Seasons of Hope: intergenerational 'storylistening' among demobilised guerrilla in Colombia

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Abstract: This account of peacebuilding workshops with demobilised guerrilla in Colombia emphasises the presence of hope in the peace process. The workshops were designed to facilitate 'storylistening' through intergenerational dialogue between former child soldiers and ex-combatants ranging from 14-86 years of age. The workshop activity was based on an animation entitled 'The Tree of Love' (*el arbol del amor*) made by the younger participants (aged 14-22), with its focus on the tree and the seasons. For the indigenous community in Jambaló, in the Cauca region, the tree is an important symbol of resistance and reconciliation: it has withstood 55 years of conflict and is a haven where hopes, dreams and secrets are shared. This article is presented as a narrative which collates the auto/biographical voices from the workshop as the participants consider key words in their understanding of conflict, mapping them to the seasons and testifying to the significance of hope in peacebuilding contexts.

Introduction

The idea of hope is important on the path to building peace.[1] It features in the narratives of the Middle East conflict and the sectarian Troubles in Northern Ireland, among other post-conflict contexts. Hope is presented in sociological and anthropological literature as an engagement with the future, usually in settings characterised by crisis, conflict and uncertainty. But hope can founder in these contexts, since 'the perceived irreconcilability of intractable conflicts is conceptually tied to the lack of hope for resolution' (Leshem et al, 2016, p.303). In order to sustain, hope also requires complex cognitive activity such as creativity and flexibility, but in violent settings is often dominated by fear, which requires little

cognitive effort (Jarymowicz & Bar-Tal, 2006, p. 373). This can have severe and negative consequences for peacebuilding: Just as individuals may develop hope, societies or collective groups with shared and common interests may also develop 'a collective emotional orientation' based on hope (or fear) (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006, p.374). The presence of fear is particularly evident where the intractability of violence means that it has become normalised: Colombia is emerging from a 50 year - long conflict[2] into an era that is now termed by civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media as "post - peace agreement" rather than "post – conflict". This fragile scenario is complicated by problems with the re-integration of former FARC[3] rebels. In 2019, the UN warned that the goal of providing new opportunities for ex-combatants in civilian life was far from being realised. Moreover, criminal factions remain one of Colombia's biggest challenges as it struggles on its path to 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1964).

This sustained violence 'shapes not only how external actors perceive Colombia, but how individuals and communities perceive themselves, construct memories and identity, and create and share beliefs and values' (Dancey and Morrison, 2019, p.34). It has created what Steiner (2005) terms a 'negative identity' and not only causes trauma in individual lives, but also restricts the Colombian people's ability to 'imagine a different future' (Sanford, 2006, p.1 in Dancey et al, 2019, p.34).

The affordances of cultural and artistic projects for post-conflict societies are well- established , but they need to be implemented carefully in contexts of ongoing violence. Artistic and cultural interventions seek to engender peace and reconciliation through encouraging the creation of 'new imaginaries', of new ways for groups of people to think about society, captured in images and stories (Taylor, 2004, p.23). Culture has the 'potential to transform dominant imaginaries of violence' and to create new practices (Dancey and Morrison, 2019, p.44), but many scholars seem to agree that within the Colombian setting, this process is characterised by the 'long and ubiquitous use of the imaginary of violence' (Steiner, 2005, p.1 in Dancey et al, 2019, p.34). In an attempt to mitigate this problem, the focus of peace-building projects, particularly those working with young people, could perhaps aim to place an emphasis on the importance of new narratives which stay close to the participants' voices and offer strategies for empowerment, whilst acknowledging the legacy of violence. Vietnamese film-maker Trinh Minh-ha calls this 'speaking nearby' or 'a speaking that reflects on itself' (Minh-ha in Chen, 1992, p.87). Our intention in the making of the animated film and in the intergenerational workshops was to stay as close to the participants' voices and stories of lived experience as possible – just as the film represents their stories, their voices, their animation, so, in the workshops

we listened to the participants' stories of lived experience, their memories and their hopes for the future. We have termed this approach to creating shared narratives of lived experience, "storylistening".

Concepts of building hope and peace through forgiveness are foundational to the Christian faith as a route to mutual understanding. Intergenerational faith formation is integral to building communities, whereby 'intergenerational learning' brings 'all ages and generations together to learn with and from each other' (Roberto, 2012, p.113). Intergenerational dialogue has also been utilised by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in Colombia with a focus on youth empowerment to engender trust, to instil resilience and to encourage listening. This holistic approach is seen as the key to hope for peace.[6] It is widely acknowledged that peacebuilding occurs at the local level and is sustained through people-centred approaches. But the risks of relapsing into conflict are high and 'peacebuilding strategies which promote social inclusion are therefore vital to ensure Colombia's path to peace' (Jukes et al, 2019). In this sense, seeking to create a 'community narrative' (Ripley, 2009) often marks the beginning of recovery. Understanding the needs and challenges of re-integration presented through this 'community narrative' (arguably evident in our animated film) is essential for promoting reconciliation and future hopes.

The making of *El árbol del amor* and Seasons of Hope workshops

The intergenerational workshops in Bogota started with a screening of the animated film made by the younger participants (aged 14-22), with its focus on the tree and the seasons. For the indigenous Nasa community in Jambaló, in the Cauca region, *El árbol del amor,* or the Tree of Love is an important symbol of resistance and reconciliation: it has withstood five decades of conflict and is a haven where hopes, dreams and secrets are shared. The main characters are Sek (Sun) and A'te (Moon): The pair are fictional characters, but their stories are real, constructed from 25 testimonies elicited from former child combatants and young survivors of conflict in the remote Cauca region.

El árbol del amor was created through a series of workshops with the participants from the Nasa community as storytellers and we, as academics and film makers, became listeners and facilitators of a shared narrative space. They told their own stories through the production of artefacts: drawings, poetry and human cartography, culminating in their animation. This was the process of "storylistening".

Six of the young film makers from Cauca and their teacher took part in the intergenerational workshops in Bogota. They were joined by 3 veteran militants who had been involved since the onset of the civil

conflict and one former FARC soldier in his late 20s. The group represented 3 generations, with a mix of women and men. A psychologist was in attendance throughout the 3 iterative workshops, which were conducted in Spanish and facilitated/observed by 3 academics from Colombia and the UK. The participants were able to withdraw their consent at any time.

The first workshop involved a word exercise: Each participant was asked to select a word from the animated film that was significant to them and, if they wished to, to share this with the whole group. The dialogue that ensued assumed the form of storytelling and sharing "lived experience". The second workshop required the participants to map the words that they had selected to seasons and to explain why they had made their selection. In each of the workshops, the participants wrote down the selected words and handed them in to the facilitators to select at random so that they could remain anonymous. In the third and final workshop, the participants worked in 4 small groups to devise a statement to describe each season in the context of hope and reconciliation, using the words that had been mapped to the season.

The discourse in the workshops conveyed their intergenerational character: the 'old soldiers' (2 men, 1 woman in their seventies and eighties) spoke with nostalgia. This 'recall of nostalgic moments develops the autobiographical facility' (Dickinson and Erben, 2006, p. 244) and highlights the importance of time in life stories (Plummer, 2001; Erben, 1998). They were determined to convey the message of peace – if peace falters, the purpose of their life has failed. The former FARC guerrilla expressed guilt and regret. He was challenged to look forwards and to consider future reconciliation by the older participants. The young people from Cauca – some of whom were former child combatants, with others growing up in the crossfire - described themselves as survivors. Sometimes they displayed fear, sometimes anger, always determination or resistance "in action". A sense of nostalgia emanated from the workshops, the mingling of regret, guilt and pleasure. Nostalgia is often closely associated with nature and countryside – indigenous people in Colombia retain an elemental bond with the natural world, hence their choice of The Tree of Love as the main "character" in their film. As Dickinson & Erben (2006) explain – nostalgia can invoke a greater understanding of self and others, since 'Nostalgic memories can become part of an emotional stock from which we may make normative evaluations, have sympathetic understanding and express appreciations of the development of selfhood in time' (p.241). Nostalgia can also contain contradictory feelings (Dickinson & Erben, 2006). In this sense, nostalgia could be seen as a key component of peace and reconciliation that is founded on hope for the future and awareness of the past, although it is important to note

that the young people from Cauca were not nostalgic for a past of violence and fear, they did recall with pleasure the natural environment and traditions of their homeland. This included singing a song, giving a cultural reference point to underline the importance of reconciliation and resistance.

This notion of resistance came to inform the film and the workshops, as we discovered that the young participants are extremely resilient. They are not always the fragile beings or 'victims' as they are sometimes portrayed. Instead, they adapt to and overcome adversity in ways which most adults would find difficult. This was an important ethical consideration.

The next section attempts to convey what emerged from the "storylistening" and the mapping exercises in the Seasons of Hope workshops: Each season is described by the statements created by the participants in workshop 3. The words that they selected in workshop 1 and mapped to the seasons in workshop 2 are highlighted in their statements. It should be noted that in terms of climate, Colombia does not experience 4 seasons, but the actual Tree of Love in Jambaló does manifest a cycle of changes throughout the year, which was used as a framework for the writing of the film script.
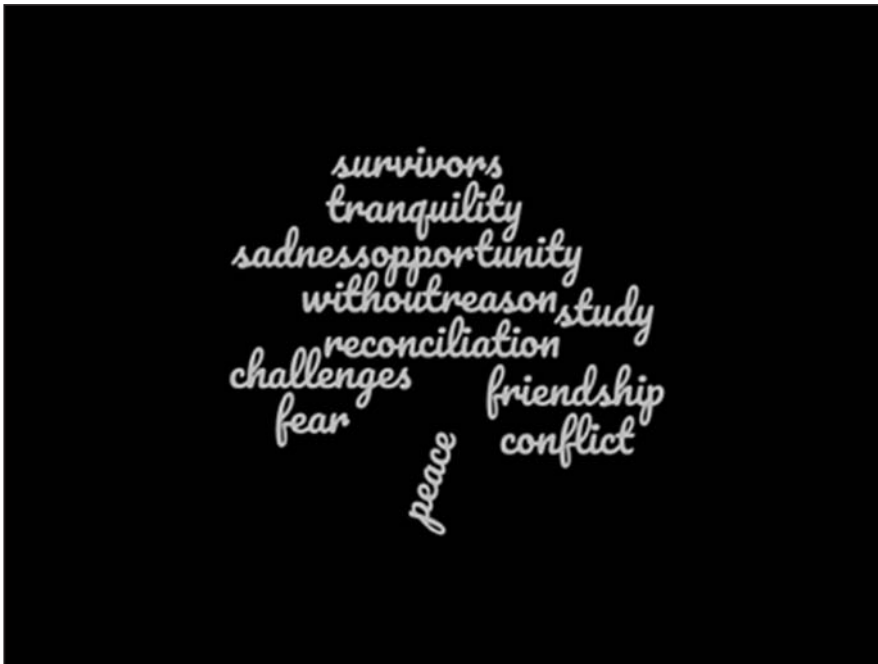

Fig. 1: Seasons of Hope word cloud

Seasons of Hope

In the final scene of *El árbol del amor,* a heart beats beneath the surface, embedded in the roots of the tree. The fundamental worldview among the Nasa community is based on the idea that people are an integrated part of nature. Their lives are ruled by the relationship with *la madre tierra* or
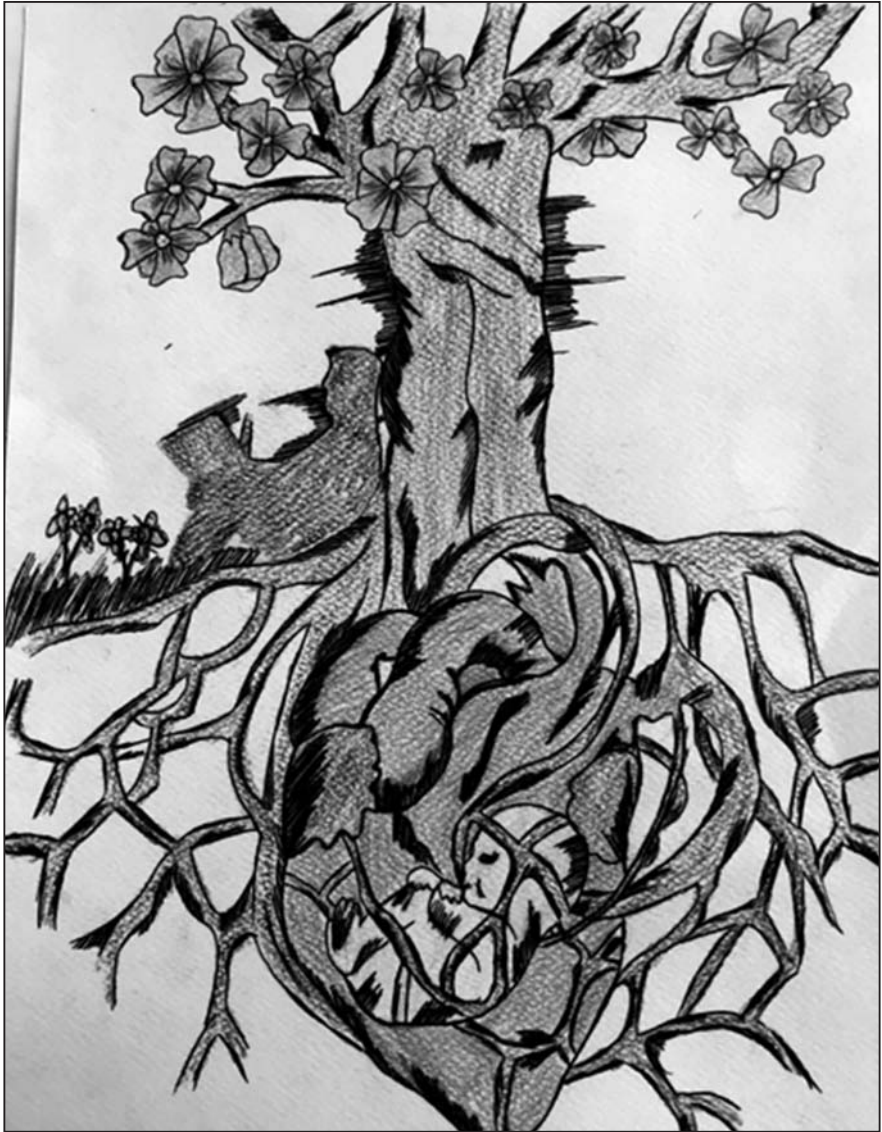

Fig. 2: Early sketch for the Tree of Love

Mother Earth. The Tree of Love in Jambaló has become a witness to the region's troubles. Its changing features evolve over time, which according to the community, reflect patterns of history and social development.

The beating heart fuels the growth and blossom of the tree, representing the community's hopes for the future.

Spring and hope's renewal

*In Spring, the **survivors** of this **conflict** study for **reconciliation** and the **challenges** that **peace** brings.*

It is of course in Spring that the cycle of life begins. Plants and trees blossom, and the mood is hopeful, fresh and anticipatory because "despite everything, we are alive."

For the workshop participants, survival carried hope for a more positive future, but survival is something to which they adapted a long time ago and it is a long-term process, which occurs both during and after war. It is an invitation to appreciate the subtle ways that individuals and communities reconfigure their lives in order to evade social, political, cultural, and economic death (Suarez and Black, 2014).

Joining the insurgency was in fact noted as a survival strategy by one of the participants. He joined the guerrilla at the age of twelve, "conscious" of his choices:

I was not abducted. It was something I wanted to do. It gave me a sense of purpose and it guaranteed my safety, at least that is how I saw it at the time.

As Suarez and Black (2014) have noted, the roles that individuals and communities undertake to survive often challenge the boundaries between victim, perpetrator, survivor, and witness, revealing the so-called grey zone of violence. For the veterans, survival was something of which to be proud, an achievement:

I was a founding member of the ELN.[8] To be here in my old age and to have survived this conflict is my biggest accomplishment.

But for the younger generation, survival represented a form of resistance:

This is a conflict that has never belonged to us. It was imposed on us. It converted us into victims, yet we're still here. We've become survivors.

Survival is therefore perceived as an active concept. The workshop participants described how they had to take action or make decisions in order to survive. The need for survival continues in the post-conflict era. "Studying" or education was identified as guaranteeing one's survival:

This is the goal now we have the conflict behind us.

Education (study) is a vital element in building social empathy, a key foundation of peace building, but it is also directly related to an individual's life chances:

Studying is our way to peace and reconciliation. Before, there was no point. War destroyed our opportunities to succeed in life. It became only about survival. Now we have the chance to thrive.

Survival, then, is tantamount to staying alive and adapting coping strategies or defence mechanisms to do so. In contrast, the spring of post-conflict brings opportunities to "thrive," perceived as individual successes, including love, labour and happiness. The participants noted how individual security and happiness can lead to wider reconciliation.

Reconciliation is, however, a complicated and highly contested term (Bloomfield et al., 2003) often associated with notions of co-existence, respect and mutual forgiveness. In the workshops, reconciliation with the violent past was defined as the moment in which society learns "to live with its ghosts" rather than ignore them. Reconciliation was also seen as the basis for reconstructing trust:

Reconciliation is key. Not just between combatants, but among all citizens. War has divided us all. It has destroyed trust. Now we need to rebuild that. Without trust, there is no society.

Peacebuilding and the reconciliation on which it depends expand outwards of trust. Indeed, John Brewer (2018) has identified the need to construct "everyday spaces" for trust-building. It was recognised in the workshops that this is no easy task. "Challenges" to peace and reconciliation building were highlighted at different levels:

There are challenges as individuals, as a community and as a country.

It is widely acknowledged that peace is made up of several dimensions along structural, personal and relational lines (Lederach, 1995). The biggest challenges for the workshop participants were "fear" and "forgiveness":

The biggest challenge is to transform our fear and sadness into friendship and peace; into harmony and forgiveness.

Hope was an integral motivation for confronting these challenges:

The peace deal has created hope, and hope is a motivator for us.

For the veterans, there was more scepticism in the face of hope, and even a warning to their younger counterparts:

Sometimes hope can be false and the more we hope, the bigger the chances for disappointment.

But for the younger participants, the signing of the 2016 peace accords and the subsequent demobilisation of the FARC guerrilla a year later provided a backdrop for optimism:

I think this generation, the generation of the peace agreement, will never allow us to return to war. We have tasted peace and we're hungry for more.

"Peace" is also a more complicated concept that is often recognised. But for those who have lived with war, there is an astute perception of what peace might resemble:

Peace is harmony, happiness. It means no war, but also no fear of war. In peace, violence is a distant concept.

This idea encapsulates the key difference between "negative" and "positive peace" as outlined by Johan Galtung (1964), where the former constitutes the "absence of violence, the absence of war" and the latter "the integration of human society" (p. 2).

The season of spring is therefore seen as one of hope, of a renewal or rebirth of optimism about the future. Regardless of the challenges involved, there is a belief and a confidence that peace can and will be achieved if the effort is made.

Summer and hope's utopia

After the winter like no other of the Colombian conflict, summer is the promised land of happiness from the natural seed of friendship.

If the seed grows well, there will be fruits on strong trees that no downpour can ever destroy again.

Summer means life is in full swing. Temperatures rise and romance blooms. The days are longer and the sunshine dissolves all the shadows in our lives.

It is interesting that summer was not the season most associated with peace by the workshop participants. Before this is explored in more detail, however, it is pertinent to consider the contemporary meaning of peace. Kenneth Boulding (2014) defines what he calls 'stable peace' as 'a situation in which the probability of war is so small that it does not really enter into the calculations of any of the people involved' (p.12-13). In contrast, Colombia is currently living what could be labelled a 'precarious peace', defined by Alexander George (2006) as a state of acute violence, which means 'little more than a temporary absence of armed conflict' (p.54). In what might be interpreted as a paradox, peace has brought more violence and misery to Colombia's marginalised communities in what Juan Carlos Garzón-Vergara (2015) has defined as a 'reactivation' of the country's conflict (p.4). For the workshop participants, peace is a goal, which has not yet been reached, and may actually never be achieved:

> *Peace doesn't yet exist, especially where we live. They're still killing community leaders and they continue to recruit teenagers. I can't see how they will ever stop that.*

The socio-political and economic context in which we live shapes both the content and reach of our hopes, but hope is also about how we confront our future. Although the workshop participants were largely optimistic and positive about peace in general, they identified how many of their peers were not, and as they explained, their hopes for peace were tainted by "fear" and "doubt":

> *I don't see how peace will be achieved, if I'm honest. Though I am hopeful it will be. But many people aren't. In fact, I'd say most people think peace is unachievable and they're scared by that.*

Such attitudes rather than detecting moments of hopeful potential refrain from investment in what may turn out to be just 'cruel optimism' (Berlant, 2011). This relates to the idea of false hope already identified (see section on Spring). Within this negative outlook, peace is consigned to a "promised land" or a utopia.

Projects like The Tree of Love are, however, intended to mobilise hope and create 'peacebuilding agents', identified in the literature as key to ensuring peacebuilding at the grassroots level (see Lederach, 1995). Such agency promotes positive outlooks and pathways to peace among the general population:

Now we've done these workshops, it is our job to promote peace and convince people that it is possible. We just need to show them how.

Hope in this sense is understood by Alicia Sliwinski (2016) as an active process and 'a creative capacity to imagine and actualize desired futures' (p.432). The utopia of peace becomes 'a hopeful modality of engaging with, and in, the world' (p.432). As Sliwinski (2016) has pointed out, much of contemporary scholarship on utopia debunks the idea that the utopian's "true" or "natural" location is a far - away future, rather utopia is "used to establish an anticipatory epistemological posture" in order to 'critique the given present […] galvanize the politics of possibility for emancipatory transformation and more just futures' (Sliwinski, 2016, p. 433).

For the workshop participants, this utopia is to be achieved through the promotion of "friendship" and the reduction of war-related hostility through the repair and transformation of damaged relationships:

Friends are key to not being alone. To happiness. Friendship makes us stronger.

The relational dimension of peacebuilding focuses on reconciliation, forgiveness, trust and future imagining in order to maximise mutual understanding (Lederach, 1995, p. 82):

Friendship is the antithesis to conflict. If war is waging around us, friendship allows for peace on a personal and intimate level. It is the basis for reconciliation.

The notion of friendship links relational to personal dimensions of peacebuilding. Trauma can overwhelm a person, but friendship provides healing opportunities and repairs social bonds broken by the violence. This relates to the idea of post-traumatic growth, where trauma can be transformative in facilitating growth.

As Louis Kriesberg (1998) highlights, the key to transforming conflict is to build strong and equitable relations in contexts where distrust and fear were once the norm (pp.332-335). The Summer of hope is therefore the result of long periods of peacebuilding among the grassroots. It is symbolic of the efforts and processes of the actors involved, which culminate in apology and forgiveness in a society where the violent actors, as well as the wider populace, are reconciled.

Autumn and hope's cyclical challenges

*May **conflict** and **fear** create an **opportunity** to bring us together in tranquillity*.

Autumn is a season of transition. It is usually a time for taking stock before the darkness and slumber of Winter. It is also a sign that the happiness of summer and all its dreams are over. The reality of autumn with its falling brown leaves and cooler temperatures represents the cold harsh reality of the difficulties that lay ahead:

Peace is a process and that's scary because the path is so fragile.

In the workshops, autumn was seen as if something had "gone wrong". It is, after all, the season between the summer of absolute peace and the hardship winter of war:

Autumn shows the chance we have in Colombia. That is to succeed or fail. Who knows which it will be? All we can do is hope.

Cognitive psychologists Maria Jarymowicz and Daniel Bar-Tel (2006) show how fear can dominate hope, and present an obstacle to any peace process. For them, intractable conflict creates 'a chronic collective fear orientation' in which individual and social fears become intertwined (p.378). Hope can only emerge in such contexts through reflection and evaluation. Autumn, then, and its "opportunity" to take stock provides a chance to quash the fears of the advancing winter, even if winter is inevitable.

Autumn and the "fear" it generated among the workshop participants represents a loss of control and influence over the peace process. The cycle of the seasons is associated with Henrik Vigh's (2008) notion of chronicity, which re-conceptualises crisis as a constant rather than a moment, marked by instability and unpredictability. Chronicity challenges the temporal and spatial categorisations of conflict and its 'pre', 'during' and 'post' stages of violence. These boundaries fail to capture the continuum of violence experienced by the 'structurally violated [and] socially marginalised' around the world (Vigh 2008, p. 5). This fear and perceived lack of control is therefore directly related to the structural dimension of peacebuilding and the social conditions that foster conflict and violence:

There is only so much we can do. The state has a big responsibility in this. If they do nothing, then whatever we do will only be half as effective.

Yet such scepticism was not enough to damage the ever - presence of hope, accompanied by this "opportunity," and of course responsibility:

Peace belongs to us. And we need to fight for it. If it fails, we will be partly to blame.

Responsibility in this context is closely tied with notions of guilt, a common sentiment among ex-combatants (Zukerman Daly, 2018). Fighting for peace might therefore be interpreted as a way of coming to terms with this guilt and indeed the past in the general:

Peace is the new struggle. It's the war without the weapons. If we achieve peace, then we can forget about the past.

I always ask for forgiveness for what we did as the guerrilla. It was never our intention to hurt civilians, even though we have to admit it happened. But now with the peace process, it's a way to make amends with the civilian population.

In post-conflict contexts, guilt can be dangerous. Andrew Schaap (2001), argues that instead of signalling political engagement, a politics of guilt constitutes a 'flight ... from the world into the self' and 'an abandonment of political responsibility' (p.752). Guilt must therefore be overcome. For the German philosopher Hannah Arendt (1998), this is achieved through 'worldliness', in which individuals are lured beyond the concerns of the self. For the workshop participants "bringing together" was also a key idea tied to reconciliation.

Although autumn is commonly associated with high winds, the workshop participants highlight the season's scope for "tranquillity," but this is not a calmness to be enjoyed. On the contrary, such tranquillity is perceived as a void that needs to be filled with active peacebuilding efforts:

We have lived in the crossfire and some in the direct line of fire. We have heard guns and explosions all our lives. But not now it's quiet and with this silence comes hope. Now it's up to us to fill this void with peace and build a future. We cannot leave it empty. Emptiness will only result in more violence.

The transitional season of Autumn therefore symbolises a key moment in the peace process, which determines the strength of the winter to come. It is a battle between hope and fear. There is an acknowledgement that the storms ahead may cause a few bumps in the road but hope that these will not inflict significant diversions. Simultaneously, a fear plays out that the

path to peace may be washed away completely. It is a delicate balance, summed up best by the now commonly used phrase: "making peace is harder than making war".[9]

Winter and hope's dystopia

*Although there is **sadness** in a winter **without reason**, there is always a ray of hope and happiness.*

In winter, life is dormant. This is the season most associated with death and old age. It is also often equated with anger, resentment, discontent or hatred. For the workshop participants and in the context of war, it was also connected with loss and sadness:

War creates sadness. Sadness that people die; sadness that people get hurt; sadness that normal lives are impossible; sadness that this is happening to us.

Along with climate change, intractable conflict represents one of the greatest threats to humanity and our planet. Winter, and by association, the Colombian conflict were presented as "without reason" in the workshops. This was true among all generations of participants. The veterans, who might otherwise be considered as die-hard ideologues, lamented a loss of ideology among the leftist guerrillas, who have become more interested in drugs and other illicit economies than the fight for socialism. For the younger participants, this was a war that "never belonged" to them in the first place. One participant highlighted what he called "the paradox" of the contemporary conflict in Colombia:

This is a war that was started to generate more justice for the people, but it actually ended up generating more injustice.

War creates a dystopia, which undermines the democratic functioning of governance and society, and in which political conflict facilitates other forms of violence to the extent violence becomes part of the everyday experience.

Unfortunately, there is what we can call a tale of two Colombias: the economic and cultural powerhouse of the city on the edge of conflict, and the marginal communities at the centre, which constitute Michael Taussig's (1984) 'spaces of death'. The guns of the FARC rebels may have fallen silent, but they have been replaced by the weapons of the ELN guerrilla, dissident factions of the FARC and resurgent paramilitary groups, who now compete for a control of those lucrative illicit economies. These are communities under siege, where populations find themselves 'inscribed in the logics of war' against their will (Pécaut, 2001: 18). But despite the

dystopian outlook, hope remains as a "ray" of "sunshine" and "happiness:"

> *We are children of violence. We have known nothing else. The beautiful thing is that our children will hopefully be Colombia's first generation born into peace, real peace.*

Despite the horrors of conflict, there is an acute awareness that the current peace process, however fragile, is historic, and that for the first time in almost six decades, a generation of Colombians could grow up with peace rather than war. The winter of hope may represent a dystopia, but it is the possibility of falling into this abyss that continues to foster hope, even in the face of immense difficulty.

Conclusions

The seasons account for the various shades of hope as it occurs within contexts of "post-conflict". The seasons have allowed us to explore hope's various semblances as it changes, develops and transforms across the different stages in the peace process, as well as across the different generations. In doing so, it transforms across temporal and spatial dimensions. By placing hope within the context of auto/biography, hope becomes intrinsically linked with past experiences, which is overlooked in the literature on hope that tends to concentrate largely on projections into the future and cognitive decisions made in the present. In this sense and within the context of intergenerational discourse focused on hope, it can also be seen to engage with notions of nostalgia, whereby episodes in the past (war) shape our hopes for (better) experiences in the future (peace). As Dickinson and Erben (2006) remind us:

> *While nostalgic feeling is a regretful one for an unrecoverable, pre-reflective past the lasting information its conscious retrieval supplies is a recognition that mature, current relations with others are often best grounded in an appreciation that lives are generally characterised by a mixture of hope and regret (p.241).*

But hope is a complex concept and does not represent a uniform experience, as the contributions in the workshops from 3 generations show – albeit small numbers. However, it is possible to have shared hope(s) and a collective goal based on shared future(s): in the Colombian context this constitutes a collective desire amongst the community and demobilised guerrillas to live in a "better" society, one which is at peace.

Whilst hope is contingent on past and present experiences, it also requires a vision for the future. This is where hope requires new

"imaginaries" and, we argue, new narratives to re-image this "better" future: it requires: 'setting goals, planning how to achieve them, use of imagery, creativity, cognitive flexibility, mental exploration of novel situations, and even risk taking' (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006, p. 373). Animation, "storylistening" and creative writing could be useful techniques to encourage this cognitive flexibility, unlocking the imagination and facilitating the exploration of new ideas beyond the boundaries imposed by intractable conflict. Hope consists of 'the cognitive elements of visualizing and expecting, as well as of the affective element of feeling good about the expected events or outcomes' (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006, p. 372-373). But there is also the danger of "false hope" and we are acutely aware of this within the Seasons of Hope project. In any setting, it is not clear how much we are in control to be able to determine positive outcomes from our hopes and this is starkly evident within the challenging landscape of Colombia's fragile "post-conflict" era. If a hope for peace 'liberates people from their fixating beliefs about the irreconcilability of the conflict to find creative ways to resolve it' (Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal, 2006, p. 379-80), then it is possible that peace and reconciliation projects focused on using creative techniques to generate hope through listening closely to the intergenerational auto/biographical narratives of those caught up in the conflict can make a small, but – we hope - meaningful contribution to Colombia's ability to resist violence and to find peace.

Notes

1   Numerous NGOs and peace building projects are founded on the concept of hope, for example: Bridges for Hope and Peace: https://www.b4hp.org/en; Place for Hope: https://www.placeforhope.org.uk/peacemaker/join-us-in-peacebuilding

2   For the past 5 decades Colombia's civil war has been characterised by armed conflict between the state, left - wing rebels and right - wing paramilitary groups

3   The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia

4   For example, in addition to the Critical Reflection and Review produced by Dancey, S.T., and Morrison, E., see the Next Generation series, also produced for the Changing the Story project: https://changingthestory.leeds.ac.uk and the work of Naidu-Silverman, E. (2015) on the contribution of art and culture to peace and reconciliation in South East Asia

5   For a detailed explanation of the making of the film, see Fowler-Watt K.,
    and Charles, M., (2019) 'The Story behind 'El árbol del amor': an animated
    documentary from Colombia's indigenous Nasa community' on Rising
    Voices https://rising.globalvoices.org/blog/2019/11/01/the-story-behind
    -el-arbol-del-amor-an-animated-documentary-from-colombias-indigenous
    -nasa-community/
6   To read more about GPPAC's Intergenerational Dialogue Project, see:
    https://www.gppac.net/intergenerational-dialogue-colombia
7   The World Bank (2006) estimates that countries emerging from hostilities
    have a 40% chance of relapsing into conflict within five years and around
    half of all civil wars are due to post-conflict relapses (Brown et al. 2011).
8   The uprising of the National Liberation Army, the ELN, has become
    Colombia's longest insurgency since the 2017 demobilisation of the FARC
    guerrilla.
9   This phrase was coined by Adlai Stevenson I (1835-1914), former US Vice
    president.

Acknowledgements

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