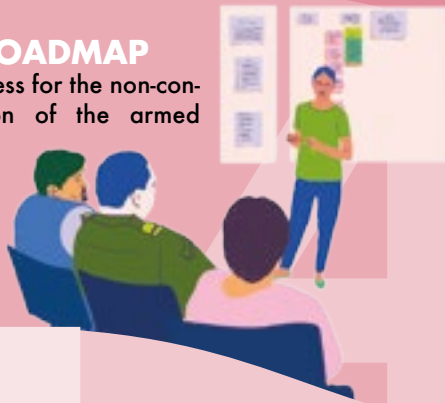
REGISTER OF THE PROCESS

As the dialogue process progresses, information will be added and cases will be progressively shown to be solid in order to understand the persistence and to provide elements for the research.

SISTEMATIZACIÓN

Evento público o privado, en el que las víctimas dan a conocer su testimonio según el orden acordado entre ellas en la preparación colectiva

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Based on the dialogue profile, criteria for monitoring the process was established, as well as the indicators associated with the results. It included evaluations of methodologies, participation (quality and relevance) and commitments in relation to the Commission's objectives.

NATIONAL CLOSURE THROUGH DIALOGUE OF DIALOGUE PROCESSES FOR NON-CONTINUITY AND NON-REPETITION

Once the regional agenda has been developed for the four territories, a national space will be held, where different actors and sectors participating in the process will be called upon. A space for national reflection to share the conclusions related to the persistence of the armed conflict in the four prioritized territories.

FINAL PRODUCTS

Final narrative that includes:

- Historical perspective of the armed conflict, derivative violence and persistence factors.
- Specific cases explaining persistence factors
- Analysis of differential impacts
- Proposals for recommendations

Chart 19. Steps for dialogues

Fuente: Truth Commission

NATILONAL DIALOGUE FOR NON-REPETITION[136] **PROVIDES RECOMMENDATIONS**

This was a space for dialogue that took place in Bogota on October 15, 2021[137] with the participation of nineteen departments. The conversation was led by a panel of four representatives, chosen by social leaders, representatives of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities and LGBTIQ+ communities, as well as international and institutional organizations. The team in charge of the non-repetition objective held a previous workshop that resulted in the selection of four persistence factors that were made known in that great dialogue. «The results of these dialogue processes were part of the collective analysis carried out by the different social actors who participated in each of the meetings organized by the Truth Commission in these territories»[138].

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[136] Comisión de la Verdad, "Diálogo nacional por la no repetición entrega recomendaciones sobre cuatro factores de persistencia comunes en los territorios".

[137] "The National Dialogue for Non-Continuity and Non-Repetition was proposed as a scenario for the conclusion and presentation of the findings and proposals resulting from the different regional dialogue processes that have been carried out since 2019".

[138] Commission. National Dialogue for the Non-Continuity and Non-Repetition of the Armed Conflict: the regions speak about other possible futures. 2021.

Some of the recommendations derived from the exercise identified that the presence of armed groups in the territories is a persistent factor that leads to insecurity in the communities and, in turn, is fueled by the non-compliance of the State regarding many agreements. Another point to highlight in the dialogue was the recommendation made by the leaders on the full and urgent implementation of the Final Agreement. They also highlighted the differentiated presence of the State, which is minimal and not comprehensive, the importance of businessmen in the territories and the role they can play in peacebuilding.

At the end of the dialogue, the commissioners present concluded that all these recommendations presented by the leaders were of vital importance, and the Commission had the responsibility to include them in the Final Report, as well as to disseminate them.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography:
María Paula
Durán

El rol de la sociedad civil fue central durante todo el mandato de la Comisión, y se espera que lo sea aún más en el futuro. Por ello, la entidad creó la estrategia de Legado, con el objetivo de preparar a la sociedad y entregar al país las conclusiones de su trabajo a través del Informe Final. Asimismo, sistematizó las recomendaciones y aprendizajes recogidos, con el objetivo de que este saber pueda convertirse en un bien colectivo que lleve a una vida digna y mejor para todos y todas. *Legado* es entonces un puerto de llegada, pero sobre todo un puerto de salida para lo que viene.

PUERTO LEGADO (LEGACY PORT) AND NEW HORIZON

A MULTIPLE BIRTH STORY

Wondering about the origin of the legacy takes us back to a history that has no single birth. The victims' organizations came to the Commission with their legacy -years of experience in the struggle for the defense of their rights- with the knowledge of the dynamics of the territories and of the dialogue with the State. The Peace Agreement and the creation of the Integral System, of which the Truth Commission is a part, would not have been possible without the pressure they exerted for decades.

In another scenario, as seen in the first chapter, the contribution of previous truth commissions around the world was recognized from the outset, and the metaphor "we stand on the shoulders of giants" was often used. The Commission was heir to the recommendations and lessons learned from previous experiences at the global level.

In 2021, during a dialogue between coordinators of the eleven macro-territories, a consensus was reached that the legacy had begun from the first day of the Commission. From that moment on, the territories began to participate, through hundreds of processes carried out during the years of the mandate, in plural conversations about the armed conflict, with actions to promote coexistence, in acts of recognition, in requests and offers of forgiveness, as well as in the search for commitments of non-repetition. Hence, it is possible to say that "the legacy began as soon as the Commission touched the souls of the people to whom it listened".

The final origin point of the legacy is located at the end of the Commission, from the day of the release of the Final Report to the country, which brings together the reflections of its participatory, analytical, and rigorous exercise, and the recommendations for non-repetition. According to the Commission's staff, the legacy is something that will survive thanks to society's appropriation of the work carried out by the Commission, as well as all the previous work done in a partnership network.

This account of the multiple ways of understanding the beginning of the legacy reveals the richness of the contributions that the Commission received, of those that it itself produced and of those that it hopes to deliver to Colombian society.

A LIVING LEGACY FOR WHAT AND FOR WHOM

The legacy becomes truly meaningful when it becomes an inheritance and social knowledge. Civil society must know and appropriate the recommendations and lessons learned from three years of plural listening throughout the country. How will this transmission take place? Undoubtedly, the participation of society as a whole, and especially of the younger population, is required.

In order to make the legacy tangible, the following were established:

• **A narrative:** considered as contents, messages, and values through which the Commission promotes the construction of shared meanings around the purposes and learning that should lead to valuing the truth as a necessary means to identify the transformations that will lead us to peace.

Outputs and activations: the Final Report and the lessons learned are expressed as a multimodal transmedia open to society, which displays the narrative through media and pedagogical platforms, communication, and artistic and cultural activations.

Networking with allies: this will lead to a broad and diverse group of organizations, agencies and individuals who will contribute to the appropriation of the Final Report and the recommendations, educating their audiences and advocating for the implementation of the recommendations[139].

These components, coupled with a permanent and transversal **pedagogical practice** will ensure that this legacy becomes the necessary inheritance and social knowledge.

The following is a general explanation of how these four components included in the legacy were developed. Then, in a fourth and final part of this chapter, contributions will be addressed based on the four objectives of the Commission: clarification, coexistence, recognition, and non-repetition. Finally, the differential strategies of this Commission to keep its legacy alive will be presented: the Monitoring and Follow-up Committee for its recommendations.

NARRATIVE

The Commission identified from the beginning the need to create a shared narrative, which could be expressed through its communications strategy (internal and external), the Final Report and the legacy in general. During the first year of its mandate, the Commission focused on a type of institutional communication that provided the internal foundation for this narrative. The communication strategy during that first period was the responsibility of the Directorate of Social Dialogue. However, from the second year onwards, the need for communication outside the entity and transversal to all its processes began to be sensed. Therefore, administratively, the strategy was transferred from Social Dialogue to the presidency of the Commission. From that moment on, the director of the Communications strategy was allowed to attend strategic decision-making entities, such as the Technical Council.

The Commission's communications strategy was developed based on the view of communication as the construction of meaning, rather than as a problem of media, channels, or messages. When thinking about the construction of meaning, the focus was placed on narratives and stories, in the context of a great dialogue with society. This implied the need to understand that it was not enough to speak clearly or to use a language (audiovisual, drawn, written, etc.) correctly to tell a story well or to produce the expected meaning.

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[139] The Legacy. Internal document of the Commission. May 2022.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: Truth Commission

Working on communication based on narratives is a recent topic, dating back only a decade. The premise of storytelling is the following:

> *People tend to understand better when you tell them a story (...) It seems to me that it made perfect sense for the Commission to work on this subject of narratives because, in the end, the Report is a story that has to be told, a great story telling the history of this conflict[140].*

Certainly, for someone to be in control of meaning is not easy. Meaning is constructed in a great conversation, in a great dialogue. What can be done is to share an understanding, a story that others can interpret, visualize, or read in their own way and from their own context in order for true communication to take place. Something important is to be clear that these stories are not built with arguments, but through emotional elements[141].

In 2019, the Truth Commission contracted the organization Avina[142]/Lever, an expert organization in producing large-scale changes for sustainable development in the region, to carry out a research study to understand the perceptions and associations regarding the truth in Colombia. The goal of this study was to define possible concepts, messages, and narratives to be used in communication and pedagogy to talk about the truth in Colombia and the work of the Commission.

The Avina-Lever report was key in laying the foundation for the narrative that created the Commission's Communications Strategy. This gave the whole team the opportunity to understand the deep ideas that are linked to the decision-making process of the people in Colombia. It also made it possible to identify the diversity of audiences in the country. The report showed that not everyone can be told the same story in the same way. This implied that the strategy was much more demanding for the whole team, because many efforts had to be made to tell the same narrative in multiple ways, with many products, and a variety of stories.

This report was the input that provided the communications team with an image of Colombians who are not an imagined Colombian or an average audience, but an image of Colombians who are more real, who fear the truth, but who also cope better with it through their sense of humor. An example of the result of the revelations of the Avina-Lever study was the creation of the television program *Frente al espejo* (In

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[140] Corredor, "Interview".

[141] Therefore, the theoretical and conceptual bases of the narrative model implemented by the Commission lie in the psychology of emotion, cultural code analysis and affect theory.

[142] Avina is a Latin American organization (14 countries in Latin America, United States, Europe, and Africa) created in 1994 to produce large-scale changes for sustainable development, through the construction of collaborative processes between stakeholders from different sectors. Since 2016, it is the coordinating organization of the Innovation with Purpose Platform.

front of the mirror)[143], with the renowned actor Santiago Alarcón, who, making use of humor, invited the country to reflect on the complex issues of the war. The program was widely awarded.

Right from the start, there were three important decisions for the Commission regarding its narrative. First, that it could not be a melodramatic narrative, built on the logic of a world divided into good guys and bad guys. The Commission never pointed to those accountable because it was extrajudicial by nature. Its purpose was to show the complexity of our conflict, full of nuances and gray areas, of stories that cannot be simplified.

Second, the grief narrative had to be recalibrated. The Commission had to narrate the impacts caused by the war in its Final Report. What this narrative wanted to do was to dignify the victims and, at the same time, try to focus the narrative on the future, so that this would not be repeated. Thus, in the face of the grief narrative, an attempt was made to emphasize the narrative of the coping forms of the communities and organizations, in the ways of resisting through art and culture.

Third, designing a unified, although not centralized, communications strategy. The aim was to respect the dynamics of the territories. Recognizing and respecting territorial autonomy was therefore a priority. On that basis, the strategy was agreed to be decentralized in its operation and implementation but based on a unified strategy.

DECISIONS ON WHAT THE NARRATIVE SHOULD AVOID

In May 2020, Commissioner Marta Ruiz created a document called *Narrative of the Commission's Report: Issues and Insights.* This document was distributed to the various directorates of the Commission and inspired the work of the communications team. The text accurately opens up the four main questions that any truth commission must answer and where it will focus its attention. First, what happened, to shed light on what was denied, hidden or poorly known. Second, why it happened, stressing the persistence factors. Third, who is accountable, since according to the law it was clear that collective or institutional responsibilities would be attributed[144]. And fourth, what to do to stop its "recycling", which is expressed in a series of recommendations.

This document already showed that the Commission was committed to shedding light on the past and also to betting on a different future:

THE NARRATIVE FOR THE FINAL REPORT

> *When we speak of a transition narrative, we mean that the Report is a link between the past and the future. It is placed in the present to understand what happened during these six decades, from a historical and critical perspective. Yet it is not only a matter of reconstructing the past, but also of finding the linking*

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[143] Truth Commission, *Frente al espejo.*
[144] Ruiz, "Narrative of the Commission's Report: Problems and Insights," 1.

threads between that past, which is still being repeated today, and the future that is being entrusted to the new generations[145].

There is a section of the document, "What does story mean?", which explicitly states the type of story that the Commission proposed to deliver to the country. On the one hand, a story that shocks everyone and that proposes - as one of the principles that should guide its narrative - to be a story embodying the lives of those who gave testimony. On the other hand, the Final Report of the Commission as a legacy is not an academic text or a denouncement or a legal sentence, nor is it a sum of chronicles of the conflict or a technical report.

One of the main contributions of the document «Narrative of the Commission's report: problems and insights" is in its final section: «Attribution of responsibilities in the historical, ethical and political spheres». There, Commissioner Marta Ruíz stated the following: "the Commission will probably have to differentiate guilt from accountability»[146]. Indeed, the entire Commission incorporated in its narrative the term " accountable" and distanced itself from the term "perpetrators", the latter widely used and accepted in the State entities dedicated to the attention, assistance, and reparation of the victims of the conflict throughout the country.

Other contributions were to refer to the acts of accountability recognition as "truth recognition meetings" instead of "hearings"; as well as to speak of war for the general public and armed conflict for specialized audiences and affectations instead of victimizing events. Additionally, the communication strategy consciously avoided defining the truth in accordance with the Commission's investigative position, as was seen in Chapter 5, on the search for a socially shared truth.

THE LEGACY'S NARRATIVE

The "broad outlines of the 2022 legacy narrative" were presented in April 2022 in a fourteen-page document[147] that detailed the key messages to be reinforced by the Commission during the months of April through June. This document maintains the same structure as other precedents: there is an introduction explaining that a narrative is not a script, but it helps to ensure that the basis on which the Commission explains is the same. Those in charge of this explanation can be officials and collaborators of the Commission, allies, the media, and anyone who wants to prepare for the reception and appropriation of the Final Report.

Once the introduction is over, the text answers the following questions: what are we facing, what is the purpose of the Truth Commission, what will the Commission leave to society and the State, and what is the ultimate meaning of the Commission. This

[145] Ibíd, págs. 1 y 3.
[146] Ibíd, pág 13.
[147] Líneas generales de la narrativa del legado 2022 (abril a junio). Documento de la Comisión de la Verdad.

section closes with a brief passage entitled "About the Final Report", which, combined with interviews conducted with officers from all the Commission's directorates, are the basis for what will be developed in subsequent sections.

The pedagogical intention of staggering the delivery of the Final Report during 2022 was based on this narrative from documents that, with high-impact ideas and messages, shared small advances and partial results to achieve understanding of its complexity.

These advances prepared society for the arrival of the Report and were made in three moments. The first stage focused on clarifying the expectations of the different sectors by opening spaces for joint discussion and dialogue. There, the information on the Commission was standardized. The second moment focused on making visible and raising awareness in society about some of the findings found during the mandate, the lessons learned and the nature of the Legacy. Finally, with the arrival of the *Hay futuro si hay Verdad* (There is future if there is truth) Report, efforts were concentrated on its dissemination, on pedagogy for its understanding and on actions for its appropriation.

OUTPUTS AND MEDIA

As mentioned above, the Final Report and the lessons learned from the years of the Commission's mandate are expressed in a multimodal transmedia open to all audiences, thanks to which the Report acquires a broad connotation that goes beyond the 11 written volumes of which it is composed. The following is a description of its components.

DIGITAL TRANSMEDIA

Twenty years ago, when Priscilla Hayner published her exhaustive study of 21 truth commissions around the world[148], only one - South Africa's - included among its recommendations to disseminate as soon as possible the use of audiovisual recordings attached to the report, so that they could be used in human rights training. Among the "measures to promote reconciliation", only the Chilean Commission considered the creation of public debate spaces on human rights, through actions such as forums or cultural activities to be held during the National Human Rights Day.

This means that between the earliest commission that addressed this study - that of Uganda in 1971 - and that of Sierra Leone in 2001, the narrative of the final reports issued by truth commissions was not yet a topic of debate, and the use of sound, visual and audiovisual media, as well as cultural and artistic languages, was consequently very limited. The vast majority of these commissions concentrated their work on the investigation of crimes committed in the context of dictatorships or internal armed conflicts, and their final texts were aimed at specialized audiences and/or those with a prior interest in human rights.

The case of the Colombian Truth Commission was different for a number of reasons. First, it had a broad mandate, which included not only the clarification objective, but also those of coexistence and non-repetition. Second, its technology was different from

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[148] Hayner, Unspeakable Truths 2e: *Transitional Justice and the Challenge of Truth Commissions.*

that of previous commissions. Third, when the entity began its mandate, there were a large and rigorous number of studies that had brought to light the origins, dynamics, damages and impacts of the armed conflict in the country[149].

Therefore, one of the first messages of the Colombian Truth Commission's narrative was that, although it would not bring anything new to light, it was going to relate it in a different way, that is, in a way capable of shocking and reaching out to civil society, to diverse audiences, including non-experts or people not interested in the subject.

The Commission, capitalizing on the technological developments of its time, decided to publish its Final Report and the lessons learned through a multimodal transmedia open to society. «Transmedia is a type of storytelling where the story unfolds across multiple media and communication platforms, and in which part of the consumers take an active role in the process of expanding the story»[150].

In the case of the Commission, the narrative was unfolded through very diverse media, such as video, mockumentary, animations, photographs, infographics, and also through pedagogical platforms, communication, and artistic and cultural activations. In sum, transmedia is one of the distinctive features of the Colombian Truth Commission.

This team also faced the challenge of starting to design without having all the contents of the Final Report. At the beginning of 2021, the design of content on the Internet was started based on structures and content trees. The first step was to think about the structure of the contents for the chapters that were already more advanced in order to save time while the other chapters of the report were being finalized. Content design was the biggest challenge for the transmedia team, due to both the existing information overload on the armed conflict and a certain exhaustion of the Colombian public towards the grief narratives.

One of the first exercises carried out was to agree on what the platform could and could not do: «the platform is not the one that conceptualizes the legacy, but it is the legacy [that conceptualizes] the platform»[151]. In order to respond to the general guidelines that the Commission drew up on legacy, this team perceived its mission in two ways: to be part of the legacy, and at the same time, to amplify it by spreading it.

The spreading of the transmedia staging was another major challenge. Bearing in mind that there is a connectivity gap between the country's capital cities and rural areas[152]–only fourteen of the 32 departments have more than 50% Internet coverage-

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[149] Para ampliar esta información, ver capítulo 1.

[150] Tomado de: https://proyecta.senalcolombia.tv/guias/que-es-y-como-hacer-un-transmedia, fecha de acceso: 7/04/2022.

[151] Ibíd.

[152] Según el DANE, 56,5% del total nacional de la población en Colombia cuenta con servicio de internet. Sin embargo, en los centros poblados y rural disperso ese porcentaje llega solo al 23,8%. En: https://www.dane.gov.co/index.php/estadisticas-por-tema/tecnologia-e-innovacion/tecnologias-de-la-in-formacion-y-las-comunicaciones-tic/indicadores-basicos-de-tic-en-hogares.
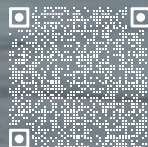
the Commission had to think about how to bring transmedia content to those areas where Internet access is more limited.

To this end, 60% of its digital content was defined as offline, that is, content available in many formats, which could be downloaded without an internet connection and in a simple manner; transmedia was the means through which the Commission managed to take its Final Report out of the world of experts and bring it to other readers. Transmedia also functioned as a medium that speaks to the country's youth, as well as to children, in the expectation that they will be the guarantors of non-repetition and non-continuity of the conflict. Its content is based on differential approaches with pieces in ethnic languages and for people with special needs, such as the hearing impaired.

Transmedia was also used to engage in conversations with those with whom conversations had never been held before. As a result of the Commission's work, it was decided to publish the Final Report in book format and to host its digital version in the Public Access Platform, together with more than 800 digital pieces that offer an expanded account of the volumes of the Report, more than 6,000 archival resources with information used for the investigation of clarification, and the record in different formats of the social processes carried out that contributed to the objectives of clarification, recognition, coexistence and non-repetition.

These words by Francisco de Roux, president of the Truth Commission, illustrate why the plenary of commissioners decided to incorporate the voice and work of artists within the entity:

> «*The Commission has deemed important to enter into an in-depth conversation with the artists because of their compelling and lively voice, and because they have the ability of telling us the story of what we have lived through their works and opening spaces of conversation that, beyond concepts and theoretical arguments, allow us to reach an understanding of the unmentionable and help us to raise - deep within ourselves - questions and reflections to abandon what must be definitively left aside, so that we can build together through paths of non-repetition*»[153].

Recognizing that art is a tool "capable of stirring the deepest corners of ourselves" and that it can create spaces for conversation beyond concepts, the Commission created the cultural and artistic strategy, which has been in operation since 2018. Over the course of its mandate, the Commission was able to evidence how in hundreds of organizations and collectives throughout the national territory artistic practices contributed

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[153] Truth Commission, Doris Salcedo in Naming the unnamable.

UNFOLDING THE NARRATIVE OF THE REPORT THROUGH ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL ACTIVATIONS: ANALOG TRANSMEDIA

152.

Photography: Truth Commission

to the processes of coexistence, reconciliation, dialogue, recognition of the value of communities in surviving the war, building memory, and denouncing what happened.

Reflection was also needed on issues entrenched in the culture that let the conflict endure, and on the positive and negative transformations that arose during the war.

This resulted in a process that started from what was heard and enhanced communication, the awareness of society around transformations and the creation of links that help to ensure non-repetition of the conflict.

The entity deployed actions related to artistic and cultural activations during the final months of its mandate in 2022. National, territorial, and ethnic peoples' pieces circulated in different scenarios, bringing the voice of communities to different audiences, preparing society to listen in a positive commotion for the non-repetition of the conflict.

There were also several events for the presentation of the Final Report held in various parts of the country. On one side, the national event to accompany the day of the delivery of the Final Report; on the other side, cultural and symbolic actions for the presentation of the Final Report in the regions[154].

More than 120 artistic productions were developed to promote dialogue and social reflection on the armed conflict and its non-continuation, including three large-format plays that circulated in different cities around the country and a national television broadcast. In addition, there were film cycles and alliances for circulation in 23 festivals; two exhibitions on emblematic cases of human rights violations; a photographic exhibition in public spaces in 28 cities; and artistic and cultural festivals and artistic activations.

WHAT IS IT?   As defined in the methodological guidelines of the Truth Commission, since 2018 the need to promote the articulation with social, public, and private actors, at local, regional, national, and international levels, was identified[155]. This engagement, in addition to being plural, had to be effective[156]. The different stakeholders are allies, individuals, organizations, institutions, or groups that have contributed to the development of the mandate, either through political, technical, or financial support[157]. This support is and will continue to be essential to achieve an understanding of what happened as a society, and the national commitment to the non-repetition of the events[158].

The foregoing is confirmed with the identification of approximately 3,300 allies from different backgrounds, domestically and abroad, during the years of the Commission's

[154] Internal Commission document: "POA-Legacy 2022".

[155] Cfr. Document On Networking with Allies (tra)1: progress, results, and next steps for the commission's closing phase (October 2021).

[156] Ibíd.

[157] Prada and Pulido, "Interview. Networking team with allies".

[158] Ibíd.

work[159]. The different teams of the Commission have identified approximately 1,700 of these allies who are strategic for the sustainability of the Commission's legacy[160].

Strategic allies include organizations, institutions, platforms and/or individuals who, as social and political subjects, were agents of change and advocacy, and whose own objective was to contribute to peacebuilding and promote negotiated solutions to the armed confrontation in the country, which grants them commitment, capacity, and autonomy for networking[161].

Networking with allies resulted from an internal process of decision making and conceptualization of what the legacy of the Truth Commission is, in a dialogue involving all areas, including the presidency[162]. The main goals of this networking are translated into sustainability, since these allies showed the Commission an outline of actions to be implemented for the survival, ownership, and dissemination of the legacy[163].

These were the following purposes: first, to prepare society for the reception of the Final Report and to understand its scope; second, to disseminate and socialize the Final Report and transmedia as widely as possible in Colombia and abroad promoting democratic debate; third, to promote the use and social appropriation of the physical and digital archives received, produced and consolidated by the Truth Commission; fourth, to ensure the sustainability of the processes of recognition, coexistence and non-repetition accompanied by the Commission at the territorial and national levels; and fifth, to engage in advocacy for the implementation and follow-up of the recommendations for non-repetition and the articulation with the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of these recommendations[164].

HOW WAS IT DONE?

The Plenary approved this strategy in April 2021[165]. The global focus it demanded led the Cooperation and Partnerships Office to carry out this work, since through this type of project it was kept up to date with what was happening in all the teams; after all, 50% of the Commission's work was financed through sponsorship from cooperation[166].

From that point on, the Cooperation and Partnerships Office was designated to support the development of this strategy jointly with the Legacy Articulation Board[167]. The sustainability of the Commission's messages and conclusions were fundamental

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[159] Cfr. Document On Networking with Allies (tra)1: progress, results, and next steps for the commission's closing phase (October 2021).

[160] Ibíd.

[161] Ibíd.

[162] Prada and Pulido, "Interview. Networking team with allies".

[163] Cfr. Prada y Pulido.

[164] Committee conformed in accordance with the provisions of Decree 588/2017.

[165] Ibíd.

[166] Ibíd.

[167] Cfr. Document On Networking with Allies (tra)1: progress, results, and next steps for the commission's closing phase (October 2021).

Photography: Truth Commission

for this closing phase, so the entity concentrated its efforts on the completion of the Final Report and the recommendations for non-repetition, in search of the best legacy possible.

Due to their nature, the allies will be the ones to continue the task of advocacy and action for the implementation of the recommendations and to keep the legacy of the Commission alive[168]. Three elements were advanced internally to this end.

First, solid, and suggestive imaginaries capable of creating a common will were offered, delving into inspiration and betting on listening, as well as on collective representations to add to the path of transition and the reiteration of the narrative of hope, making allies part of the solution, stirring them towards action[169].

Second, the documentation of information on the work carried out by the Commission was distributed among the allies in a sufficient and transparent manner, allowing them to share and facilitate among themselves and their own networks, contents, methodologies, and tools, in an assertive, timely and permanent fashion, in relation to the Final Report and the recommendations, and thus build their own narratives to approach their audiences[170].

Third, it provided spaces, mechanisms, and strategies to ensure that information on the legacy became part of an agenda that would promote -in the short, medium, and long term- the dissemination and debate of the Final Report and the implementation of the recommendations for non-repetition[171].

Nevertheless, in order to advance in the consolidation of networking with allies, a four-step process was developed[172]. The first stage consisted of consolidating information on all partners with all the Commission's teams, since the Cooperation and Partnerships Office only had information on those belonging to the international community, so it had to inquire about other partners that had been linked to the various areas[173].

The second stage was a process of matrix consolidation, which highlighted the work that the entity had been carrying out with more than 3,200 partners at that time, who were working on issues such as peace, human rights, and others relevant to the Commission[174]. These were already supporting the work; therefore, they would continue once the mandate ended, which would imply help not only to prepare the delivery of the Final Report, but also for its dissemination and the follow-up to the recommendations[175]. A matrix was created to characterize and identify the allies: their

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[168] Ibíd.
[169] Ibíd.
[170] Ibíd.
[171] Ibíd.
[172] Cfr. Interview María Prada and Tatiana Pulido. Networking with Allies Team.
[173] Ibíd.
[174] Ibíd.
[175] Ibíd.

data, their relationship with the territories, the type of audiences they worked with, and the issues addressed with the Truth Commission.

The third stage consisted of an internal phase of convincing the teams of the relevance of this networking. Each area had to provide detailed information on the work it was doing. Within this information, the transversality of the interests of the different working groups of the Commission with the interests of the allies was identified[176]. In this way, the members initially linked to only one team were able to support others. This significantly increased the possibility of obtaining partners in the projects of each team, thus opening the spectrum and the perspective of those who were linked to them[177].

In the fourth stage, the Cooperation and Alliances Office talked to all the allies through mass communication[178]. This office launched the email legado@comisiónde-laverdad.com.co and wrote to all the allies (November 2021). In the communication, a letter from Francisco de Roux was sent to them, letting them know how their support had been priceless so far, and that from that moment on, a permanent and constant communication strategy would be established[179].

In the communication sent, the main achievements of the Commission were also shared with them. From then on, they were kept informed of important matters, so that they would have first-hand information on important events, bulletins, and releases where they felt that because of their role they had faster, closer, and more official information[180]. We also developed the strategy of *Friday Talks with Allies,* a space for meetings between different directorates of the Commission and various allies.

The universe comprising 3,300 allies is reflected in the digital platform, where reference is made to those with whom we carried it out[181]. On the other hand, the strategic allies were those who were convened on Fridays talks, coming from twenty-four countries and with presence throughout the national territory, with whom actions of the agenda of the Truth Commission were materialized, in terms of sustainability of the legacy, useful, basic, simple information for its dissemination and appropriation[182].

Since its first year, the Commission created the pedagogical strategy, which succeeded in inviting Colombian society to value the truth and to feel it as a public good. At the end of that year, the Commission was informed that it had a few more months to deliver its Final Report to society. Those months allowed it to strengthen what was called the preparation of society for the arrival of the Report. Based on the experience

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[176] Ibíd.
[177] Ibíd.
[178] Ibíd.
[179] Ibíd.
[180] Ibíd.
[181] Cfr. Interview María Prada and Tatiana Pulido. Networking with Allies Team.
[182] Ibíd.

TRANSVERSAL PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

Photography: María Paula Durán

of truth commissions in other parts of the world, it was already known that the final reports are read mainly by a specialized public, that is, very few people, so it was necessary to educate the public to know that there is a Final Report, some lessons learned, and recommendations delivered by the Colombian Truth Commission.

THE THREE MAIN AXES OF WORK

AXIS 1: APPROACHING TO LEARN - APPROVAL PROCESS

After listening to the pedagogical needs compiled in a matrix, shared needs were identified. One of them was to agree on a minimum of common language to present to society a balance of what the Commission did. This led to the creation of the " Approaching to learn", or homologation process, whose main task was to provide common narrative elements to describe the Commission's work. As a result of this first axis, a document was produced[183] which answers three main questions. First, in what context was the Comprehensive System for Peace born? Second, what has the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition been? Third, what do we consider to be the legacy that the Commission will leave behind?

AXIS 2: ARTICULATE AND MOBILIZE TO SUSTAIN THE LEGACY

Another need shared by the Commission teams was «to tell specific audiences, allies, teachers, young people, policy makers, other organizations how we carried out our process, how we understood coexistence, the gender approach, the life course approach»[184], among others. This second line was called «Articulate and mobilize to sustain the legacy» and produced a series of pedagogical use guides on social dialogue, to approach the methodologies and tell how a package of pedagogical use guides on social dialogue was made.

AXIS 3: CREATE TO TRANSFORM, CULTURAL ACTIVATIONS.

The construction of a pedagogical needs matrix also provided an important overview of the number of cultural and artistic actions aimed at facilitating social transformation processes. This line emerged precisely for the purpose of linking all that was known in the Commission as "cultural activations". The result was the creation of guides for pedagogical use, based on the artistic and cultural productions promoted by the Commission, to carry out processes of appropriation and preparation of the Report.

These three axes allowed grouping the needs of the three closing moments of the Commission: setting or preparation of the society to receive the Final Report, the event (presentation of the Report) and its socialization.

[183] Approaching to learn. Common narratives. Preparation for the reception of the Final Report. Bogotá: Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, 2022.

[184] Gordillo and Gallego, "Interview. Transversal Pedagogical Support Team".

Along with the support to the mission teams in the creation of guides and pedagogical strategies for the legacy, this group worked in coordination with the creation team of the digital transmedia. The members of this team highlight two of the main limitations of their work: the confidentiality of the information related to the Final Report -because it is not possible to teach about what is not known- and the difficulty of thinking about pedagogical pieces and actions in the midst of changing interpretations of the narrative of what should be understood as legacy[185].

THE LEGACY FROM THE FOUR OBJECTIVES OF THE COMMISSION

1. CLARIFICATION: THE HUMAN RIGHTS ARCHIVE OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE CLARIFICATION OF THE TRUTH, COLOMBIA 2018- 2022.

Every archive is an inheritance. An archive is not exhausted in one generation or in several, it lives as long as the care of society allows it. In the archive there is never a single voice, its signature feature is its ability to bring together a multiplicity of voices. And although their mission is usually to protect and disseminate memory, in the particular case of human rights archives they have an additional commitment: to contribute to the clarification of the truth. How? Through making documents, testimonies, reports, cases, and all kinds of materials related to human rights violations available to society as a whole, which for a long time were considered to be for the private and exclusive use of specialists.

In addition to the Report, and in order to continue contributing to the clarification once its mandate was over, the Commission delivered to society "The Human Rights Archive of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth".

The Commission conducted and processed more than 14,000 interviews, and received more than 1,500 reports and cases[186], which are part of its archive. In addition to this mission-related information, the archive contains all the documents produced during its years of mandate at the mission, strategic and operational levels.

In the light of all this documentation, the relationship between the Commission's human rights archive and its legacy becomes crystal clear. Not only was an archive created as a patrimony of society, for its guarantee of rights. It was made, above all, so that the country would know of its existence and lose its fear of approaching this unknown terrain, so that it could discover its potential and finally use it, feel it as its own. This is what is known as the process of social appropriation of the archive, the invitation that the Commission leaves open to Colombian society by handing over this documentary heritage.

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[185] This team reported that through their attendance to the "Legacy Board" they were able to see how there was a moment in which the legacy was understood as tangible: the report, the transmedia; but towards the last months of the Commission there was a narrative shift towards the intangible, summarized in the following phrase of Commissioner Lucía González: "Entrusting a legacy is to be able to pass on the lessons learned". Thus, the means of the legacy (the Final Report and transmedia) were differentiated from the legacy itself (lessons learned and recommendations).

[186] Figures as of March 16, 2022. Retrieved from: *Legacy, figures, and facts on how we did it.* Internal document of the Truth Commission, presented in the space of "Fridays with allies" on March 18, 2022.

The second contribution to be highlighted is that, since the beginning of the Commission, with the creation of its Mission Information System (SIM), the first legacy actions were taken by designing tools to process and analyze the information it produced and received, thinking about how all this information would be delivered to society.

Once the Commission was closed, this archive was to be left in the hands of an entity that would be in charge of its management. Concerning the inheriting entity, Decree 588 established that the Plenary of Commissioners would make the decision to choose it. However, since 2020, a specialized consultancy agency was hired for this issue, which prepared a series of criteria to be met by the legatee entity. Administrative, legal, and technical aspects related to territorial presence, archival tradition, resources for the preservation of documents, physical infrastructure for their conservation over time and human talent specialized in archive management, among others, were defined.

These aspects brought into consideration five entities, which were: the Cultural Sub-management of the Bank of the Republic, through the Luis Ángel Arango Library; the Memory Museum of Colombia; the National University of Colombia; the Historical Archive of the National Library; and the General Archive of the Nation.

An internal evaluation was made within the Commission and these aspects were weighed, and as a result, the entity that met the highest number of requirements was considered to be the cultural sub-management of the Bank of the Republic.

However, at the end of 2021, the Bank of the Republic replied that it lacked the technical and administrative capacity to manage the information systems offered by the Commission, so its contribution to the dynamization of the legacy was focused on the socialization and availability of the contents of the digital platform in its virtual library, as well as the development of activities for the appropriation and dissemination of the recommendations and report of the Commission.

Faced with this scenario, the Commission undertook a new strategic, political and technical analysis that led the plenary of commissioners to the conclusion, after several working sessions and technical and legal discussions, of the need to adopt a special/mixed model for the ownership, custody, administration and access to its Archive/Documentary Fund so that, on the one hand, the ownership of the same rests with a public entity and, on the other hand, greater access to this information is guaranteed, protecting the extra-judicial nature of its mandate.

As a result of this new horizon and the fact that the entity formulated and implemented a legacy strategy with the Comprehensive System for Peace, the fundamental purpose of which was to guarantee the continuity of processes and learning, linking the entities of the system to processes of delivery and institutional appropriation of the elements of the legacy of the Commission to promote the sustainability of the learning and processes, thereby strengthening the contributions to the transition and peace, it was concluded as provided in Agreement 004/2022 of the plenary of commissioners that the "Special Jurisdiction for Peace will be the owner of the Documentary Fund of the Truth

Commission as a documentary heritage of the Nation with social, historical, political and cultural values, from the date of termination of the legal existence of the Commission" and in the same way the designation of the "General Archive of the Nation as the depository entity and exercise the tasks of preservation, custody, protection, security and, in addition, comply with the principle of maximum disclosure of public information relating to human rights provided in the Statutory Law on Transparency and the Right of Access to National Public Information or Law 1712/2014" was also recommended.

This file, in addition to being part of the legacy of the Truth Commission, is delivered to the country as a transparency mechanism, so that it is possible to access each process of the entity. Additionally, the file contributes to the clarification of the truth by allowing access to information that complements the information presented in the Final Report.

This work, in short, consolidated the most important human rights archive in the country and the largest one delivered so far by a truth commission worldwide.

2. LEGACY RECOGNITION

The recognition processes had as a starting point the work developed by the office of the High Commissioner for Peace around the early recognition acts -in the framework of the Havana agreements- within which a working group was established with the signatories of the FARC peace agreement. From that point on, there was not much time for documentation and analysis because after establishing this group, between October and November 2018, contact was made with the "Committee for Reconciliation" foundation, which brings together more than 1,700 individuals appearing before the JEP, most of them members of law enforcement.

This first work phase took place before the formal start of the Commission, which, as mentioned in Chapter 1, had November 28, 2018, as the exact date. Following the working group with the FARC and the Reconciliation Committee, a 5-phase[187]:methodology was proposed: identification, preparation, participatory construction, meetings for the truth, and monitoring and assessment, as discussed in Chapter 4.

A systematization document prepared by the Commission, -*Reflections for the Transition: Lessons and Reflections derived from the Recognition Processes carried out by the Truth Commission*- details the deep meaning of these extrajudicial recognitions, as well as the reparations they provided to victims and accountable parties, and quotes testimonies of the protagonists that reflect part of their experience after completing the process.

From the beginning of its mandate to date, the Commission has carried out 50 recognition processes. At least 306 testimonies were given by individual and collective

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[187] This team elaborated, as contribution to the legacy, the document *Conceptual and methodological approach for the processes of promotion and contribution to the recognition of what happened in the framework of the armed conflict*, version of April 29, 2022. The document presents "the reflections and lessons learned by the Objective of Recognition of the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition, based on the Meetings for Truth and the Contributions to Truth and Recognition of Accountability that took place between 2019 and 2022". The document details what each of the five phases consisted of.

Photography: Truth Commission

victims and 86 interventions of accountability recognition - in public spaces - by former combatants from illegal armed groups and law enforcement[188]. These 50 recognition processes are part of the legacy that the Commission left to the country.

Two documents were also delivered, as well as a package of pedagogical tools that are part of the transmedia -among them 12 graphic novels- which are «the synthesis of a series of recognition processes carried out by the Directorate for Social Dialogue, the Directorate of Territories and the Directorate of Ethnic Peoples during the mandate of the Truth Commission»[189].

Additionally, the systematization document *Learning and reflections of the recognition processes carried out by the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition (2019 - 2022)*, structured in three sections, was created for the legacy. The first section summarizes what they did in terms of results, how many meetings, where and with whom. The second describes how they did it, namely, a methodological consolidation; the third includes some reflections and gives an account of existing and available resources and tools.

Regarding the intangible elements of its legacy, the recognition team highlighted the following. On the one hand, the creation of a methodology for recognition that has a novelty value in the manner in which it incorporates and integrates the entire mission of the Commission.

On the other hand, recognition processes offer an opening door to the possibility for transition on the ground. This means that the meeting between victims and accountable parties is the door itself, the staging of the transition. Another important issue for the legacy is that it shatters the idea that people cannot be transformed; in other words, this logic of war is deconstructed.

Recognitions show a different burden of truth, which is not the truth of the clarification of the facts, but the truth of pain, such as the realization that there was suffering and that it is possible to transform that suffering.

Another key element is the contribution to a different notion of justice, delving deeper into the notion of restorative justice, in a society that is culturally designed and prefigured for punitive actions, for punishment[190].

Among the possible adjustments that could have been made by the recognition team is the dissemination, the public staging, to make it more visible. Better design of the spaces for recognition would be important. They would also have liked to involve social

[188] Truth Commission, "Conceptual and methodological approach for the processes of promotion and contribution to the recognition of what happened in the framework of the armed conflict" Internal document of the Truth Commission. Version dated April 29, 2022

[189] Information shared in the Commission's internal mail on Tuesday, June 21, as part of Recognition Week.

[190] Santodomingo Aguilar and Fernández Niño, "Interview", conducted on May 23, 2022.

organizations more actively and directly because, although the focus was on the victims and those accountable, these entities also played an important role.

Lastly, the team believes that it is important to continue the recognition exercises, in particular those of responsibilities, in order to give a long-term perspective to the processes initiated by the Commission.

On this last matter, the recommendation to give continuity to the recognition process deserves to highlight the role that society will play. Unless civil society accompanies and validates these processes, the will of victims and accountable parties will remain halfway there. That is why, as we have insisted, this legacy is an inheritance and, at the same time, a commitment for everyone.

Differential elements of the Colombian Truth Commission have been previously highlighted: the gender approach, the incorporation of victims in exile, the creation of a mission information system that relied on big data and free software development, a broad mandate that included, in addition to clarification, recognition, coexistence and non-repetition, among others. Regarding the latter -the extent of its mandate- the entity brings a new differential element: the interest in studying and documenting previous peacebuilding experiences in the country.

One of the fundamental premises of the coexistence processes was to show the world that, although Colombia is a country marked by a history of conflict, the country has also bet - throughout its territory - on proposing peacebuilding exercises. The mission, in a deep way, was to make a call to believe in a different future, opposing the logic that tells us that we are condemned to war.

Coexistence, more than something that the Commission had to guarantee, actually meant recognizing and promoting the peacebuilding efforts that were already underway throughout the country. The Commission began to fulfill this objective by showing that there were people, experiences and previous processes in the country that teach us how to coexist.

The first exercise along this path was to carry out a mapping for the subsequent creation of a database of good practices, intending to show that coexistence was not something abstract and that, on the contrary, trends could be identified, to know who are the people and which are the communities, organizations and entities that most lead coexistence experiences in the country, as well as which are the sectors that have most promoted social dialogue in Colombia.

As the mapping process progressed, more and more coexistence exercises began to appear. Upon seeing such a large number, the idea was that sharing it with the country was important, that it was necessary to give an additional and different story to the human rights violations; that this correlation would allow showing that there are leaders defending life and territory, that there are people and organizations dialoguing with the

3. LEGACY COEXISTENCE

GLOBAL OVERVIEW OF HOW WE WORKED FROM COEXISTENCE
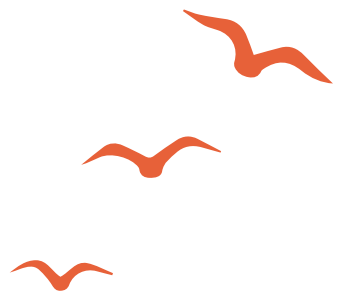
violent, mobilizing for peace and resisting, promoting positive transformations during the armed conflict.

Once this first mapping was completed, the team wondered how to understand coexistence. From the mapped experiences, the team found that coexistence is consolidated in critical citizenships that resist from collective processes. Therefore, they suggested to go a step further in the understanding of coexistence, understood as living well together, to move on to the concept of "democratic coexistence", which implies living well together as holders of rights:

After having the first good coexistence practices mapped and having defined the meaning of democratic coexistence, the team undertook a second process, selecting six «coexistence pilot experiences»[191]:

Coexistence experiences were defined as social, political, economic, and cultural processes (set of practices) carried out by various stakeholders (civil society, institutions, etc.), whose intention would be to promote coexistence, that is, to favor the guarantee of rights, strengthen the exercise of citizenship and peacefully transform conflicts in order to foster relations of recognition and collaboration. These processes (which are not actions), have a clear objective, framed in an institutional order and in specific places and temporalities[192].

WHO CAN HAVE THIS DATABASE AS A RESULT OF MAPPING?

The database is kept in the archives of the Truth Commission, the JEP, and the Missing Persons Search Unit, as well as in research centers, as public property. The coexistence team collected a total of 1,009 experiences, of which 84 case studies were made and 135 were systematized[193].

LEGACY CONTRIBUTIONS

The coexistence legacy for Colombian society includes three lines of work: the great agreement for coexistence, the agreements for coexistence and good living, and the lessons learned for coexistence, as discussed in Chapter 4.

1. GREAT AGREEMENT FOR COEXISTENCE[194]

The great agreement for coexistence arose from the information provided by the database on good coexistence practices in the country. There were some analysis categories that served as input for a first document of findings, which was discussed with

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[191] The six pilot experiences were: 1. Brisas de Polaco (Ocaña). The guardians of memory; 2. Micoahumado; 3. Municipality of Colón (north of Nariño); 4. Life of the Magdalena River (Río Grande de la Magdalena); 5. Tunjuelo river basin; 6. Coexistence agreement between Nukak indigenous people and peasants in Guaviare.

[191] Guide for pedagogical use – Lessons learned for coexistence. CEV, 2022.

[193] This information can be further expanded through the text: Report "The truth of coexistence", coexistence objective, 2022, CEV.

[194] Truth Commission, "Great agreement for coexistence".

the different directorates to define five narrative axes based on what was found. These axes were:

1. Overcoming discrimination and stigmatization.
2. Recognizing differences and trying to re-signify them: difference as transformation potential.
3. Coexistence to defend the common home.
4. Culture and art as alternatives to war.
5. Sustainable networks for peacebuilding.

When the narrative axes were defined, the plan was to hold a national meeting of experiences, which ended up taking place in May 2021, with two objectives: one, to deepen the findings and offer recommendations for new petitions, and two, to have the coexistence experiences accompanied by the Commission send a message to the country. Working groups were set up, the experiences were classified according to these work axes, and the findings and recommendations for non-repetition were deepened.

The great agreement was launched as part of the week for peace in September 2021, in the framework of a strategy for the appropriation of the great agreement. At that meeting on September 8, the Decalogue (10 points for democratic coexistence) was launched, a commitment to non-repetition that was signed by more than 3,000 people.

Then, on May 16, 2022, on the International Day of Coexistence in Peace, the Commission held the meeting «Voices united for coexistence: a legacy for non-repetition», with the participation of representatives from 54 territorial initiatives[195]. In this space, a call was made to the country to understand that coexistence is a commitment that brings us all together, as well as to invite citizens to join the great agreement.

2. AGREEMENTS FOR COEXISTENCE AND GOOD LIVING

In 2019, the Commission requested the coexistence team to engage in transformation processes in the territory. This request materialized in the agreements for coexistence and good living, since these were real exercises in dialogue to transform relationships, based on situations arising from the armed conflict. At that time, the initial idea was that each territory would make an agreement, so the coexistence group received many agreements and ideas to make them a reality. The team used these contributions to start defining criteria on what was and was not feasible to do during the entity's term of office, also according to its mission.

The decision to contract feasibility processes for the coexistence agreements was made, and based on the results of these analyses, the methodology was defined. At the end of 2019, the six processes that met the conditions began to be implemented with the support of the territorial teams, followed by the pandemic at the beginning of 2020. Notwithstanding, methodological adaptations to the virtual space were possible

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[195] EL TIEMPO, "A legacy for Colombia: the 'Great Agreement for Coexistence'".
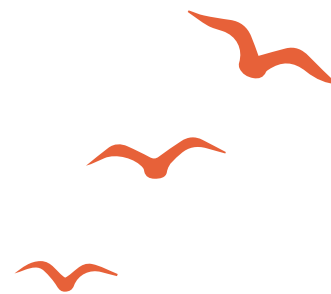
in order to continue the dialogue with the different stakeholders. In some groups, it was possible to count on very strong partners and allies[196].

3. LESSONS LEARNED FOR COEXISTENCE [197]

Learning to live together was promoted through a campaign called *Más razones para creer*[198]. (More reasons to believe). The territories embraced the campaign and even published some booklets. This campaign tried to socialize another narrative. The pieces that were produced were made together with the people and to make their own processes visible and included the use of different languages -such as short, animated films with youth experiences- to reach diverse audiences.

Of course, some difficulties were also encountered, such as areas of the country that could not be reached, like the Amazon region. Strengthening the capacity for dialogue was also required to awaken trust, and the pandemic posed an extra challenge in this encounter with others. Emphasis had to be placed on the fact that transformation processes do not happen overnight.

4. NON-REPETITION AS A LEGACY

Referring to the legacy for non-repetition implies recognizing both the contributions made by the Commission during its mandate and two tangible elements: the recommendations and the Monitoring and Follow-up Committee. Concerning the former:

The objective of the Commission's recommendations is to contribute to defining a future agenda to advance in a dialogue on the necessary transformations in the country and to put an end to the armed confrontations that persist, overcome the factors of persistence, and contribute to the reconstruction of trust between society and institutions in order to move towards reconciliation and guarantee the non-repetition of the armed conflict[199].

The recommendation development process included actions carried out from the beginning of 2019 until June 2022. The main criterion guiding this entire process was that of "broad and plural listening", which considered the voice of the victims, accountable parties, civil society organizations, academia, and public servants of the

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[196] All the information on the conceptual elements considered for the formulation of the strategy, as well as a description of each of these processes, their phases, the analysis of the transformations, their sustainability and lessons learned can be consulted in the Truth Commission, "Agreements for Coexistence and Good Living Systematization Document".

[197] See: "Methodological document on lessons learned for coexistence", CEV, 2020; and "Guide for pedagogical use, lessons learned for coexistence", CEV, 2022.

[198] Truth Commission, "*More reasons to believe*".

[199] Truth Commission, *Findings and Recommendations of the Truth Commission*, 769.

Commission, as well as experts in non-repetition in Colombia and the world. This process led to the implementation of the following actions[200]:

A matrix of more than ten thousand recommendations was created with the information gathered in the dialogue spaces, as well as through reports, cases, and interviews. Behind this large number lies a great work of collecting, organizing, categorizing, and systematizing all these recommendations to finally arrive at a much smaller and concrete number, which was delivered for the Final Report in a document of more than 80 pages and 75 recommendations.

These recommendations contain nine major topics:

1. Peacebuilding as a national project;
2. Drug trafficking;
3. Impunity concerning serious human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law;
4. Comprehensive reparation to victims;
5. Peace security;
6. Political regime and democracy;
7. Peacebuilding;
8. Cultural transformations;
9. About the Truth Commission's legacy.

It is noteworthy that the recommendations were drafted for specific addressees, always named at the beginning of each recommendation, for example: the government, certain State entities or society. In addition, in order to promote compliance with these recommendations, the Truth Commission created the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee[201].

Finally, it should be noted that, although 75 recommendations were included in the final report, the 10,091 that were systematized are available to the public through a booklet that constitutes part of the transmedia.

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[200] Acknowledgement to Tatiana Lote, member of the non-repetition team, for the inputs shared with the systematization team.

[201] The Commission created a pedagogical document on the composition and operation of the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee, which describes its duties, where its resources come from, who is on it, how it was chosen, as well as other key questions to understand it: Truth Commission, "An ABC on the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee".

FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING COMMITTEE

The Truth Commission stipulated the operation of the follow-up and monitoring committee through Resolution No. 019 Of April 26, 2022 "Whereby the procedure for the composition, operation, selection mechanism and duration of the Follow-up and Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the recommendations of the Commission for the Clarification of the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition referred to in Article 32 of Decree Law 588/2017" is regulated.

This committee is made up of seven members, chosen from nominations proposed by the Plenary, who must have a commitment to peacebuilding, a capacity for political advocacy, knowledge and experience in matters related to the objectives and mandate of the Commission, as well as a capacity for understanding, experience and analysis of territorial and population dynamics and differential approaches.

The committee will operate for seven years, and is composed of Armando Wouriyu Valbuena, secretary of the Special High-Level Instance of Ethnic Peoples, Marco Romero Silva, director of Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (Codhes), Wilson de Jesús Castañeda, director of Caribe Afirmativo, Julia Eva Cogollo, Afro leader of the Cimarrona Route of the Caribbean, Dorys Ardila Muñoz, exiled Colombian, member of the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence. Esther Marina Gallego, coordinator of the Pacific Route of Women and Claudia Calero, president of Asocaña.

FOLLOW-UP AND MONITORING COMMITTEE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE CLARIFICATION OF TRUTH

Armando Wouriyu Valbuena	Secretary of the Special High-Level Instance of Ethnic Peoples
Marco Romero Silva	Director of Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (Codhes)
Wilson de Jesús Castañeda	Director of Caribe Afirmativo
Julia Eva Cogollo	Afro leader of the Cimarrona Route of the Caribbeane
Dorys Ardila Muñoz	Exiled Colombian, member of the National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Coexistence
Esther Marina Gallego	Coordinator of the Pacific Route of Women
Claudia Calero	President of Asocaña

The Commission, in the process behind the creation of the recommendations, gave value not only to the truth of the conflict (clarification), but also to a truth that emerges from non-repetition, and all the contributions it received from civil society, from victims' organizations and experts, so that we do not fall back into a cycle of violence.

The non-repetition call to Colombian society is to receive the legacy of the recommendations and to give all support to the monitoring and follow-up committee, so that the purpose of non-continuation of the war is adopted, demanded, and fulfilled.

The legacy then transcends the written Report, hundreds of pages that respond to the demands of the victims, accountable parties, and society in general for that long-awaited truth. This transcendence translates into digital platforms, strategies for its dissemination and appropriation, and a legacy of learning that, together with the Human Rights Archive, becomes a heritage of the whole society, in other words, a public good for everyone.

This legacy in turn becomes an accumulation of experiences that also leave lessons learned about what was best or what the Commission had to reflect on during its mandate. The final chapter of this document gathers the most important lessons learned by all its teams, staff, and collaborators, which will be useful for future experiences that seek to promote peace, memory and the clarification of truths arising from conflicts.

Photography: Truth Commission

Photography: María Paula Durán

LESSONS LEARNED

The four years of work of the Colombian Truth Commission are not only summarized in the fulfillment of its mandate and the publication, dissemination, and socialization of the Final Report, but also in a "know-how" that provides lessons learned for future truth commissions and other similar experiences in Colombia and the world, especially for those with a similar territorial deployment. These lessons come from experiences that have been shaped by reflection and critical analysis[202] of the factors that may have positively or negatively affected the processes. The lessons point to knowledge production allowing the replication of successful actions or the avoidance of mistakes in future similar experiences.

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[202] In order to identify these lessons learned, a sample taken from the universe of interviews of the systematization exercise (120) was analyzed with officials and former officials of the Truth Commission belonging to all areas and all organizational levels. The contributions that pointed to lessons learned were organized in a matrix that considered the following elements: textual examples extracted from the interviews that illustrated the lesson, the context in which the lesson was framed, the impact of the lesson learned, recommendations that can be made based on it and, finally, the description of the lesson. The main criterion for their selection, although not the only one, was the most recurrent reference of most of the collaborators.

A model adapted from the «knowledge notes»[203] methodology was used to document these lessons learned. The knowledge notes were structured here in three parts: background and context, lesson descriptions and recommendations. The following, divided into six categories, are some of the lessons learned from the Commission's systematization process. These categories helped to group and analyze the information, maintaining a comprehensive view from which the interrelationships in the Commission's way of working are made visible. Although they are divided for analytical purposes, they are in fact interconnected with each other. Such categories are: organizational, political-strategic, methodological for clarification, methodologies for social dialogue, participation and, finally, those arising from the circumstances of the years of its mandate.

ORGANIZATIONAL

The lessons presented in this section reflect some of the administrative and organizational reflections that took place during the Commission's mandate. These lessons derive from the framework of the institutional and operational design, the creation of the institution and the structure and its transformations. They are analyzed from the realities and contexts that created them, the dynamics, narratives, and tensions in the framework of the work, as well as from their nature and place of constitution. Also, the organization of the Plenary and its role in defining the political and strategic orientations of the Commission.

1. A FLEXIBLE AND ADAPTABLE STRUCTURE

Decree Law 588/2017 is the regulatory framework for the construction of the Truth Commission as a transitional entity. This decree guided the composition of each of the teams that gave life to the Commission and made possible the fulfillment of its mandate. One of the first challenges it had to take on was to build itself from "zero" as an autonomous and independent entity of the national order, with constitutional rank, with legal status, administrative, budgetary, and technical autonomy, and subject to its own legal regime[204].

In order to establish its organization, relying on the experience and knowledge of the people who set up the entity, a flexible structure and capacity for adaptation were essential for the Commission to be able to adapt. During its mandate, adjustments were made to its organization and methodology to respond to the needs that arose along the way, to the contextual conditions in the territories, to the people who participated in the processes and to the different situations that affected or strengthened its work.

Although this process posed difficulties. According to the Secretary General, «we were subject to a process of trial and error, sometimes unnecessary, not everything we did was written down»[205]. For example, the constitution of the Social Dialogue and

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[203] Methodology promoted by the IDB Knowledge and Learning Department (KNL). Taken from Luna and Rodriguez, "How to document lessons learned".

[204] For further information, see Decree Law 588/2017

[205] Systematization Interview, Office of the Secretary General, 2021.

Knowledge directorates materialized after having advanced in parallel processes, and often with little communication, even until the end of the mandate. In the case of the Directorate of Social Dialogue «at the beginning it was very difficult, we really lasted almost a year and a half as if we were separated»[206]. The teams within this Directorate in charge of the strategies, approaches and objectives of recognition, coexistence and non-repetition operated in a dispersed manner. Once the directorate was formed, they achieved a unified coordination that unified efforts and was able to respond to the processes for the fulfillment of the mission.

One of the other adjustments was the change of departments in charge of the areas. In the case of the Communication and Dissemination Strategy, this went from being under the direction of Social Dialogue to report directly to the Presidency, due to its strategic importance. Such change, which broadened the strategy's perspective, was the result of a reflection on the scope it was having, as well as the mobilization needs that were required regarding the entity's work. Besides developing its own content and making the different processes visible, a series of mechanisms were implemented to impact different audiences about the entity's mission

> «After the first year, we realized that this structure, and this functionality, as we had invented it, taken from the Decree Law, was not sufficiently useful in reality. So, we decided to modify it. The Commission's operations do not necessarily correspond to the initial structure»[207].

Despite the fact that the Decree-Law incorporated the guiding elements to create the entity, the administrative, operational and mission needs for its functioning could only be identified through its practice. For similar experiences, a permanent reflection on the structure of any organization or entity is recommended to allow for flexible adjustments -such as changes in units- and thus respond effectively to the needs encountered during its implementation. Risks, implications, internal policies, and procedures should also be evaluated prior to any modification, in order to avoid causing trauma. A flexible structure that allows for rapid adaptation can also make the structure agile and responsive to needs, rather than rigid and hindering administrative, mission and operational processes, for example, where the operationalization of processes or decision-making does not depend solely on a specific person or group.

[206] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Social Dialogue, 2021.
[207] Systematization Interview, Political Advisor to the Presidency, 2022.

Photography: María Paula Durán

2. THE LEGAL NATURE OF THE ENTITY

In Colombia, the regulations related to public spending imply the development of certain procedures for its execution. Usually, a merit-based contest is held for contracting. However, this requires considerable time to be operational. The Commission had the possibility of being governed under a mixed (public-private) regulation that, from the private regime, allowed the reduction of bureaucratic processes for contracting, i.e., the reduction of steps for operational procedures. Despite this, other procedures were governed by the regulations, protocols, and procedures of the public sector. This delayed processes that could have been more expeditious:

> «If you want to do something, things can take up to three months; for us, who had such a short time to comply, that was not the way to go. But the whole administrative procedure was centralized, everything went through Bogotá, so it was somewhat of a contradiction for the Commission»[208].

According to some of the entity's collaborators, «greater use could have been made of the private standard. Others recognize that, although this option offers possibilities, it is still restrictive, since it relies on public resources that must be subject to expenditure controls»[209]. One of the advantages of the private system was, as a matter of fact, the reduction of contracting procedures, while the great advantage of the public system was the transparency of the process, through accountability. This dilemma about whether or not to take advantage of the legal nature of the entity was permanently present throughout the development of the work.

For similar processes, the study of other entities and experiences in mixed regimes (public-private) should be used as a reference for managing resources and guiding administrative and operational procedures. This permits the identification of possibilities and limits for the development of the work. Another important point is to allow a balance between the possibilities offered by the regulations and this hybridization in context. In other words: to rigorously study both the administrative and legal constraints imposed by the regulations and their possible flexibilities in relation to the administrative, contractual, and operational procedures of the private sector. Nevertheless, this must always be put in a territorial or national context according to the execution of the expenditure.

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[208] Systemization Interview, Knowledge Management, 2021.

[209] Systemization Interviews, Office of the Secretary General and Directorate of Administration and Finance.

Aside from its organizational flexibility and the considerations regarding its legal nature, adjustments had to be made to the ways of working throughout the Commission's term of office. The collegial structure[210] of the entity with a Plenary of eleven members, who sought to reach agreements for decision-making, posed a challenge[211]. The workers referred to the Plenary as "a soccer team" with "many heads that think differently and give different orientations", "eleven bosses to whom one must answer". This reveals difficulties in the line of communication, in decision making and in the understanding of the regular channels for operationalizing decisions. There were reports of processes that had been slowed down due to lack of consensus in the Plenary and of others that had been slowed down while waiting for the Plenary to address them, as well as uncertainty regarding decisions to be made.

This was a constant feature throughout the Commission's mandate. Although - as one of the commissioners stated - consensus was favored, and this implied taking the necessary time to make decisions, it is important that clear procedures for decision making are built and structured from the beginning, and that these are complied with. In similar experiences, as recommended by the different teams, it is necessary to form smaller plenary sessions to facilitate consensus, have explicit procedures for decision-making, have strategies for resolving disagreements, clearly establish internal communication and respect the established channels. Communication channels and mechanisms for turning plenary decisions into effective actions should also be clearly established and known, so that the strategic, mission, administrative and operational teams can work more dynamically.

In connection with the time elapsed comply with the Commission's mandate and the delays in the Plenary's decision making, the territories also had the aforementioned perception that the administrative processes could be disconnected from the realities of the regions. Procedures and requirements such as having to send a request ten days in advance to obtain approval of a transfer for taking testimonies, for example, proved complex to comply with: «if people confirmed yesterday that they would give us their testimonies that day in that place, would we tell them no? that maybe in 10 days?»[212]. At first, these procedures were characterized by their lack of administrative flexibility, forcing the teams to demonstrate their ability to adapt and innovate in order to define

3. ABOUT THE COMMISSIONERS

4. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES WITH A TERRITORIAL APPROACH

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[210] A collegial structure is constituted by a plurality of natural persons who collaborate, deliberate, and make decisions by consensus, majority, or unanimity, as a unitary identity before a public interest. In the Truth Commission, the structure was made up of eleven persons who had their membership in this collegiate body as a full-time and exclusive task.

[211] This situation is not foreign to other truth commissions in the world, since a horizontal collegial structure representative of all parties in a country in conflict implies disagreements and decisions that are difficult to make in a unified manner, which has even led many commissions to be unable to fulfill their mandate or publish a final report. Brahm, "Uncovering the truth: Examining truth commission success and impact".

[212] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Territories, 2021

alternative solutions and strategies «sometimes it could be, for us in the territory, easier to manage (external) alliances to meet the objectives - whether of a meeting or an activity - than to try to handle it through the Commission»[213].

In light of this challenge, the work teams defined a clear recommendation: administrative processes must be in line with the realities of the country to ensure that the work in the various regions and contexts flows and is guaranteed. «Administrative aspects must never obscure the mission»[214]. Nevertheless, the teams themselves recognize a level of flexibility and learning, highlighting that the Commission allowed the adaptation of their processes and the autonomy of the territories.

Future experiences require an understanding of the dynamics of the regions that determine the administrative processes. In other words, there must be a level of administrative adaptation related to the practices of each of the territories, which are changing and different from those carried out in the main cities of the different countries. This facilitates the development of the processes: «it may seem insignificant to us, but for many people this is very annoying and can ruin all the relationships of trust that we have established».[215]

5. LOGISTICS OPERATORS

As a complement to the administrative learning, there is a logistical learning, the need to have regional or national operators with the certainty that they understand thoroughly the management of the entity's operation[216]. Working on the logistics of processes and events at the regional level was proposed from the beginning of the Commission. Even though after a few months of operation the national scheme failed, the people who made up the Commission's work teams overcame - outside the institutional framework - these difficulties.

As part of the first scheme, the disconnection with territorial realities was evident. For instance, knowing what type of refreshments should be offered to participants from different territories - according to their cultures and contexts - and responding to their own expectations, was achieved by shifting to regional operators. «The model had to collapse. We had a resounding collapse so that we could adopt another form. The second year we had regional operators, and things have worked out wonderfully well»[217].

The territorial teams point out that the Commission could have established greater flexibility with the operators in order to achieve a permanent reading and adjustments at the right time. In any case, the responsibility of being a public institution produced permanent tensions, as well as fear of taking risks. Nevertheless, it was possible to establish dialogues, procedures and protocols with all the Commission's teams and

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[213] Ibíd

[214] Ibíd.

[215] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Social Dialogue, 2021

[216] Systemization Interview, Directorate of Administration and Finance, 2021.

[217] Systemization Interview, Directorate of Territories, 2021.

directorates to adapt and facilitate, in some way, the administrative and logistical processes. For similar experiences, regional operators are recommended from the outset, «meaning that logistics should be contracted locally, with people from the same area who know and respect these dynamics»[218]. These build relationships based on trust, makes regional economies more dynamic, contextualizes processes, avoids tensions due to procedures that are not in line with the context, and respects the different cultures with which the organization works.

STRATEGIC POLICIES

This axis presents lessons learned in relation to both the political and strategic commitments that the Commission had to develop for the fulfillment of its mandate and the importance of building trust between the entity and the different stakeholders, sectors, and communities. Also, the visibility of the entity towards society and the mobilization processes resulting from it. Furthermore, networking with allies is fundamental for the fulfillment of the mission objectives and for the sustainability of the processes in the Legacy. All in all, lessons learned are shown on actions that contributed to the support, legitimacy, fulfillment of the mission objectives and sustainability of the processes.

6. BUILDING TRUST IN HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS

The implementation of the Final Peace Agreement was permeated by an adverse political landscape, characterized by a polarized civil society and a government expressly opposed to the Agreement. The Commission's work to make its objectives, mandate and scope known was made more difficult. The complex political context was compounded by the fact that the Commission was a state agency and was therefore not exempt from the distrust that this type of institution evokes in Colombian civil society.

Amidst this panorama, the entity had to concentrate initially on two types of actions through its territorial deployment. On the one hand, in building permanent spaces for education and communication on the differences between the entities of the Comprehensive System for Peace (SIP) to which it belonged. On the other hand, focusing on the importance of the Commission for the current history of the country, its extrajudicial nature, and its mission objectives. Additionally, trust-building actions were promoted with different stakeholders at the local level, which included addressing the scope of its functions in order to create expectations and avoid frustrations about what the Commission could really achieve: «we initially encountered many and diverse expectations from all the people, from all the territories. Sometimes they could be complementary, but they could also be contradictory»[219].

Hence, the Commission's presentation went beyond the publication of its methodological guidelines[220] towards a communication in which «telling people what we were
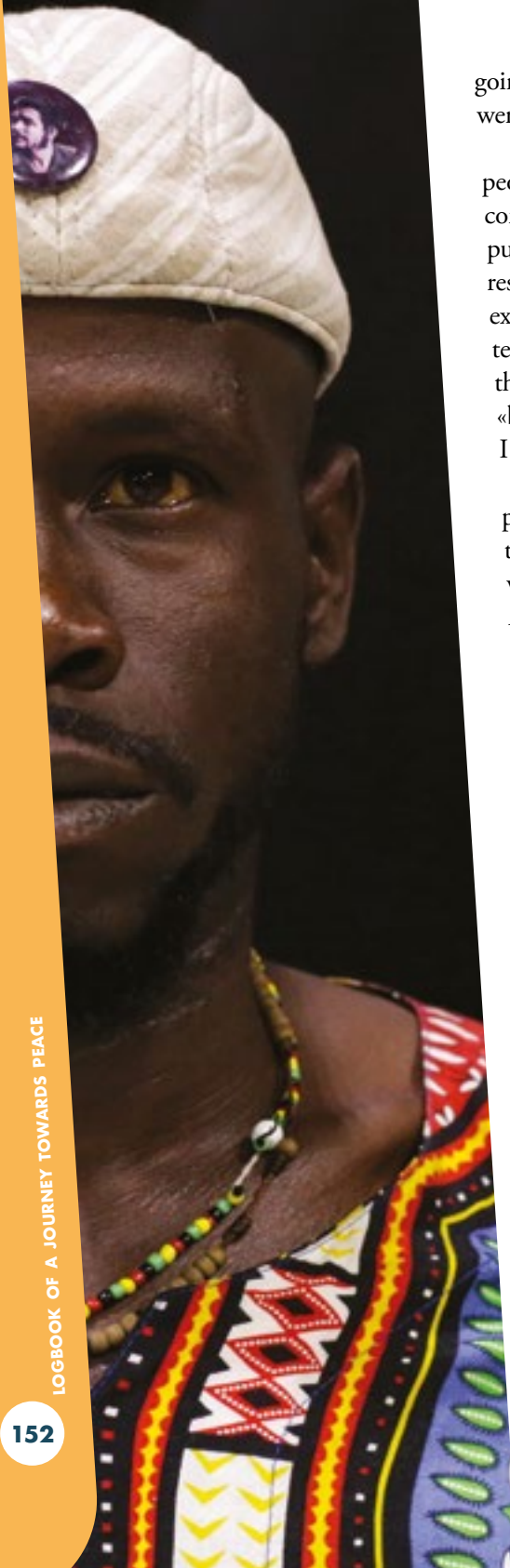
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[218] Ibíd.

[219] Systemization Interview, Initial Team, preparation period, 2021.

[220] On January 18, 2022, the document "Listening, Recognizing and Understanding: Methodological Guidelines for the Truth Commission" was published.

going to do [and] how far we could go was key; we tried to ground the expectations we were facing in the territories to what we could actually accomplish»[221].

The work with territorial stakeholders already positioned and recognized by the people, who were the bridge for the creation of trust between the Commission, the communities and those who wished to give their testimony, was fundamental for this purpose. Territorial work teams were formed with extensive local backgrounds in social, research and professional terms. This allowed an immediate approach to be able to explain not only what the Commission was, but also how to participate in it, through testimonies in the construction of a national narrative that would give an account of the events that occurred during the armed conflict. The presence of these professionals «built trust, the teams were known, the logic behind it was 'I don't trust the State, but I trust you, you are from here, you have worked here'»[222].

Work was also done hand in hand with organizations, associations and other actors present in the territory. «This articulation with allied entities in the territories was key to develop a deployment, we did not have time to build trust from scratch, to wait until we gained the legitimacy that would allow us to enter the territories on our own»[223]. Approaching known and respected stakeholders increased the trust and legitimacy of the entity, encouraged dialogue about the work to be done and helped the Commission to have a better understanding of the local context, the history, the stakeholders, the processes related to the conflict and other relevant aspects that would make its work more appropriate to the context. As an example, the different perceptions that local communities and social organizations had about peace, truth, justice, and reparation, among other terms related to transitional justice.

Trust was achieved only gradually, and sometimes requiring additional efforts to respond to the adverse political context. For example, a greater number of telephone conversations with those who would give their testimony, meetings in non-institutional places, such as churches, cafeterias, restaurants, where people felt safer, and pedagogy with emphasis on the extrajudicial nature of the entity, which would identify the limits and scope of the Commission, among others. In any case, a permanent and sincere response was given to the concerns of those who contributed to truth building.

Although the actions taken to overcome the atmosphere of mistrust, political obstacles, and the contextualization of expectations with respect to the Commission may have had shortcomings and differences from region to region, the overall experience in this regard was positive. In similar experiences, starting with the relationship with local collectives is essential, in addition to the actions mentioned above. This expands the entity's knowledge of the contexts in which the mission actions are carried out. More

[221] Systemization Interview, Initial Team, preparation period, 2021
[222] Systemization Interview, Directorate of Territories, 2021.
[223] Ibíd.

Photography: Truth Commission

importantly, local actors can be involved from the beginning in the development of activities, which results in the appropriation, dissemination, and socialization of processes from their own platforms, but above all in the collective construction of them. This is fundamental not only for the survival of the legacy of a temporary entity, such as the Commission, but also for the strengthening of local initiatives, which can use these platforms to promote their own social peacebuilding processes.

7. SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD

In relation to the social appropriation of the Commission's messages and findings, the communications strategy had to change in 2020. The strategy changed from one focused on informing about what the Commission was and what the components of the social dialogue were, in the first years, to one oriented to social mobilization. Organizationally, the strategy moved from the Directorate of Social Dialogue to the Presidency, a space more favorable to hold meetings with various teams and to have greater political-strategic weight. These changes were positive for the strategy; however, the Covid-19 pandemic was the one that implied the greatest challenges in terms of communications, especially external ones.

To this end, a creative and risky strategy had to be proposed to keep the Commission in the public dialogue, despite not developing face-to-face spaces, such as a television program with an atypical presenter (worthy of several awards) or a Tik-Tok account to reach younger audiences, among other bets on social networks. This approach required in-depth research on the type of audiences in Colombia, which suggested approaching audiences not only from rationality, but from the emotionality of the relationship between Colombians and the truth. Despite the social distancing, the Commission did not lose its relevance. There were even several peaks of audience in different meetings for the truth and other events that were promoted in social networks, among them, the delivery of the Final Report.

Given the decentralized structure of the Commission's communications component, despite this study and the achievements of the different initiatives, a unified narrative at the national and territorial levels was not fully achieved. This was because there were not always homogeneous messages and the methods of doing things were different, which implied a variety of messages, contents, and objectives in the campaigns. In the case of similar experiences that require a communications strategy with thematic, territorial, and national components, an organizational structure that allows more control over the institutional narrative is recommended, so as to have homogeneous messages, contents, and campaigns, in order to avoid duplication of work and thus send more compelling messages that result in the replication and appropriation of the Commission's work.

Internal dissemination of the communication contents and pedagogical material is also relevant in this regard. This was not smoothly done in the Commission, despite the fact that the officials were the first to be called upon to replicate the work carried out. In order to make an effective exercise and invite social appropriation of the contents of

the final report, or the results of other research and social processes, an "inward" work is suggested to allow those who develop the pedagogical and communication strategies to build the appropriate tools in the socialization process for their appropriation..

8. NETWORKING WITH ALLIES

In relation to the Legacy of the Commission and the importance of weaving organizational, institutional and cooperation networks, considering a Monitoring and Follow-up Committee that would facilitate a more effective implementation of the recommendations was a great success since the establishment of the entity. «We emphasized that the recommendations must be followed up, hand in hand with the social organizations, with the victims' organizations»[224]. Thus, the Commission promoted both national and international articulation with allies, in order to strengthen a network with which to think about how to expand the dissemination of the Final Report, the creation of strategies for social appropriation of the files left by the Commission, the accompaniment and strengthening of the spaces for coexistence developed in the territories, the impact on the recommendations made by the entity and the support to the Monitoring and Follow-up Committee.

Promoting this network of almost 3,000 allies was a collective and permanent work of the different directorates, strategies, and objectives, guided by the Cooperation and Partnerships Office, with the participation of social and territorial platforms, national and territorial public institutions, the international community, academia, the media, the business sector, and the political sector. Together with them, a commitment was made to work on a complementary basis, recognizing their backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, and support, which were and are fundamental to the Commission's mission and legacy.

The network promoted dissemination, outreach, and ownership actions of the Commission's work towards society. These were preceded by joint work and mechanisms such as "Friday talks with allies" in which the strategies, the chapters of the Final Report, the Legacy, and the recommendations, among other aspects of relevance for the Commission, were presented to them.

This created a working precedent around peace that can be replicated not only by the SIP, but also by other peacebuilding bodies that have presence around the country. In similar experiences, promoting the work with allies at the moment of constituting an entity of a similar nature (with a short mandate and recommendations for the institutional framework) fosters a committed network that seeks to follow up on the recommendations provided to the institutional framework in terms of the transformations required by the country to achieve peace. This is crucial because the impact of the Commission on institutional reforms may not be immediate, which is why third

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[224] Entrevista Sistematización, Dirección de Conocimiento, 2022.

parties committed to promoting these transformations after the Commission's closure are required.

Along with the fulfillment of its mission objectives, the Commission carried out systematization and "know-how" processes targeting different audiences. All technical processes were documented, and manuals were created for specialists in information management, while at the same time documenting its work methods, in order to tell the public how it achieved its objectives. This transparency exercise produces a positive impact, since it provides information according to people's interests, both to learn how the process was carried out and to take it as a reference to replicate or avoid making the same mistakes. For similar experiences, systematization exercises complementary to the mission should be carried out. These exercises can allow for transparency in the processes, although, if further progress is intended, it is important to make critical reflections on its "know-how" to deepen learning, knowledge, and its transfer internally and externally. Additionally, these exercises should be carried out on two fronts: one operational and technical, for those who will receive the data and seek its replicability, and the other more didactic and suitable for all audiences, in order to explain its origins and ways of working and to provide guidance on its possible application.

9. CONTRIBUTE TO KNOWLEDGE FROM THE KNOW-HOW

PARTICIPATION

This axis is related to the processes, strategies and methodologies developed by the Commission for dialogue with different actors, sectors, and communities. This section documents the lessons learned in relation to the development of strategies that motivated and enhanced people's participation in the processes, without ignoring the difficulties and limitations encountered in listening to everyone.

Trust was one of the pillars that made possible the participation of different stakeholders and sectors. This allowed, on the one hand, the inclusion of multiple voices that made possible research and social dialogue on what happened during the armed conflict. On the other, the recognition of differential affectations and the tranquility of expressing both the violence exercised and the violence suffered, without implying legal effects, reprisals, or new victimizations. «This is not solved with defensive, segmented or partial memories; this can be solved if there is an inclusive truth regarding what has been assimilated as part of that collective truth. A big learning process has taken place at that point»[225]. The Commission became a safe space to narrate what happened in the context of the armed conflict, from a differential perspective[226].
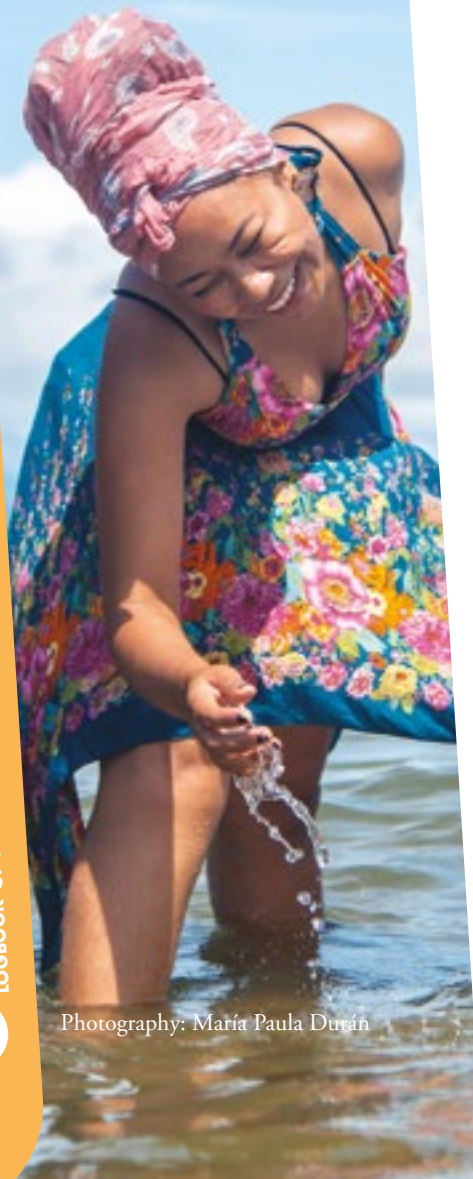
10. TRUTH IS BUILT WITH MULTIPLE VOICES

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[225] Press conference, Commissioners, 2022

[226] This perspective implies designing strategies for the effective participation of people from a gender, ethnic, disability and life course perspective.

Photography: María Paula Durán

Ensuring the participation of multiple voices began with the inclusion of a differential seat for commissioners representing indigenous and Afro peoples. In past experiences there were commissioners of indigenous or Afro origin due to the ethnic nature of the country, but they did not have a seat as delegates to position and develop their bets or to influence a differential approach. The fact of having a high percentage of the ethnic team in this Commission and a Directorate of Ethnic Peoples facilitated the work in the territories and contributed to building trust, as they were people who came from organizational experiences with their peoples. Acknowledging the importance of recognizing the contexts, the value of diversity and inclusion within an institution such as this had a significant impact on the territories and the work with the population.

Being able to count on a listening process that respected the consultation processes with the ethnic peoples by law, their authorities, worldview, customs, and own epistemologies allowed the Commission, together with the ethnic peoples of Colombia, to find explanations about the events that for years had been invisible, misrepresented or limited. Similar experiences require prior consultation with the ethnic authorities so that the process responds to and respects their realities and honors the consultation agreements. Institutional adjustments must be made to guarantee the effective participation of the peoples and to incorporate, within the research teams and those who ensure participation, members of the ethnic peoples to allow a better approach to their realities. A permanent dialogue process is also essential to guarantee their participation and to provide an opportunity for income and community strengthening. Moreover, sufficient resources are essential to carry out this work, as well as the incorporation of security strategies for those who participate. Permanent risk assessment processes, the activation of care and protection routes, information protection exercises such as data anonymization and all efforts to preserve and guarantee the lives of those who participate in similar processes are crucial as well.

Furthermore, the listening process was based on the incorporation of the feminist approach as an ethical commitment to listen to the victims and their recognition: the principle was to believe them and trust their testimonies. Thanks to this belief, the Commission is the first state entity to make an effort to collect, analyze and integrate disaggregated data on the impacts on LGBTIQ+ people as part of the war. In similar experiences, incorporating a feminist approach and gender perspective is fundamental, ensuring that women and people with different gender orientations are heard and participate. In turn, this approach should cross all actions derived from similar processes both within organizations and entities as well as in the work with victims.

The listening process transcended national boundaries. «It was something highly innovative from a truth commission, listening to those who had to leave the country and their invisible stories»[227]. This poorly researched reality was addressed by the

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[227] Press conference, Commissioners, 2022

Commission as a differential element. The Commission sought to understand how they were affected, their ways of resisting, their history. Listening to them expanded the understanding of what happened in the context of the armed conflict. This was an opportunity to contribute to the clarification and, in the process, to create the possibility of consolidating collaboration nodes and networks for the fulfillment of the Commission's mandate.

For similar experiences, counting on the story of those who do not live in their country of origin because of the armed conflict broadens the understanding of the different impacts and struggles that transcend national borders, and guarantees their right to the truth.

11. ENSURING PARTICIPATION AND MAKING THE MOST OF THE ERA'S TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

This entity had to face different obstacles. Perhaps one of the most significant was to develop each of its processes in the midst of a pandemic that forced the population to isolate itself. Ensuring participation in the middle of this situation implied the virtualization of most of the actions in a country as disconnected as Colombia, where Internet access is limited in several regions. This, on one side, was possible to overcome thanks to a technological support that from the beginning was thought to be robust to guarantee the taking of testimonies and the celebration of virtual events. When the pandemic hit, the Commission was able to deploy its capacity and respond effectively to the emerging needs[228].

Furthermore, the Commission built alternatives for effective participation and sustaining the trust built between the different stakeholders and sectors with the entity: telephone calls, letters and messages, and sporadic visits with all the biosecurity measures were some of these alternatives. Similar experiences should include, from the outset, a technological infrastructure to safeguard the information that is built up over the course of the mandate, a strong support to overcome connectivity difficulties and to bring people in hard-to-reach areas closer together. Creativity must also be fostered in the work teams when facing difficulties and the use of different tools that guarantee people's participation must be encouraged.

12. ADEQUATE PARTICIPATION?

The exercise of social dialogue and plural listening for the investigation was possible thanks to the willingness of the different stakeholders, sectors, and communities to contribute to the clarification of the truth, recognition, coexistence and provide recommendations for non-repetition. Testimonies were collected and «conversations were held with different actors and sectors in the territories. Social organizations, public forces, institutions, and businessmen were interviewed. The aim was to provide a very pluralistic account of what is happening in the territories»[229]. The Commission tried to

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[228] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Administration and Finance, 2021
[229] Systematization Interview, Directorate of Social Dialogue, 2021

create conditions that would allow the participation of the greatest number of people willing to contribute to the fulfillment of the mandate.

On the one hand, diverse wills, interests, and demands were brought together, meetings between different people were promoted, and what happened was made visible from multiple voices, which made possible the construction of a common narrative about the conflict, which led to the establishment of platforms and networks that contribute to peace-building. On the other hand, the atmosphere of distrust and polarization that characterizes the country hindered approaching some sectors, among them the so-called "civilian third parties". This was influenced by the lack of knowledge about the extrajudicial nature of the entity, since for many, talking to the Commission meant entering into legal proceedings with the State. In the words of one of the commissioners, «the challenge remains because we were not able to listen to everyone, we need to continue deepening the meetings between different (people or sectors)»[230].

In similar experiences, practical participation mechanisms should be promoted to guarantee a listening process with multiple voices (victims, accountable parties, businessmen, institutions, civil society organizations), those that narrate intimate and shared stories, fragments of social life that help to build a broad explanation of the complexity of the internal armed conflict.

Among these mechanisms, we suggest: a) the reception of oral stories and reports that are shared by victims' organizations, civil society and law enforcement, among others; b) listening spaces preceding the recognition between the parties that become a support to express feelings, sensations and reactions to what has been experienced and the upcoming scenarios of participation, c) telephone calls that start with a presentation on the objective of listening to the testimonies and the need to provide accurate and confidential information for the accompaniment process, d) individual and collective interviews as an exercise of connection with personal and family elements that help to build the story, e) listening to territorial experiences, such as memory museums, memory houses, youth initiatives built in community houses or meeting places that have a symbolic value for the communities. Ultimately, the listening process as a type of interaction between people requires trust, confidentiality, openness, cooperation, and mutual responsibility among participants; in addition, the relationship with participation has to do with the construction of agreements that guarantee voluntariness in the process.

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[230] Press conference, Commissioners. 2022

This section presents the lessons learned from the process of investigation and preparation of the Final Report for the clarification of the truth. It shows the challenges in the perspective of territorial articulation, the considerations around the use of tools of the Mission Information System (SIM), data analysis, writing and editing around the Final Report and other technical elements that, as suggested, should be considered for similar experiences.

The search for the truth about what happened during the armed conflict implied addressing, together with the communities, patterns and dynamics that made it possible to arrive at the explanations necessary to satisfy the victims' demand for truth. This challenge was compounded by the difficult task of materializing this search at a conceptual and methodological level, and also rendering it comprehensible to those who voluntarily gave their testimonies:

> *«They would tell us: how come what happened to me - in terms of my son's disappearance, or my husband's murder, my daughter's sexual violence, or mine - is not something that happened to me, but a pattern?»[231].*

The search for the truth would not focus on clarifying specific cases, as this is the responsibility of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), but rather on finding patterns that would explain the origins of the armed conflict, the characteristics of its development and its persistence factors. This implied understanding that in the analysis of more than six decades of armed conflict there are events that share characteristics, cycles, forms, and dynamics that are repeated, as well as recurrences and similarities between violence that resemble each other in terms of the types of victims, victimizing events, and territories where they occur, among other criteria.

Given the possibility of providing society with a broad, inclusive, and enlightening explanation of the conflict that would allow for a shared narrative built with -and not on- the victims, regional and national articulation was required to achieve this construction of truth that, although participatory, inclusive, and plural from the territories, their stories, and experiences, would not lose the investigative horizon. During the mandate of the Commission, national meetings, in-depth seminars, shared readings among the teams, transcription and labeling teams with territorial emphasis and multiple efforts derived from the articulation were implemented. Nevertheless, despite these actions, national thematic research, and territorial research with an emphasis on the regional dynamics of the conflict were permanently parallel until the end of the mandate. This was further deepened due to the isolation produced by the Covid 19 pandemic and

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

13. ARTICULATION

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[231] Systemization Interview, Initial Team, preparation period, 2021.

resulted in a Final Report that includes analyses on the main themes, as well as other regional analyses that account for the dynamics of the territories.

In similar experiences that seek to clarify what happened during the armed conflicts from a similar territorial perspective, joint efforts are needed to allow a permanent dialogue between the territorial contextualization of the war and thematic efforts to explain the causes, origins, patterns, and resistance factors of the conflicts from a systemic analysis. Methodological, conceptual, pedagogical, and participatory efforts should also be deployed, as the Commission did, although preferably from the beginning, to promote conceptual clarifications derived from its mission regarding the horizon and the reason for a clarification exercise. This may not only allow for clarifications that minimize expectations and maximize participation in the processes, but also facilitate the collective construction of the exercise of truth and memory.

14. ADAPTING TO CHANGES IN THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Beyond people's understanding of their testimonies as contributions to the construction of the narrative, the work teams also had to understand and adapt to the various methodological changes in the research. In this regard, the methodology presented several trial-and-error processes, which added to the diversity of articulation difficulties. This determined a route with circular and overlapping phases, i.e., neither linear nor consecutive.

Difficulties in agreeing on a research approach from the beginning, changes associated with the leadership of the Knowledge Directorate, which articulated the research, and the lack of communication between the transcription teams and data analysts are some of the elements that the Commission had to face. Similarly, the late definition of the index of the Final Report and the hiring of an editorial team only towards the last phase of the research (2021) were major setbacks. It was necessary to:

> *«Reorganize the text radically, we made three versions of the same Report of the same chapter, I believe that it has been one of the most exhausting processes I have experienced within the Commission, due to changes in orientation, because there is no clear orientation for the investigators»[232].*

The research had to constantly adapt to the needs that arose: «we have had to develop capacities for flexibility, for adaptation (...) this is what we learned»[233]. Similar experiences require "listening to the process", as it clarified the routes, showed the paths, and presented the needs that had to be met. In research processes, memory exercises or neighborhood peacebuilding processes, flexibility and permanent adaptation principles must be incorporated to foresee situations that imply changes in direction, approach,

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[232] Ibíd.
[233] Ibíd.

or conceptual understanding. The development of adaptive skills for the processes and teams is another factor that should serve as a solid base in the face of possible transformations. Simple and flexible methodological clarifications are indispensable from the outset, seeking to articulate the different elements within similar exercises.

Another strategy that the Commission wanted to implement focused on internal communication between the teams. However, «we did not manage to connect the transcribers with the researchers, nor the researchers with the data analysts; we did not manage to make a number of connections that we assumed would be natural and would favor the Commission's knowledge construction process»[234]. Factors such as the scope of the processes, the size of the teams, the isolation produced by Covid 19, the distance between the clarification exercise and the social dialogue, the different analytical, conceptual, and even political positions generated gaps between the teams. For similar processes, more effective coordination, and strategic communication mechanisms between professionals from different areas should be foreseen. The internal will of the teams, leadership, and effective communication between them must equally be strengthened, in order to overcome individual will and bureaucratic processes and translate into effective contributions to the processes.

A mechanism that can provide centrality, articulation and communication is to pay permanent attention to the mission objectives, i.e., to incorporate strategic planning exercises and the collective construction of processes, including construction that involves the communities. When people, employees or communities feel part of the processes and have defined objectives and directions, conceptual, methodological and, in some cases, individual and subjective political difficulties acquire a less protagonist dimension and this, in turn, allows the processes to move forward and the objectives to be fulfilled.

Interviewing was the basis of the research exercise to obtain the testimonies that were the central axis of the Commission's listening. These required informed consents that allowed the investigators to legally support the testimony and link it to the Final Report. Towards the end of the Commission, when the need to transfer the accumulated archive and incorporate the collection produced during the years of its mandate in the Digital Transmedia and the Human Rights Archive appeared, the Commission found around twenty-two types of formats adapted to the needs of the different processes or in response to situations such as the pandemic produced by Covid-19. As well as not being unified, these consents did not fully incorporate the legal mandates for

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[234] Systemization Interview, Sub-Directorate of Knowledge, 2021.

15. INTERVIEWING

Photography: Truth Commission

the use of personal or image data or their transfer, for instance, for their use in digital platforms such as transmedia, the website and the Commission's audiovisual production. For similar experiences, a unified format needs to be developed that responds to national legislation and to the general processes where these testimonies are implemented, also foreseeing the use that will be made of the information provided by the individuals.

16. RESEARCH INFORMATION SYSTEMS

One of the most important challenges faced by the Truth Commission in Colombia was information abundance and high technological development. Therefore, the Commission's challenge was not only to access information, but also to develop adequate tools to manage the vast amount of previous knowledge and the knowledge it would produce during its mandate. The Commission took as a reference the case of the Guatemala Commission, as developed in Chapter 1, from which it acquired lessons learned for the incorporation of an information system that would allow the capture, reception, organization, and availability of information.

> *Noting that the Commission received many contributions of information in different ways, for example, through reports and cases, through databases, through documents that the communities have built with great effort - or often give us their archives directly to show us what they have produced for years - the need was observed to protocolize the reception of documentation by means of a procedure «in which the ways of receiving documentation, the different types of documentary contributions from organizations, institutions and individuals are standardized and normalized»[235].*

In early 2019, the Commission created the SIM. SIM's main objective was to manage the information derived from the listening together with the contributions delivered by organizations and institutions from its registration, preservation, processing, and protection. All this knowledge was subjected, together with technological tools and automatic and manual processes, to procedures for its organization, processing, and disposal. The SIM was the system that took care of, safeguarded, and made available this knowledge and the technological base that allowed the analysis of structured and semi-structured data with specialized catalogs, documentary collections and tools for their consultation and visualization. This system also made it possible to explore and download databases and information sources, and to access own and external sources.

Although the Commission developed its own information system ahead of such an extensive study on the armed conflict in Colombia, the technological scaffolding and the processes derived from this system did not occur with the speed that was needed in practice and expected in the era of information and such advanced

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[235] Systemization Interview, Directorate of Social Dialogue, 2022.

technological development. This means that, while listening processes in the different corners of the Colombian territory advanced swiftly, the processes to enter the testimonies into the SIM (which required large transcription, labeling, cataloguing and curatorship equipment) were much slower, as well as the technological development necessary for their safekeeping. Consequently, the research process required to have the knowledge derived from the listening inside the SIM available for analysis and comparison also slowed down.

Similar experiences require the incorporation of information systems from the outset, in line with the volume of sources to be incorporated into the investigation processes, but above all, to ensure a technological development that responds to the pace of the investigation. Combining processes of capture, processing, access, availability, visualization and custody of both testimonies and external sources is fundamental to advance in the solidity of the clarification of what happened during conflicts or similar experiences that require it. This allows the guarantee of human rights defense processes to have greater input to ensure enforceability in a more solid and forceful manner.

Moreover, similar experiences should seek to reduce technological gaps among researchers, since «many of them are reluctant to use technology and are accustomed to working in a traditional manner»[236]. Reducing this gap not only strengthens the search for the truth about what happened, but also allows for progress in an interdisciplinary analysis. «The SIM contributed for human beings to use technology not as an end in itself, but as a vehicle to achieve the objectives of the Commission, which ultimately are also truth, peace and justice»[237].

17. DATA ANALYSIS INCORPORATION

As seen, the Commission worked with large volumes of information. In order to make the best of them, a process of quantitative data analysis was also carried out to strengthen the findings from the perspective of the questions that emerged from the testimonies and reports derived from the listening. The research was nourished by more than 500 databases related to multiple phenomena that made it possible to explain the armed conflict. As discussed in Chapter 5, one team was in charge of processing and analyzing the information from primary and external sources, supporting the researchers with strong elements for the analysis, contrast, and verification of the qualitative findings throughout the research.

The major difficulty in determining the magnitude and patterns of the conflict in Colombia in relation to the databases submitted to the Commission

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[236] Systemization Interview, SIM Team, 2021
[237] Systemization Interview, Sub-Directorate of Knowledge, 2021

Photography: María Paula Durán

was underreporting. This means that there are partial data, disparate data among sources, and a high number of unidentified victims (N.N.) and missing persons not registered. Two of the great contributions of the Commission are to achieve consolidation in order to centralize the information that until now was scattered and to build new reliable sources for future investigations. For similar experiences, combining the systematization and treatment of the testimonies collected, purifying the existing data sets, implementing quality processes, and generating new sets and implementing protocols for publication or distribution of the information obtained is essential to make progress in solidifying the investigation.

Formulating and appropriating new methodologies, incorporating constant dialogues between qualitative and quantitative research, and using a significant number of databases and datasets, as was done by the analytical process in the Truth Commission in Colombia, is further recommended. This process leaves as a legacy a wealth of quality inputs for future research, including databases, cartographies, analysis documents and data visualization tools. Thanks to the mixed methodologies and their open codes, similar experiences will be able to contrast the findings and replicate the processes.

In any case, this journey was not an easy one. Right from the start, there were not only articulation difficulties between qualitative and quantitative analyses, but also distances between analytical, procedural, and conceptual positions. From one side, the analytical teams incorporated rigorous statistical estimation processes, projects for data visualization and debugging of structured sources without clear research hypotheses coming from the research teams. Research teams, on the other end, sought to understand quantitative findings to strengthen the research, without conceptual clarity to serve as a framework for analysis and contrasts. The data analysts' reports, although complete and rigorous, were misunderstood by the researchers; and the research teams did not achieve sufficient deductive clarity needed by the data analysts, due to the nature and focus of the Commission's research.

Nevertheless, the Commission managed to incorporate solid strategies that led to a solid narrative, which integrated mixed methodologies of analysis for the development of the Final Report and the comparison of the findings and results that were found during the listening process. The main strategy to overcome this difficulty was the incorporation of data analysts in the research teams at the time of organizing the teams by book of the Final Report. This means that, for example, for the development of the book No es un mal menor (Not a lesser evil), a data analyst was permanently immersed in the research. Thus, both data analysts and social researchers combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies to strengthen the findings and writing of each volume of the Report. Still, without clear guidelines for articulation, the development of the findings also faced its own difficulties. Both analysts and researchers faced deep distances and even tensions derived from analytical, research and conceptual positions. Strategies such as "SIM Informa" were incorporated to make the findings obtained

Photography: Truth Commission

by the analytical research teams visible and explained in qualitative languages, which allowed a much closer approach.

Similar experiences should strategically plan the incorporation of mixed methodologies (qualitative and quantitative) for the analysis and contrasting of information from the beginning of the research. Ongoing communication between research analysts and social researchers, following the SIM Informa strategy, which allows for a shared understanding of the findings obtained from the two streams, making it possible to integrate critical analysis based on the results of the listening, is essential to strengthen the research. Data analysis must incorporate languages related to qualitative descriptions that have as their horizon the broadest understanding, that is, that are clear to the greatest number of audiences. In addition, social researchers are required to develop listening and data analysis skills that allow them to consolidate findings, verify results or even reach conclusions. A permanent articulation between qualitative and quantitative research amplifies views and integrates disciplines and, ultimately, deepens the findings obtained.

18. CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY UNIFICATION

Part of the information processing was that of the Commission's interviews. This was done through their transcription and labeling. SIM designed this strategy to facilitate their analysis within the System. In order to extract the contributions to the investigation from the testimonies, 120 transcribers distributed in the eleven macro-regions according to their origin labeled the elements of the interviews for their search within the system. This was oriented by a tree of labels organized by specific research themes. The creation of this tree, which also made it possible to classify and relate transmedia contents of the Final Report and external sources, started from a first tree with tags derived from the thematic cores of the research. Subsequently, these were refined with the research teams from the analysis of the controlled language with which the Commission ordered and established the terms related to its research activities. The Thesaurus was built with the validated terminology in an effort to achieve a common language and was made available to the entity's researchers within the SIM.

The Thesaurus enabled the recording and standardization in an orderly manner of technical and popular terms, or those most frequently used, thus providing a common language on the armed conflict. In this way, the Thesaurus served as a reference framework for the documentation, cataloguing and curatorship processes of both testimonies and external sources. Designed with the purpose of organizing the concepts and terminology used by the Commission based on semantic relationships, its vocabulary facilitated the access and visibility of the data within the SIM and contributed to the precision in the search for information in the documents and digital tools.

Similar experiences require this type of tools and conceptual frameworks from the beginning of the process, otherwise, as was the case in the Commission, agreements on statements and conclusions are delayed and difficult to reach. Furthermore, the number

of concepts should not exceed a significant number, since more than 300 labels or base concepts for the statements makes their use and search more complex. Understanding the labels from their semantic relationships is also essential, since if they are understood as separate terms, without conceptual relationships, they can limit the analysis tools and make the search for information more complex..
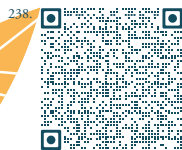
19. INFORMATION ACCESS [238]

Given the extraordinary powers that the Commission had to access external information from State entities, and with the aim of awakening confidence in the interested sectors and society in general about the custody and reserve of this, the Information Access Group was created in August 2018. This group was intended to manage access to information from other entities or national or international organizations for the development of the functions and objectives of the Commission. On the one hand, they organized the process of obtaining external information required by the investigation for the analysis and contrasting of the findings. On the other hand, they established an internal procedure and culture of care to safeguard the confidentiality and use of these sources.

As of late 2018, this group sought and developed agreements and protocols with State agencies and created a registry of information requests that later became a unified alert system of access, management and monitoring of obtaining external information. The group also issued the Internal Policy on Access to Mission Information[239], which sought to regulate researchers' access to documents at four levels.

Although the implementation of these four levels led to a timely institutional organization -along with follow-up and access strategies- they did not respond to the three levels established in the Transparency Law. For the closure of the mandate and the creation of the Archive of Clarification -which gathers the accumulated information from external and own sources produced during almost four years- the Commission had to re-classify the information for its transfer and inheritance.

In similar experiences that seek to develop information gathering processes, establishing criteria for its use, access, and organization in correlation with the transparency and archiving laws in force in each country is crucial. This is the only way to avoid duplication of internal processes, as well as to promote the creation of robust human rights archives in accordance with the organization of the countries. Other experiences should also consider, from the beginning, creating a team, a unit, or a committee with knowledge of each country's regulations, especially those related to archives, together with lawyers and data analysts in charge of creating their own access route and/or policy to centralize requests directly with State entities and follow up on access to information

238.

[238] Truth Commission. Methodology for the Clarification of the Truth. 2022. p. 93 - 95.
[239] Truth Commission. Information Access Policy. V2. 2022

within the organization. External requests must be signed by the legal representative of the entity to ensure credibility.

Additionally, for internal requests, incorporating formats with simple questionnaires that provide the team in charge with accurate information for the search is recommended. These requests should be aligned with the organization's mandate and mission. Another aspect that can facilitate the external request process is to know the document management policies of each entity, in order to clearly understand the access policies. This helps facilitate requests and avoids stumbling blocks. In addition, if permanent letters of request are avoided and visits are established to explain the mission and mandate, consultation is made possible through agreements for the use of the information. In more complex cases, such as the Colombian case, where permanent silences, omissions and delays have occurred, requesting the issuance of legal circulars ordering the entities to comply with the provision for the delivery of files is recommended[240].

20. PREPARING THE FINAL REPORT[241]

In April 2021, the drafting of the final texts corresponding to the books of the Final Report began. These texts were based on the inputs produced by thematic lines and cores; exchanges between national and territorial researchers, listening assessments and their subsequent analysis, verification and contrasting, and the work of the other areas of the Commission in charge of social dialogue, differential approaches, and strategies. Moreover, at this point, the teams that had carried out the research were rearranged to meet the demands for the book writing process.

During the same semester, an editorial team was formed, with a coordinator, to consolidate the criteria for writing each chapter of the Report. Their first task was to create a style manual, which was nourished by some documents and guidelines that had been produced in previous stages of the process. This was followed by a phase of diagnosis of the state of each chapter, in which various editorial processes were defined to respond to particular needs. The editors, together with each research team, built collaborative work plans that allowed for smooth progress in the writing process.

In addition to the particular work of each team, there was also a general strategy with three moments in the editorial process. The first was macro-edition to check that the main elements of the structure of each chapter, the handling of testimonies, the depth of the information and the narrative flow of the text, among others, performed correctly. The second was micro-edition, which focused on a line-by-line analysis of the story: here they checked that each sentence contributed to the structure, that it made the right sense and that there were no redundancies or gaps. The third stage was proofreading and style correction.
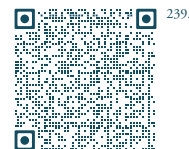
239.
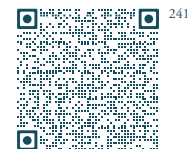
241.

[240] For further reflections, see the annex to the Final Report: Assessment of Information Access.
[241] Truth Commission. Truth Clarification Methodology. 2022. p. 123 - 124.

The incorporation of data analysts and editors in each of the books of the Final Report led to progress, on the one hand, in the construction of an analysis that enriched the research and, on the other hand, in a process of permanent writing and editing. However, this started late, so it produced setbacks in versions of the volumes and duplication of efforts, due to continuous changes suggested both at the editorial level and in the analysis and arguments. In similar research experiences, in order to avoid setbacks and meet the objectives set, the incorporation of research and data analytics teams, as well as social researchers, editors and writers, should be contemplated from the beginning. For example, having style manuals before the start of writing can guarantee orthographic unification in the documents produced, standardization in citation and expeditious revision.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE METHODOLOGIES

This axis documents the lessons learned related to the ways of working that fostered social dialogue processes in the Commission and that focused on recognition, coexistence, and non-repetition. The importance of the moments of preparation, closure and follow-up that accompany the dialogues, the symbolic elements that contribute to the provision of a safe and trusting space, as well as some recommendations regarding the implementation of a psychosocial approach, are among those presented.

21. BEYOND AN EVENT, A PROCESS.

Social dialogue was able to develop hundreds of processes for conversation between different stakeholders and sectors of society based on the search for the truth about what happened during the armed conflict. The objectives addressed by this process allowed for the recognition of responsibilities and the effects on victims, the recognition by society of the existence of the armed conflict, the promotion of democratic coexistence as a scenario of citizen participation for the transformation of the territories, and the establishment of dialogues to build recommendations for the non-repetition and non-continuity of the armed conflict.

The Commission understood that social dialogue is not an event in which two actors sit down to exchange their experiences, but rather a process that involves prior approaches to build trust and jointly construct the spaces in which...

«Several working sessions with the parties are necessary to synchronize the demands for truth and the perspectives of recognition with the disposition, the acceptance of the accountable party. This is one of the most important achievements, to think that it is not only a public event, but that this has to do with building certain fabric, certain trust, and to be able to install in the parties some agreements that allow to continue with an exercise beyond the Truth Commission».[242].

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[242] Member of the Directorate of Social Dialogue, "Interview".

These preparatory moments addressed emotions that - in the case of the accountable parties, for example - prevented their participation due to the fear of recognizing their accountability or confronting the victims, whom they had directly violated in the past. In the permanent recognition of their dignity, the Commission provided an environment of security and trust that made possible free expression and the construction of a transitional scenario with non-judgmental dialogues. In the case of the victims, their expectations of truth were made visible in these previous spaces, «the victims have some demands, they have some claims, to listen to that, to organize it with them and to be able to give a scope to those expectations. We try, in this preliminary stage, to clarify those expectations and, above all, to clarify the scope of those expectations»[243].

Similar processes need to understand social dialogue as a process and not as an event, even if the public act is the most visible scenario. This guarantees not only the victims' demands for truth and symbolic acts for those accountable, but also collectively constructed transitional scenarios that allow the search for shared truths and narratives about what happened during the conflicts. These group processes amplify voices that are not the prevailing ones in research on the armed conflict. By doing so in processes of public social mobilization, they empower the agency of communities and ensure paths towards social transformation and the search for peace. Truth appropriation also strengthens the processes of enforceability of rights by becoming a truth of the communities, ratified by accountable parties, and articulated to rigorous exercises of contrasting and validation. This means that, in future scenarios, the communities will have their own mechanisms to defend their rights. Thus, the process does not end with the public event; on the contrary, the process begins after it.

22. SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS

Another noteworthy achievement was the incorporation of symbolic acts that provided messages beyond the spoken word in the development of each of the moments. Art, culture, and ritual contributed to bringing the entity closer to the practices of the organizations, communities, and peoples who, in their meetings, link ritual elements and promote safe and close welcoming environments. One of the Commission's achievements was to bring the entity closer to these organizations, by integrating into its methodology these elements that are not proper to the institutionality, but that respond to these practices of the organizations. «It is not simply an ornament; it is a meaningful construction that allows energies to be channeled during the event. People arrived and placed their objects in this symbolic construction, which allowed for a different appropriation of the space»[244].

Similar experiences should include symbolic acts of those individuals, communities and peoples who participate. This contributes to creating spaces and processes that are

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[243] Ibíd.
[244] Ibíd.

specific to the communities and not imposed by the institutions. If the methodology is also developed together with the communities, and these acts are incorporated into it, the scope of the objectives will be even greater. Ritual acts are central elements in the construction, reconstruction and strengthening of the social fabric, as well as for the expression of memories, feelings and wounds produced by armed conflicts. Coupled with ongoing reflection on the lessons learned in the process, unplanned derivative objectives will emerge that will allow for greater reach. Their contributions, finally, will go beyond the act of listening and will lead to a reconstruction of the social fabric, memory and truth in transitional scenarios or similar contexts.

23. RECOGNITIONS

Recognitions have «given meaning to the Report, meaning that it is disseminated in a forward-looking perspective, because through the meetings between the victims and those who are accountable, not only is the truth woven, but meaning is given to it»[245]. These processes present society with another type of truth, that of the act that reflects the dignity of victims and accountable individuals, which is the truth of the victims' and accountable parties' dignity, which:

«Breaks the idea that transformation of people is not possible, the logic of war is deconstructed and those accountable are the evidence. The process of an accountable person when making those turns of ethical order, those reflections, when recognizing, is shattering that impossibility, showing that transition is possible. This is linked to movements that trigger transformations not only at a personal level, but also at a family and community level. The recognition sent symbolic messages to society, of those ruptures and breaks that we have to make, to move from the logic of war to a different logic»[246]

For similar experiences, the promotion of recognition scenarios that contribute to the transformation of social imaginaries, to the creation of new narratives that overcome apathy towards war and strengthen transitional justice processes, based on the truth they foster, the symbolic acts they allow and the commitment to question societies ethically and politically in the face of war, is recommended.

24. LESSONS LEARNED FOR COEXISTENCE

Lessons learned for coexistence helped to identify the importance of collecting, systematizing, and strengthening the experiences that arise amid war and aim at transforming the realities of the territories in order to build peace, in addition to «understanding coexistence as a social and political process»[247]. In similar experiences that seek to collect events that occurred in the context of conflicts, some aspects related not only to the victimizing events, but also to the initiatives and struggles of the communities to mitigate or overcome violence should be considered. This recognition strengthens

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[245] Member of the Legacy team, "Systematization Interview".

[246] Ibíd.

[247] Systemization Interview, Directorate of Social Dialogue, 2022.

them, promotes joint work between initiatives and facilitates the exchange of strategies and learning. "We are not condemned to violence, we have to show, put in the public light those lessons learned from the communities that in war dialogued with the violent, resisted, defended life, defended the territory".

This brings to light a hopeful truth that opens up the possibility of replicating coexistence processes in different territories. In the Commission, talking about democratic coexistence broadened the meaning of the term "coexistence" and made it possible to overcome the vision of "tolerance" or "pacifism" commonly associated with this concept. Democratic coexistence was the term coined collaboratively with the communities to refer to processes of active citizenship, exercise of rights, nonviolent civil resistance, and transformation of the territories.

Concerning the coexistence agreements derived from the aforementioned learning, these should be accompanied by a work roadmap or an implementation plan that would materialize the agreed-upon points. Similar experiences, in which agreements of this nature are proposed, require the process to outline a work roadmap applicable in the contexts so that people can take ownership of the agreements and watch over, demand and work for their fulfillment. Grassroots organizations, cooperation agencies and institutions present in the territories should also follow up on their implementation and ensure compliance.

25. PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

In the process of establishing social dialogues, in which different sectors and actors met to share their experiences in the context of the armed conflict, there were stories that, due to their crudeness, required psychosocial support both for the participants and for the Commission's work team. During the dialogue processes and the collection of testimonies for the clarification in which psychosocial effects were expressed, there was support from a team that contributed to emotional containment and to work in a timely manner on care. There was no doubt that:

> «There are several affectation levels, but we always insist that there is an individual responsibility, a team responsibility and an institutional responsibility; we -as a psychosocial team- respond to the Commission's responsibility to be aware of the care of its teams. The other dimensions of care, at the team level, for example, are the responsibility of the team coordinator, and an individual responsibility that each one must bear in order to know and understand the dimension of working with victims and accountable parties» [248].

A psychosocial care manual was developed, and active listening activities and exercises for emotional, physical, and mental liberation were carried out, so that internally

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[248] Psychosocial Strategy Member, "Systemization Interview".

strategies could be created to deal with disinterest in work due to emotional exhaustion, frustration, or hopelessness. The psychosocial team promoted this care and support as an institutional policy right from the start. The permanent psychosocial accompaniment, both within the Commission and with those who participated in each of the processes, was a great success. However, this effort was not enough; many of the entity's collaborators suffered from depression, burn-out and psychosomatic affectations, sometimes as a result of the workload or the impact of the issues addressed:

> «Many times, a person had to [transcribe] several sexual violence testimonies in a row, and that began to cause emotional effects. A self-care exercise was done in collaboration with the psychosocial team, but also with a gender focus, to also see how this listening process, which affected at the time, contributed to the research and how it could be read in a different way. This support was fundamental for the team to move forward»[249]

Similar processes require that organizations, teams, cooperation agencies and state entities urgently prioritize the creation of institutional policies for permanent psychosocial attention and accompaniment, both for external attention and for the care of the people who collaborate with their mission. Even more so when the processes are centered on armed conflicts. Not only is it important to have a specialized, robust, and sufficient psychosocial team, but also to have clear processes, instances, and diagnoses for this support.

This means that attention, both internally and externally, cannot focus solely on the impacts and effects of the war or of the listening derived from the clarification, memory, and peace exercises, but must also contemplate an integral perspective. Broad care approaches such as those proposed by feminism and gender perspectives should be taken as a reference, addressing gender-based violence, harassment at work, work-related illnesses derived from heavy workloads and constant pressures, among others identified during the diagnoses inside and outside the entity.

The expertise and suitability of the psychosocial teams is equally important to build bridges with other organizations that allow the containment and prevention of risks in advance, making permanent exercises of joint reflection (between entities, organizations, and collectives). Finally, the critical exercise of incorporating new epistemologies (or studies) to broaden the perspective of care and the emotional processes of people will surely ensure that collaborators, related persons, employees, and people who participate in the processes have a better quality of life. This, in turn, will allow the institution, organization or collective to contribute with greater impact to processes of transitional justice, memory or its derivatives.

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[249] Team member of the Sub-Directorate of Knowledge, "Systematization interview".

This section presents the lessons learned in relation to the circumstances that strengthened or affected the work of the Commission. Strategies and alternatives to achieve closeness and build trust in the regions that to date continue to experience the ravages of war are presented here. This was compounded by a pandemic that implied flexibility and creativity to advance in the commitments established with the communities in the framework of the fulfillment of the entity's mandate.

Expectations regarding the appearance of the Commission were combined with the context: understanding how an institution could seek to clarify the causes of a conflict that was still ongoing was not easy to understand in many areas of the country. Words such as "post-conflict", "non-repetition" and "coexistence" seemed to make no sense in the local realities of many parts of the country.

Despite the fact that the work from the territorial level was crucial from the beginning of the Commission, trying to build the truth about the conflict in territories still affected by violence was a major challenge, especially for the safety of both the officials and the people who gave testimony. Consequently, collecting testimonies amidst violence and without putting people at risk required innovation, adaptation and even improvisation:

«Other commissions have not had to work in such insecurity context as this Commission has had. We went to many places and people told us "We are afraid to talk, but we want to talk", and we have tried to develop our work in that space between fear, courage and the significance that this work has had for the people, which is a very valuable example»[250]

Fear discouraged the participation and testimony of many, despite the fact that the Commission sought to have careful spaces and processes that would awaken public confidence. For instance, approaching them through local officials and other stakeholders known in the field, the commitment to confidentiality and data confidentiality of the people who gave their testimony and the provision of Truth Houses as safe spaces, among others. There was also a prevention and protection team that built tools -such as heatmaps to geo-reference security risks- thanks to which information was available for the scheduling, cancellation or rescheduling of certain Commission activities. Moreover, this team provided guidance and access routes to other institutions that could contribute to the safety of the participantsActivities had to be adapted almost on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the testimonies of those who still wished to tell the truth could be heard. In order to give people greater peace of mind, for example, Commission officials moved to alternative sites, such as churches or schools, to conduct interviews. Finding

[250] Press conference, Commissioners, 2022.

CONTEXTUAL ASPECT

26. A TRUTH COMMISSION IN A COUNTRY IN CONFLICT

Photography: María Paula Durán

these safe spots sometimes also meant moving to other territories, other than where they worked or lived. «This was very challenging for people to talk about the conflict in the midst of fear. For instance, in the Pacific area, sometimes they told us: 'I can't tell you from here, when I get to Cali we'll talk»[251]. On other occasions, particularities also required innovation and improvisation. This is what happened to obtain the testimonies of a group of women: «we invented, together with the women themselves, that they were going to a political meeting in a nearby municipality. This was the only way they could leave and come back calm and safe after talking to us»[252].

For entities that must collect sensitive information in conflict territories, the Commission's experience suggests constant monitoring of risks in the territories where the entity is present, and that these should be a guiding measure that feeds flexible procedures for the collection of information, according to the needs of those who wish to speak and participate at specific times and places. «We achieved all this by testing, adapting, what works in a territory, what doesn't (...). We respect its nature, we learned that one cannot go in with a previously designed agenda because it doesn't work that way»[253]. Similarly, there must be guarantees of confidentiality and anonymization tools that prevent the identification of individuals, organizations or organizational processes that contribute information on serious human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, as well as sensitive information on individual or collective accountability, before, during and after the collection of information.

27. THE WORK OF A TRUTH COMMISSION IN A PANDEMIC

LaThe Covid-19 pandemic restricted all face-to-face activities worldwide, which was a challenge for a commission that had been listening extensively in the territories for a year. The face-to-face Truth Encounters, the taking of testimonies, the coexistence processes and the attention in the Truth Houses were cancelled. Therefore, all areas of the Commission - particularly those in charge of listening - had to adapt once again, this time to the challenges of carrying out this work virtually. As a result, the research and social dialogue methodologies were adjusted, and new strategies were implemented for contacting the people, institutions, victims' organizations, and other sectors that participated in the process.

On the one hand, the external communications strategy focused on social networks with live streaming of events on YouTube and publications on Facebook, Instagram and Tik-Tok, as well as a strong presence in more traditional media, such as radio and television. The outreach through different means allowed the Commission's audience and visibility to be maintained, which was read as an achievement given the context.

[251] Integrante equipo Dirección de Territorios, "Entrevista Sistematización".
[252] Integrante Equipo de género, "Entrevista Sistematización".
[253] Entrevista Sistematización, Dirección de Territorios, 2021.

At certain times, there were even some audience peaks due to the content of the live broadcasted events.

On the other hand, virtual work was enhanced for the collection of testimonies and the approach to certain sectors. Virtual rooms administered by the Information Technology area were adapted to make these spaces safe for interviews and meetings, complying with informed consent and confidentiality protocols. The formats and the process of formalizing informed consents, which had to be read during the video call, were adapted, and even began to accept written contributions from those who preferred not to have their stories recorded on camera via the Internet. User manuals were also developed to facilitate access to these meeting rooms.

Although the Commission managed to collect around 15,000 testimonies during its pandemic mandate, some sectors remained unheard in the virtual world, particularly several ethnic and rural communities located in places that were difficult to access both physically and virtually. Once the mobility restrictions began to diminish in the country and sentence C-337/2021 was issued, thereby extending the Commission's mandate, the Commission was finally able to reconnect with these territories and people, gathering their testimonies for the preparation of the Final Report in its last stage.

Notwithstanding being a challenge at the beginning, there were also some advantages associated with virtuality; for example, the possibility of creating collaborative laboratories. The pedagogy team carried out virtual exercises that were widely attended, workshops were held, and pedagogical tools were co-created with teachers from all over the country to address the armed conflict in schools. Virtuality was used to convene, both nationally and internationally, people who were willing and committed to contribute to the fulfillment of the mission.

Similar experiences require being willing to build alternatives and to take advantage of technology for the development of mission tasks. Each of the processes derived from the pandemic were the result of the creativity of the entity's collaborators, who, understanding the importance of advancing in the fulfillment of the mandate, responded in a flexible, agile, and pertinent manner. Given the extreme situations that may be encountered in the development of these exercises, having a team that responds with safe alternatives in an innovative manner is essential.

Photography: Truth Commission

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