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**Beyond safe spaces: Building transformative scenarios in post-conflict societies**

**Candidate Number: 40286**

**Supervisor: Dr. Sandra Jovchelovitch**

**MSc. Social & Cultural Psychology**

**London School of Economics and Political Science**

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*This dissertation is dedicated to all the members of  
“Unión de Costureros” who shared their  
experience with me. To all of those who have  
opened up enough to challenge and deconstruct  
paradigms, and who like me, carry Colombia in  
their heart and are willing to collaborate and work  
together to construct a better country.*

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## **Beyond safe spaces: Building transformative scenarios in post-conflict societies**

### **Abstract**

As a result of Colombia's armed conflict, many internally displaced people have arrived in host communities where they tend to be stigmatized and marginalized. "Unión de Costureras" [Seamstresses-Embroiderers' Union], is a collective that emerged as a response to this problem to provide a safe scenario for armed conflict's victims to heal but also a place for encounter between them and members of their host community who seek social change. Thus, this paper explores in which way this space constitutes both a safe and transformative social space from the perspective of its host community members by thematically analysing 20 semi-structured interviews. Finding objective, relational and legitimation/conscientization conditions for transformation present in this space; and relational, material and symbolic benefits for its members, this paper discusses the relationship between safe and transformative social spaces and their importance in post-conflict societies divided by violence. Plurality and inclusion of the wider society are seen at the core of any space aiming transformation. Thus, this paper challenge traditional separatists' approaches of safe and transformative spaces that state they are only meant for marginalized or discriminated people.

**Keywords:** Internally displaced population, sociopsychological infrastructure, safe spaces, transformative social spaces, Colombia.

### **Introduction**

Colombia's armed conflict has been a widely studied topic by academics from several fields. Historians, geographers, political scientists, and economists, have been interested in studying its origin (Yaffe, 2011), the dynamics between parties involved (Cubillos-Novella, 2006), the incidence in and use of particular geographical areas (Días & Sánchez, 2004; Fernando, 2011) and how the armed conflict has ,and has been impacted by, the economy and politics (Melamed & Pérez Espitia, 2017; Yaffe, 2011). Others, have focused on studying the collective and individual consequences it has had on its victims, particularly on Internally Displaced People [IDP] (e.g CNMH, 2015; Ibañez, 2002; Ibañez & Moya, 2007; Tamayo-Agudelo & Bell, 2019). Nevertheless, little has been done regarding their local strategies to cope and manage adversity (Burgess & Fonseca, 2019), or their relationship with people from host communities.

“Unión de Costureros” is a space proposed by an IDP that seeks to improve the wellbeing of the victims of conflict and also enables an explicit encounter between them and people from their host community. In 2003, following a social leader, forcibly displaced women from different backgrounds arriving in Bogotá, gathered in different groups around the city to sew their stories on large pieces of fabric. The purpose was to provide a safe space for victims to share their experiences, re-signify them, and heal. It was not until 2012 that Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliation [Memory, peace and reconciliation centre] was opened and allowed these groups of seamstresses to use it as the central place to come together (Atehortúa, 2019). Five years later they opened their doors for other civilians from the host community to join them. Since then, one of the most involved groups has been that of young Colombians from Bogotá (Agamez-Panesso, 2019). This space currently aims to construct collective memory with all members involved, and to use the fabrics with their embroidered stories to cover the city’s courthouse as a symbol of their fight for truth and reparation, and to make the violence that the whole society has faced and still faces, visible (Atehortúa, 2019).

To the best of my knowledge, the impact of this initiative and the relationships formed between these groups have not been officially studied. In a country on its way to recovery from the consequences of armed conflict, it is crucial to examine spaces that provide people with safe scenarios destined for dialogue and reflection, and that invites other civilians to participate as well (Paffenholz, 2012). Thus, this paper aims to explore the psychosocial impact of ‘Union de Costureros’ on its members, particularly from the perspective of host community members and determine whether it constitutes a scenario for social change in a post-conflict society. Accordingly, this paper will expose the consequences of armed conflict on IDPs, the challenges faced by them in their host communities, and the role of and relationship with the sociopsychological infrastructure developed in protracted conflict. I will then address how safe spaces serve to ameliorate the psychosocial consequences of armed conflict and how transformative social spaces should be created if seeking social change is desired. Next I will present my research question and the method used to approach it. Findings will be exposed thematic networks and further discussed.

## Literature review

### Colombia's armed conflict effects: an issue of all

Despite the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and FARC, the biggest illegal armed group, in 2016 (González et al., 2018), Colombia continues facing the consequences of an armed conflict that has lasted more than 60 years. One of its main challenges is the implementation of what was determined in the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448, 2011): the victim's right to truth, justice, and integral reparation with a guarantee of the non-repetition of the events. The ongoing structural and symbolic violence that has historically permeated Colombia (Burgess & Fonseca, 2019; CNMH, 2018), the underestimated number of victims recognized (CNMH, 2015) and the presence of other armed groups in the national territory (Tamayo-Agudelo & Bell, 2019), are some of the barriers that limit the possibility of complying with it. Additionally, the aforementioned 'integral reparation', that should be both material and symbolic, are only directed towards some sectors of the population. Particularly it covers all those who:

*“...individually or collectively have suffered damage as a consequence of the human rights' violations, occurred from the 1st of January of 1985 in the framework of armed conflict: homicide, enforced disappearance, displacement, sexual crimes and other crimes against sexual integrity, kidnapping, dispossession of land, antipersonnel mines and other unlawful methods of war”* (Law 1448, 2011, p. 5)

Hence, although it recognizes several groups of people who were explicitly affected, it overlooks the impact that it had on those who were not affected directly but still make part of the Colombian society. Accordingly, this section is going to describe some of the consequences derived from armed conflict, focusing mainly on those who were forcibly displaced, but it will also explore the sociopsychological effects that prolonged armed conflict can have on the wider society. Both considerations, I will further argue, are important to take into account amid peacebuilding in post-conflict scenarios, where participation of all civilians is crucial.

### Consequences of war in forcibly displaced people: further challenges

Colombia is currently one of the countries whose armed conflict has contributed the most to forced displacement around the globe (Restrepo, 2010). The formalization of

paramilitary groups and their territorial disputes against guerrillas since the late 1980s (CNMH, 2015), has left more than 8 million people affected by this modality (ACNUR, 2019). However, despite that this phenomenon compromises most armed conflict's victims, the damage suffered is often underestimated (Ibañez & Moya, 2007). IDPs are, in some cases, conceived as 'double-victims'. According to Shultz et al., (2014) they are already-vulnerable groups escaping rural area's armed conflict, who can also experience other forms of violence and exploitation during their migration and in their host communities. More than 90% of IDPs tend to arrive to the poorer urban areas, which do not have enough economic resources to support them (Albuja & Ceballos, 2010) and where their local authorities usually ignore or disregard their specific cultural experiences, practices and needs (Escobar, 2003). Most IDPs arrive to host communities with a disintegrated family, demanding new and unexperienced roles (e.g. women assume both financial support and a care-giving role; children are forced to work or to take care of their parents and younger siblings; CNMH, 2015; Restrepo, 2010). They also experience the rupture of traditional and ancestral practices related to territory and a separation with their social-support network (CNMH, 2015). Likewise, while already facing cultural and social barriers (Shultz et al., 2014), they also deal with everyday stressors such as paying rent and providing food for their families (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010).

Challenges become more difficult to overcome with the stigmatization and discrimination faced by some of them in their new host communities (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Many people from urban areas continue seeing victims as non-patriotic people, and not as civilians of the same country that the State has failed to protect (CODHES, 2013). IDPs are frequently seen as ignorant, helpless, and lazy people (CNMH, 2015). This stigmatization is problematic as they can start behaving the way people expect them to (Major & O'Brien, 2005), compromising a positive identity and limiting their opportunities for getting a job. High rates of unemployment amongst this population and their lower-income and educational levels increase the probability of reaching a chronic state of poverty and marginalisation (Ibañez & Moya, 2007) and it can also intensify already existing mental health-related problems such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Hassan et al., 2016), hindering their integration in host communities.

## **Sociopsychological infrastructure developed in a protracted conflict: hindering IDP's incorporation and peacebuilding**

Although armed conflict has had clear consequences on IDPs, there is evidence to suggest that everyone who is living under a war context is affected as well, even if they are not directly implicated. According to Bar-Tal (2007), when society is immersed in continuous conflict, people develop a sociopsychological infrastructure that emerges as a response to the psychological needs of knowing, understanding and seeking a positive identity (Tajfel, 1978) as well as to cope with fear and stress, and to withstand the rival group (Cohrs, Uluğ, Stahel, & Kışlıoğlu, 2015; Bar-Tal, 2007). It determines how people understand war, orienting people's course of action. Therefore, it can play an important role in the resolution of conflict and the reconciliation between civilians, but also in the maintenance and prolongation of it. Such infrastructure is composed by a collective memory, an ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientations.

*Collective memory* and *ethos of conflict* are the shared narratives regarding conflict. The first one, although a broadly used concept, it is ambiguously understood. Some authors argue the appropriate term should be collective remembering as it would represent the dynamism and re-construction of what people recall from previous events. Others, question its difference with historical facts (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). However, when Bar-Tal (2007) uses this term, he is referring to the constructed narrative about the conflict's past that can be evidenced in dominant discourses. They can be exposed in texts and schoolbooks, even taken for granted as history. The second one, as opposed to collective memory, are all those narratives about the present and future of conflict. They range from a positive image and victimization of one's group, dehumanization and delegitimization of what is done by the 'enemy' and the ultimate desire of society for peace (Cohrs et al., 2015). However, although these narratives provide a common framework to understand ongoing conflicts and help people navigate their realities, they might not always be accepted by all society members as they can make invisible other people's versions about the past, present and future regarding protracted conflict.

These narratives are integrated into *collective emotional orientations*, which also help to maintain them. These shared emotions, as well as both forms of narratives described above, are nourished by information provided in different contexts in which various groups of people

are immersed, driving their beliefs, emotions and behaviour (Hameiri, Bar-Tal, & Halperin, 2014). For example, a study conducted in Colombia's capital city with mid-high class population, found that emotions such as fear, mistrust and resentment were associated with a negative orientation towards the peace agreement. Optimism, hope and empathy, however, with a supportive attitude concerning it (Villa-Gómez et al., 2019). Interestingly, the majority who voted in favour of the agreement were mostly from rural areas affected by conflict, whereas people from urban areas tended to vote against it (Álvarez & Garzón, 2016). Being exposed to different sets of information according to people's location and relation with conflict, affected their beliefs and course of action evidenced in the voting tendencies when the peace agreement took place. This explains why it seems that some sectors of the society ignore or have a misconception of other realities different from theirs. Some mid-high-class members from cities might have different understandings of the conflict than people who were directly exposed to it. As these narratives would eventually inform behaviour and privilege the ingroup from which they are held (Hameiri et al., 2014), people from the society who have never been exposed to armed conflict-related information relevant to their in-group or narratives from other society sectors, are more unlikely to mobilize to improve conditions affecting the group to which they belong to or to help other social groups. This hinders the incorporation of IDPs to host communities and represents an additional challenge for peacebuilding where all society sectors must take part of.

Thus, amid a post-conflict scenario, there is a need for safe spaces for IDPs to come together and improve their affected wellbeing by their current situation, but also of spaces where different narratives can, if not converged, be known and shared. This does not mean that knowing other's alternative versions of conflict is enough (Gillespie, 2008). It rather means that this might be one important step to achieve reconciliation within the different sectors involved. In this particular case, between IDPs and their host communities, for example.

### **Safe spaces: a situational term and its benefits**

Although the concept of 'safe space' emerged with the women's movement in the twentieth century, it has been used in several contexts (The Roestone Collective, 2014). It initially designated a space where women could come to freely discuss political matters, and

it was later adopted by the LGBT movement to provide a scenario for sexual minorities to express themselves without fearing judgment or discrimination (Campbell & Manning, 2018). It has also been implemented as a space where people of colour can be away from any kind of aggression, and where they could heal the wounds inflicted by racist domination (Hooks, 1991). They can be useful for marginalized and oppressed groups and for those who have suffered from other types of violence other than from their gender, race, and sexuality.

The application of this concept in several scenarios as a response to different needs makes it difficult to define what exactly a safe space is. Thus, for example, although for some authors it implies a physical sense of safety, others refer to it as an experiential and psychosocial space that can be, or not, aligned with a physical setting (Stengel & Weems, 2010). For Spaaij and Schulenkorf (2014), a safe space is a figurative, psychosocial scenario that is built through social relations, where people can acknowledge and relate to others to heal. Similar to Winnicott's (1965) concept of holding environments, they should also enable the self to gradually regain strength, and where people can feel real and be spontaneous. Safe space is not only the absence of trauma, abuse and stress. It is also scenario of emotional and psychological comfort derived from the interaction with other people that enables opportunities of risk-taking (Hunter, 2008), as people feel free to express, communicate and be themselves (Holley & Steiner, 2005).

In this regard, although definitions might vary, it seems that the relational component is at its core. An investigation with men who had been raped in Uganda, showed that peer-to-peer support helped survivors overcome the resulting stigma, as well as the isolation and the deterioration of their dignity and trust (Edström, Dolan, Shahrokh, & David, 2016). Being part of a group with people who had also suffered from the same situation and have similar experiences, can help overcome loneliness and improve a sense of acceptance (Schulz, 2019). As such, for some authors, *segregation* might be seen as a condition for the creation of safe spaces: a particular area where people can be free from interacting with others unlike them (Campbell et al., 2018).

In post-conflict scenarios, safe spaces are considered scenarios where people can rebuild trust, confidence and overcome war traumas (Tomlison, 2018). Particularly useful for forcibly displaced people or refugees, they provide positive social relationships that can help people navigate through the challenges faced in host communities and to heal. An

investigation with Syrian refugees and host-community adolescents found that the creation of such spaces, where women and girls could talk about various matters with their peers, built social capital as they were able to communicate to one another their coping strategies and ways to overcome challenges (Mercy Corps, 2014). Similarly, in Benghazi, safe spaces have allowed IDPs to share stories while, at the same time, relating personal experiences to one another, thus, improving their mental health (ACTED, 2020).

In Colombia, although safe spaces were initially understood as physical spaces where people could be away from any physical harm and seek safety (Mitchell, 2014), they can be any space aiming to help people who have experienced trauma or stressful situations to improve their wellbeing. For example, some marginalized displaced women have created their own workspaces or have gathered in collectives, where they can meet and re-construct their identity and create new forms of belonging (Osorio Pérez & Breña, 2008). Here, memories, experiences, nostalgia and sadness are shared with a supportive group that responds to its members' needs (Arias, 2004). Therefore, they are places where people affected by war can overcome the victim's stigma, pursue support from people who have experienced similar situations, and develop confidence and empowerment (Tomlinson, 2018).

### **From safe spaces to transformative social spaces**

Although safe spaces serve to ameliorate symptoms and consequences from traumatic events, they are not necessarily changing the deeply embedded causes that lead people to need a *safe space* in the first place. Some of the challenges that IDPs still face when they arrive to host communities are related to the structural and symbolic violence that has historically permeated Colombia (Rojas 2016). The first one refers to the resulting harm and inability to thrive due to factors entrenched in the social, political and economic system. It is therefore evidenced in inequality and lack of job opportunities (Burgess & Fonseca, 2019). The second one is related to power asymmetries and is defined as the harm caused due to identity misrecognition by dominant groups (Bourdieu, 1989), and where IDPs, for example, are positioned as subordinates. Thus, while all people can be affected by these forms of violence, it is important to recognize how society as a whole can, at the same time, contribute

to their maintenance and reproduction (Rojas, 2016). Spaces that enable or seek the abolition, or at least dissemination, of these last ones, are crucial.

Transformative social space, for example, is a concept commonly used in the health field to describe a space where marginalized people can gather to discuss and comprehend the issues affecting their health and wellbeing, but also actionable ways to confront its causes (Campbell & Cornish, 2010; Ramella & De La Cruz, 2000). The dialogue that this scenario encourages, allows people to engage in critical thinking. Similar to Freire's (1973) concept of conscientization, participating in these sites transform people into 'thinking subjects' who understand their reality and act to improve it (Vaughan, 2010). Thinking about the social roots that place people's wellbeing at risk, as it is the case of IDP's but also of the wider society, builds empowerment and raises confidence to confront them.

According to Campbell and Cornish (2012), an environment aiming to promote such transformative communication must comprehend three dimensions: symbolic, material, and relational. The first one refers to the meanings, ideologies and worldviews people use to understand themselves, others and the activities they are engaged in. The second one refers to the resource-based agency and is linked to people's ability to get funding for their projects, food, or paid work, while at the same time to the opportunity to put in practice, improve and develop people's agency and skills. Finally, the last dimension refers to the capacity of bonding social capital amongst its members and bridging social capital with those outsiders who can assist them in their needs to, ultimately, achieve social change. Guerlain & Campbell (2016), although using the term 'health-enabling environments', describe how some scenarios, such as community gardens, can improve the psychosocial-wellbeing of people and at the same time act as prefigurative scenarios for social change. Finding benefits related to these dimensions, they argue that people transforming the way they perceived themselves, re-configuring their personal goals, and constructing positive social relations, is *already* social change.

### **Research question**

While safe and transformative social spaces have been studied with marginalized population (Campbell et al., 2010) and people whose health has been affected (Campbell & Cornish, 2012), they have not been widely explored in post-conflict scenarios nor with *non-marginalized* population. Therefore, this research aims to provide a study of an inclusive

space formed amid a post-conflict scenario that seeks social change and improves people’s wellbeing. Accordingly, the research question to be answered is: *in what way does ‘Unión de Costureros’ constitute a safe and transformative social space for its host community members?*

## Method

### Research design

Considering the nature of the research question, this dissertation is framed under a qualitative research approach. As argued by Flick, von Kardoff, and Steinke (2004), this form of investigation allows describing life-worlds from the ‘inside out’, considering people’s point of view. In this case, it was used to describe people’s experiences as participants and members of ‘Unión de Costureros’. It focused on studying how people perceived this space, themselves and the relationships emerging in this setting between IDPs and civilians from their host community.

### Participants

A total of 19 civilians from the host community and the social leader in charge of Unión de Costurero’s collective participated in this study as illustrated in Table 1. Initially, six participants and the social leader were recruited through purposeful sampling. As I was previously a member of this collective, I chose already known participants considering the specific characteristics that,

Table 1. *Participants' description*

Participant	Age	Field	Society member
1	22	Psychology	Host community
2	21	Psychology	Host community
3	23	Psychology	Host community
4	23	Psychology	Host community
5	25	Social Communication	Host community
6	20	Psychology	Host community
7	23	Psychology	Host community
8	22	Psychology	Host community
9	22	Psychology	Host community
10	22	Psychology	Host community
11	24	Law school	Host community
12	20	Psychology	Host community
13	34	Psychology	Host community
14	23	Psychology	Host community
15	22	Psychology	Host community
16	22	Psychology	Host community
17	20	Psychology	Host community
18	23	Psychology	Host community
19	23	Psychology	Host community
20	63	Social leader	IDP

to my judgement, made them the best information-rich cases (Mayan, 2009). The social leader was selected as she created this collective and was a victim of Internal Displacement

herself. She has been the bridge between IDPs and other social groups participating in this collective and has a complete knowledge of its process, activities, outcomes, and challenges faced since 2003. The other six participants are part of the host community and have been members of this collective since 2017, actively and consistently participating throughout the process. Furthermore, snowball sampling was implemented to reach other members of this collective who were also part of the host community. According to Small (2009), this approach consists of asking participants to recommend others who might possibly comply with the characteristics needed for this study. I asked participants to think about other people they knew were also active members of the host community in this collective for at least one year. I asked them to give them the participant's information sheet (Appendix C) with my contact data and the ethics implications of this study so they could reach out to me. Finally, 13 more people with the requested characteristics needed voluntarily agreed to participate in this study and signed the informed consent (Appendix D).

## **Instruments**

Semi-structured interviews were selected in order to collect the data for this research. As any other interview, it is a verbal interchange where the interviewer attempts to elicit information from another person through previously prepared questions, although with the flexibility to change, add or skip questions to create a less rigid conversation (Longhurst, 2010). Hence, two semi-structured interviews were designed.

On one hand, the one for the social leader was divided into 6 sections, exploring the history and origin of the collective, the characteristics of this space, her personal experience in participating in it, the relationship with people from the host community that are now members, the challenges faced and needed to be overcome, and the next steps for this collective (Appendix A). On the other hand, the one done towards host community civilians, explored their motivations to join, their initial expectations of this space and the identified challenges they currently perceived about this one. Additionally, relying on the previously exposed dimensions and benefits that, that an enabling scenario for transformation should have, it included three more sections aiming to explore the symbolic, relational and material dimensions (Appendix B). These dimensions were re-defined on the basis of the nature of this space, as it is shown in Table 2.

## **Procedure**

After recruiting participants as previously described, 20 interviews were arranged considering the participants' availability and preference. 19 of these were conducted online through *Zoom* as this platform allows scheduling appointments and recording interviews. The last one was done telephonically and saved on a recording machine, as the participant reported not having a computer and preferred a telephone conversation. The first two interviews were aimed to be a pilot. However, due to the richness of the data obtained, I decided to include them in the analysis. These interviews allowed me to delete some questions that were repetitive and to re-order some sections (e.g originally, I was going to start asking participants about the material dimension, but due to the course of the conversation, I found that it was better to start by the relational one). Overall, interviews took an average of 37 minutes to be completed and only voice recordings were saved. They were all manually transcribed, and pseudonyms were assigned to guarantee people's confidentiality and finally exported to NVivo for further analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis was used to examine the obtained data as it allows the researcher to identify common and repetitive patterns and ideas within a set of data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Hence it was helpful to identify shared experiences and understandings amongst the participants of this study regarding their participation in 'Unión de Costureros' and what it meant for them. As such, and following Attride-Stirling's (2001) directions, I used NVivo software to systematically code phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. These were assigned a descriptive label and constitute what is called basic themes. I then grouped them into organizing themes, to finally create global themes: bigger groups that embrace the whole information from a set of grouped organizing themes. I got a total of three global themes, describing different features from the whole data set I analysed.

Throughout this process, I followed a deductive and inductive process. I started coding the interviews focusing on what previous investigations found regarding safe, health enabling, and transformative social spaces, particularly focusing on the material, relational and symbolic dimensions. However, given the contextual influence and the lack of information regarding these spaces in post-conflict scenarios, it was also possible to find emerging relevant themes (Clarke & Braun, 2017). I also re-defined some of the organizing

themes, added and excluded others to get a relevant and congruent set of information that could answer the proposed research question. The final coding frame and the description for each organizing theme is shown in the following table:

Table 2. Coding frame

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Description	Basic Theme
Enabling/disabling conditions for participation	Motivations to join 'Unión de Costureros'	The reasons why people decide to come to this space in the first space.	Personal reasons Academic Reasons
	Limitations for participation	The identified challenges this space need to overcome in order to improve and increase participation and commitment.	Location Difusion and visibility Misinformation
Enabling conditions for transformation	Objective conditions	Place, artifacts and practices that frame and facilitate the construction of transformative social spaces	Distinctive place to gather Artifacts (fabric) The act and goal of sewing a fabric together Workshop: memory pedagogy
	Relational conditions	The way relationships need to be, in order to provide the benefits that participating in such space allows.	Plurality and inclusion Sharing experiences Knowledge exchange
	Legitimacy and conscientization conditions	Conditions needed for a space aiming to be/achieve social change	Reflection of our reality in a broader sense Consciousness of our own responsibility to change reality Social legitimazy
Perceived benefits from participation	Material benefits	Tangible or concrete/practical benefits derived from the participation of 'Unión	Learning oportunities Alternative forms of income
	Relational benefits	The social dynamics and connections that participation facilitates	Sense of belonging and acceptance Supportive social relations Re-configure misconceptions and stigma
	Symbolic benefits	The psychosocial value and meaning that participants found through involvement	Healing and re-signifying negative experiences Creates collective memory Peace and social fabric construction

## Reflexivity

This investigation was motivated by my personal experience participating in 'Unión de Costureros' two years ago. Therefore, my position as a former member of this collective might have influenced the interaction with participants and the interpretation of results. Participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences with me and it also gave me a shared common framework that allowed me to understand the context participants were referring to and it helped me to relate even more to what they were reporting. However, it is important

to know that participant’s responses might have been affected by their assumptions about what my opinion was regarding this collective and my personal experience with it.

I also would have wanted to collect additional information through participant observation to articulate it with the one derived from the interviews. However, due to Covid-19 pandemic, social interactions were limited, and this space was temporarily closed. This was the reason I conducted online and telephonic interviews. Although useful to build a conversation with a person in different spatial locations (Maddox, 2020), internet connection issues interfered in some of the interviews limiting a fluid conversation. Although all participants were extremely understanding, this could have affected their disposition to participate and comfort during the interview.

### Findings

Thematic analysis resulted in three global themes. The first one is related to the reasons and conditions that facilitate or limit participation of members and non-members in “Unión de Costureros”. The second one refers to those characteristics this space has that enables it to be transformative, whereas the third one looks at the perceived benefits this space provides for its members.

#### Enabling and disabling conditions for participation

Participants mentioned both their initial motivations to be part of “Unión de Costureros” but also some reasons why members’ and non-members’, participation could have been compromised.

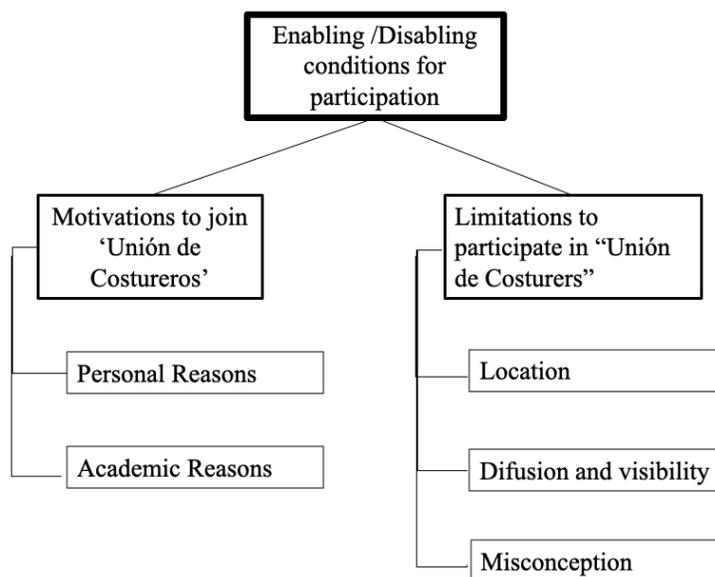


Figure 1. Enabling and disabling conditions for participation

#### Motivations to join ‘Unión de Costureros’

People who are not officially recognized or do not recognize themselves as victims and are part of the host community got interested in this space for several reasons. Some of them

arrived due to personal motives, such as the desire to put in practice sewing skills or a general interest in Colombia's armed conflict. Some even saw this space as a place where they could volunteer or just hang out with friends who were already members. Participant 7 explains her reasons to join:

*"So, I wanted to know about the history about the conflict in Colombia, to consolidate my psychological knowledge and 'to help them' [the victims] ...I've always loved volunteering".*

Others, however, got to know and participate in this space because of more academic reasons linked to research exercises demanded by their educational institutes or because teachers found a place in this space where their students could acquire knowledge and put in practice specific career competences.

*"It was in May 2018. It was thanks to a professor from the University. We had to do an activity and she took us there. She already knew them, and she wanted to teach us something related to how to interact with vulnerable populations (...) I studied social communication" (Participant 5).*

Thus, everyone who was interested in this space, regardless of their initial interests and motivations, was welcomed to participate.

### **Limitations for participation**

Participants also identified some reasons that limit current members and non-members' involvement. For example, for current members who do not live near the Centre where "Unión de Costureros" is, the trip represents an important challenge that hinders regular participation. This space is located downtown, and it can be far for some members from the city where it is situated and especially, for the ones living in surrounding towns.

*"El Centro de Memoria [Memory Centre] is very far away. I live in Cota [a municipality in the suburbs of Bogota], so for example, getting there was expensive, it took a long time and the truth was that it was something like jugh ... I have to go ugh', It's not that I didn't want to, but that the trip was tiresome... even though I still go... but I cannot go every week 2 or 3 days..." (Participant 9)*

Additionally, this space is usually visited by people who have a particular interest in the social field. People come there because they have heard about it through their social circle or at the institutions in which they studied or study. Although it is an open space, not many people from other fields are aware of it. One reason given by the majority of participants was the lack of visibility and diffusion of this space. Consequently, they suggested other means to disseminate information about it such as social media

*"...participation is minimal because there're not enough advertisements... people who attend it is because someone who is in the group told them, but they do not find out through social networks or other communication channels" (Participant 4).*

Likewise, some perceived that even the people who have heard vaguely about this space, have a mistaken conception of what it really is or is done there. Participants mentioned they have heard people saying only victims can get in this space, or that it is just for women. Participant 6 explains she also had a misconception regarding this space prior to her involvement in it. Asking her for the reasons she thinks people might not be going to this space, she said:

*"because many people believe -I include myself here - that the conflict has only been suffering, pain, war, deaths, injuries, and blood, and it stayed there. So, I understand why people don't go...I was the same, I didn't have much interest in knowing that pain, that story ... because it is painful. But when you really go, you realize that yes: there is a dark, dense past of war and violence, but there are people who are getting up to keep going... that's what people should know about this space".*

Hence, while location might be something affecting both members and non-members of this space, lack of diffusion and visibility, and the misconception about this space is hindering the possibility for more people to come and become active members of it.

## Enabling conditions for transformation

Throughout the interviews, it was found that ‘Unión de Costureros’ has some conditions that facilitate its construction as a transformative social space. These are divided into three categories: 1) objective, 2) relational and 3) legitimacy and conscientization.

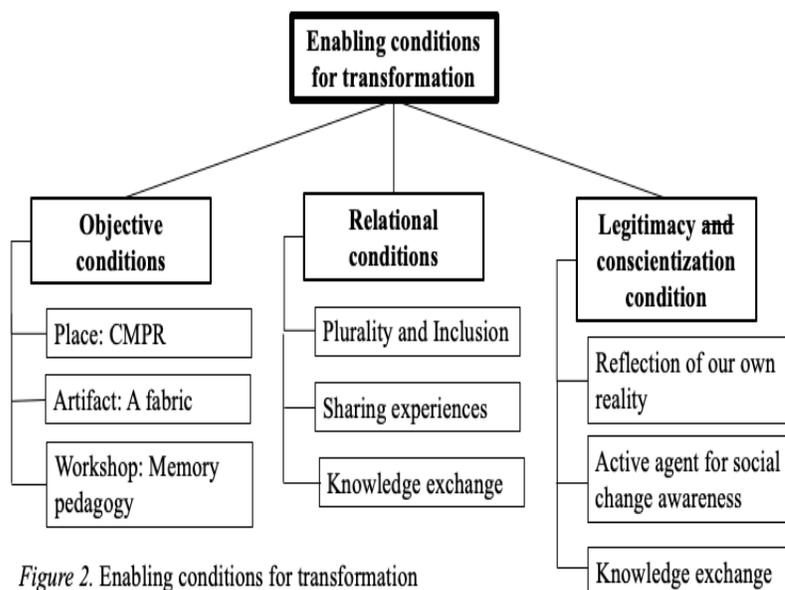


Figure 2. Enabling conditions for transformation

### Objective conditions

Objective conditions are all those places, artifacts, and workshops that frame and serve as a basis for a transformative communication to take place. Participants perceived the Memory Centre, where the central base of “Unión de Costureros” is located, not only as a powerful place where the monument honouring all Colombia’s victims is, but where all different people can come to gather, to know each other and sew.

*“Although the fabric could be transferred and we could sew in other spaces such as in the University, sewing in the CMPR was like wow. Because that was where people went, where you would meet everyone ... not only your university colleagues but everyone... the victims and all” (Participant 8).*

Additionally, the use of an artifact such as fabric facilitates the encounter between all people. Participant 4 provides a very good description of how this one enables communication and demands teamwork with other members of this space.

*“The scenario is more or less a room, with long tables and with the fabric on top of it...and people sitting around. Who arrives, greets, sits down and weaves, sews (...) sewing around a fabric with other people is a group exercise that has a goal. We all have to work to achieve that goal. And during the process we get to know each other, our stories, we find similarities and we find that the person who is sewing next to us has lived similar things and therefore*

*understands my situation. In the end, one knows that, without the collaboration of the others, that fabric wouldn't have been finished at all or it would have taken longer".*

Furthermore, some participants distinguished a particular workshop held in this space at the beginning of everyone's process. Although some did not recall the name of it, all mentioned the activity consists of asking participants to draw on a piece of paper their relationship with conflict. This activity, named 'memory pedagogy' by the social leader who runs it, enables members to identify themselves as victims, or other forms of violence, as well. Participant 14 explains what she learned during and after this workshop.

*"...it was very interesting to think about what conflict was ...and to get that actually we are not that far from that conflict. Some people had a hard time understanding the idea that conflict has not only to do with war and weapons but that there are more conflicts... there is intra-family violence, bullying ... it was like really recognizing that these other forms of conflict also involved us...".*

A distinctive place to gather, the use of a piece of fabric to communicate with each other and a structured workshop that elicit reflection, acted as tangible characteristics presented in this space that underpins the conditions for it to be transformative.

### **Relational conditions**

This sphere refers to those characteristics that enable the creation of bonding and bridging relationships and social capital. As such, one important aspect of this space is its plurality and inclusion of people. As the social leader exposes and was also confirmed by all members:

*"there is no exclusion of any person here. There is no skin pigmentation, there is no social stratum, there is no religion. Everyone who wants and needs to participate, who wants to sew ... can come here"* (Participant 20).

Participants mentioned several actors within this space; students, members of NGO's, civilians, tourists, indigenous members of different communities, and homeless people, were some of the most commonly identified. Sharing experiences and exchanging knowledge were important aspects so that members of this space could relate to others' circumstances and mutually learn from each other. Thus, it was mentioned that the social leader and some of the

other armed conflict victims explicitly told people from the host community, to share their experiences

*“she told us: ‘I am not going to tell you my life and that’s it... because I also need you to tell me about yourself’ That was magic for me (...)I told them about the death of my mom-she died from cancer, they told me how some of them have lost their children” (Participant 13).*

This encounter, Participant 17 explains, not only facilitates them to heal what they needed but also to

*“(...) know other stories that perhaps, because of being from the city or because of the life we've had, we don't know or understand”.*

Finally, knowledge exchange was also a common identified feature that could be found in this space. Participant 3 recalls an encounter with an indigenous community member who taught him how to make handicrafts, and how, in exchange, he gave him the idea and the location where he could sell those:

*"it was normal (...) There was a time where an Émbera community came and they taught us how to make handmade bracelets, and then I told them: hey, why don't you sell that in Usaquéen market?".*

This knowledge exchange could be also present in conversations on how to prepare some meals, or even as an encounter between practical and formal and informal knowledge. A law student reported his surprise when he realized members from “Unión de Costureros”, without any academic degree, had extensive knowledge about human rights from which he could learn too.

*"I think that ... especially in the lawyer's world, something happens, and it is that one feels that one is an expert let's say in...in human rights. So "ah, I have read ... I know a lot ... I am an expert and I am going to teach them" then you arrive at this place, and you realized that these people have a lot of knowledge in human rights... you learn from them too. Knowledge is always a construction... ideas exchange... it is not one-sided” (Participant 11).*

### **Legitimacy and conscientization condition**

Some specific characteristics were identified to be almost necessary to achieve social change in a broader sense and were present in this space. Throughout the interviews, participants reported reflecting on their reality.

*"(...) [the conflict] is something that has affected all of us, ... the conflict is not only in a rural area, or where guerrillas are; it is something that also really permeates all society, including Bogotá". (Participant 14).*

These kinds of reflection lead some host community participants to understand there is also conflict in their surroundings who might also affect them. As such, all of them emphasize on their active role in the construction of a better country, finding this space as a scenario where change can begin. This was well described by Participant 9:

*"Sometimes one thinks like ... 'what can I do?', one feels a little helpless, without hope... or we just don't know how to contribute ... and here one realizes that from very small things like ... simply going to sew, one can contribute a lot"*

Likewise, participants legitimize this space's existence and the practices held in there.

*" This space must exist for its victims because it is part of their rights. But on the other hand, it is also important because of what they teach... in a certain way, knowledge generates awareness and pedagogy of citizenship, values of coexistence, tolerance...learning from other cultures. That's important for society" (Participant 4).*

They also mentioned intending to cover the courthouse was something that matters, as it would help to make visible people's struggles and fights, recognizing that the ultimate goal of this space was to create social impact

*"it was not sewing just because we wanted to sew, we were creating collective memory and raising our and other's voices" (Participant 16).*

But also, because the act of sewing was, although informally, therapeutic.

## Perceived benefits from participation

This final global theme considers the benefits and positive outcomes derived from participation as members of “Unión de Costureros”. These benefits are related to the conditions described above and to the way participants perceive and experience this space. As such, material, relational and symbolic benefits were identified.

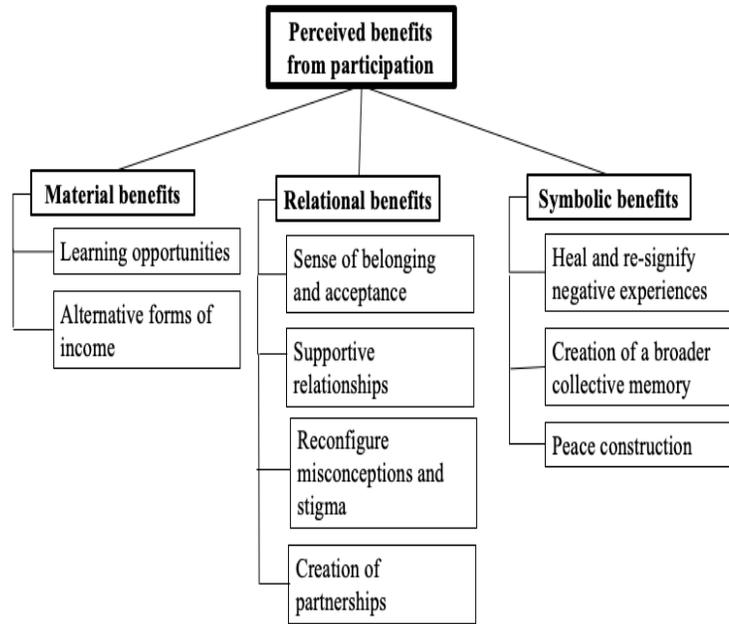


Figure 3. Perceived benefits from participation

### Material benefits

Participants perceived “Unión de Costureros” as a place that offers learning opportunities and alternative forms of income. Some found this space to go beyond what is taught in schools or exposed in textbooks regarding the armed conflict.

*“one heard about the armed conflict but in a more personal way... through emotions and sentiments... it was like learning from the other side of the coin, you know?” (Participant 5).*

Additionally, according to the different activities and people that were present on certain days, members could learn not only how to sew and embroider... but even from imitation jewellery, handicrafts, and gastronomy. Participant 1 explains how she learned a little bit more about Colombia’s geography and gastronomy through sewing

*“Then [redacted] asked me to sew 47 ‘fabric tamales’ [a traditional food of Tolima’s region], which are the number of municipalities in Tolima(...) it took me so long to sew them hahaha but if you ask me now, I will never forget how many municipalities Tolima has. You can search on the internet... 47”*

Within these practical learnings, participants also developed personal skills like empathy, teamwork, and communication skills. Additionally, as most of the participants were

interested in the social field and they were mostly students, they also perceived this space as a praxis scenario where they could put in practice and develop particular competences.

*“This space has also created academic spaces where theory and practice can come together... I learned how to approach a community different from mine and how to interact with them”* (Participant 16).

“Unión de Costureros” is also a space where participants could find alternative forms of income. The money raised would come from the events carried out throughout the year, in which people had to pay to attend seminars, conferences, and artistic performances. Additionally, they recently decided to sell products made with quilting of leftover fabrics.

*“...they also have something called the Memory Market and they make bags, holsters, handles ... all that... and they sell and finance the work of Unión de Costureros’ and the Protector’s network’s projects”*. (Participant 4).

Some of the participants reported helping out selling wafers and empanadas [hand-pies] at the events or making pencil-cases to sell in the market.

Not only would this money be used to fund the activities held in this space and sewing materials, but it would also help to improve the economic situation of some of its most vulnerable members. The social leader expressed the purpose of this.

*“I wanted to look for resources to fund this and to have at least 20 people always at the space sewing and working to at least guarantee them ...rent, services, and food, right? with these guaranteed things you have no problem saying that you are not coming back, because of your services being cut off ... not having food right? that kind of thing ... ah and transportation”*.

Thus, for example, while some IDPs could benefit from this space as it provides a job for them that could help them pay rent and bills, it also benefits some of the members of the host community, that, for example, do not have enough money to get there. Ultimately, people from this space wanted to raise money without profit, not just to help the needed ones with bills and services, but because they all wanted to continue participating in it.

### **Relational benefits**

Being part of this group improves participant’s sense of belonging and acceptance, the constitution of supportive social relationships amongst its members, the consolidation of

partnerships with other institutions, and re-configure misconceptions and stigma. Although some members initially felt like outsiders, the situation improved with time. Participant 15 described her initial feelings regarding her participation in this space:

*"At the beginning, I did feel like 'what am I doing here?' some people have had a really hard time, who have gone through terrible stories and I just ... I have been very lucky ... Then I was like. How much can I say if nothing has happened to me? But then, as that was also nice, that they included you, even if you did not have a direct relationship with the armed conflict, you can participate... you become part of the community too".*

This was supported by all participants in this study, arguing they never felt judged or ignored. Some even describe it as a second home with family-type relationships.

*"If it was lunchtime and you were there, they would always give you lunch... they wouldn't even ask you if you want lunch hahaha I remember the first time she gave me... I thought she was being very caring... like a mom. I was like: 'I feel very good and thank you'" (Participant 10).*

Participants reported feeling very supported by other members of the sewing group. Either with their daily life problems which they could talk about there, or specifically in their healing process. One member describes her experience sewing her violence-related story in one of the fabrics that were going to be exposed during one of the events:

*"...the last day that we went there before the monolith was going to be clothed, my fabric was raw.. incomplete. But ██████ said: that fabric must be finished, because if we do not finish it, ██████ [The participant's name] has not done anything here. I felt a horrible pressure ..and at that moment the other IDP seamstresses - ██████ and ██████ - came immediately: 'don't worry, this is going to be finished, you're going to be able to re-signify.. don't worry" So they helped me (...) I felt their support as when they said to me: 'I know what you are going to feel after finishing this fabric'. They knew what it was, and so they wanted me to feel the same" (Participant 13)*

The encounter between the different society sectors and the disclosure of experiences from both sides, help participants to reconfigure-misconceptions and stigmas held regarding armed conflict victims

*"... I used to think that they were the victims, and that 'poor thing' ... and I got there, and they don't see it that way. They made it a part of their life. They took a bad thing, empowered themselves, and changed it to have a completely different position to what has happened to them. They are very strong and have managed to thrive despite all" (Participant 12)*

Armed conflict victims also benefit from this encounter as they also change the way they perceive people from the host community as well as themselves. The social leader, who was a victim herself, explained of behalf of other IDPs:

*"more important is that it made them [armed conflict victim members] reflect, to realize that we are not the only victims, but that there are people with more serious victimizing acts than ours ...people from the city and who are not complaining and who have not yet had the possibility neither to denounce, nor to speak, nor to tell anyone"*

Bonds established between these groups, helped them relate even more with each other and it also facilitated the creation of partnerships with institutions. Members who were part of different organizations such as universities or NGOs, started to create alliances with this project. These alliances are materialized on what they call "Memory protectors". Participant 2 is a member of this circle and explains their function:

*"I am also part of the protectors' network ... which is like something bigger. The Seamstress Union is within that network. Representatives from different institutions get together, to propose, to propose activities, forms of funding..."*

In the case of Universities, these alliances serve to provide alternative learning scenarios for students, victims, and civilians, whereas organizations involved can provide ideas and resources for activities and events. Therefore, this is a place where people feel accepted regardless of their differences and where its members can create meaningful and practical social relationships from which people can benefit from one another.

### **Symbolic benefits**

These benefits are related to the psychosocial value and meaning that participants found through their involvement in the project. As such, most understand this space as a place where

they can heal and re-signify experiences, mainly enabled through sewing. One participant describes this process and her personal experience:

*"Sewing is something I inherited ... It has been there since my grandmother, my mother and even my aunt taught me how to sew. And it is also a way for closure, to heal. How one put a cloth on top of the other and to end with a knot (...) was like beginning to interlace things and close things. To close them and leave them on the fabric. Sewing is ..wow! I mean, it's very reassuring... it connected me to my past and gave me strength" (Participant 10)*

Others referred to it as a place to spend their spare time and forget about daily life problems, as sewing was an activity that demands a lot of concentration and time. Likewise, they also felt they were creating a 'broader' collective memory with people who initially were perceived as being completely different from them. Participant 8 recalls the experience that leads to this feeling.

*"One day we were asked to sew a fabric about Colombia, we were like 7 or 8 and it was to realize that all Colombians (...) have a history that unites us through war and violence ... and it is very difficult to recognize that. Knowing that we all have that in common even though our stories are very different ... I didn't even live here [In Colombia] for a while and it realized that it was because of armed conflict. It affected us differently, but it affected us all".*

Finally, several people described this space as 'peace construction' and as a means for strengthening and building social fabric. A young woman explains this:

*"I would summarize it in ... peace construction, because let's say that it is a space in which many things are built, not only memory-which is a very central part of the process, but I feel that community is also built. The relationships that one builds here transcend a little what is merely the academy, but strength and ties are created amongst its members and one gets to share much of oneself here". (Participant 9)*

As such, another participant referred to it as a space where they could work to build a better country, a place where

*"people who do not know each other at all, very very different, are all willing to change the conditions of the country, change a mentality" (Participant 1).*

This space was something unique and special for all the interviewees as they conceived it not only as a place where they could improve their wellbeing, but also to contribute to peacebuilding.

## Discussion

The thematic network illustrated in figure 4 depicts how people who come to “Unión de Costureros”, combined with the conditions for transformation, provide its members with a number of benefits that are in line with what a safe space usually offers and which in return, also helps to enable those transformative conditions to take place. As such, this is both a safe and a transformative social space.

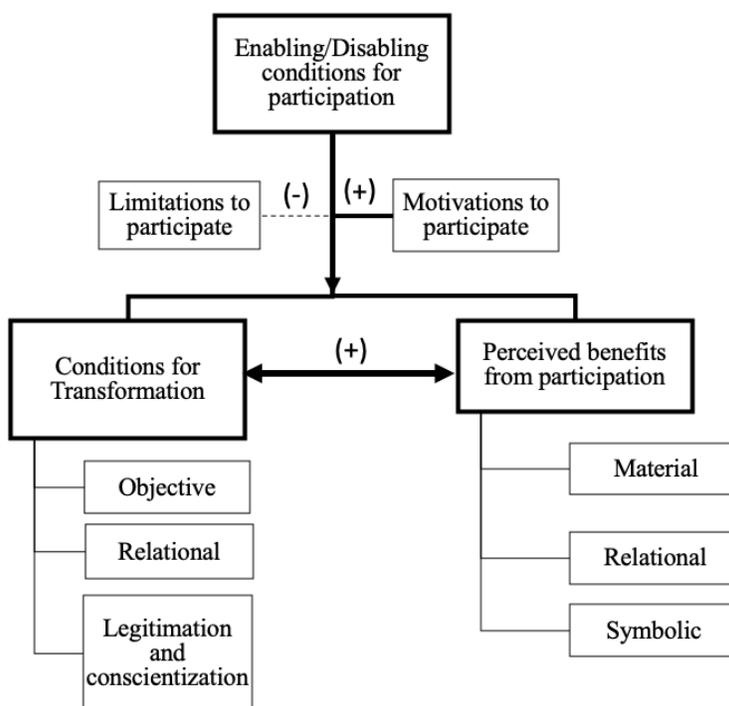


Figure 4. Interaction between conditions for participation, transformation and perceived benefits from participation

### “Unión de Costureros” as a safe space

A safe space, as described above, emerges as a response to particular needs and in a variety of contexts where, usually, only discriminated, marginalized, and vulnerable people tend to participate of. Accordingly, “Unión de Costureros” was originally created to provide a safe scenario for victims of the armed conflict. However, the perceived benefits from participation, particularly the relational ones, implicitly lead this space to being considered as safe also for people from the city who, initially, could be seen as privileged and in no need of such spaces. Although this term is usually conceptualized as a place where people can be free from interacting with people different from them (Campbell et al., 2018), “Unión de Costureros” illustrates how participants of various backgrounds can still feel safe. This is

reflected by how they emphasize feeling accepted despite differences, not feeling judged (Hunter, 2008; Holley & Steiner, 2005), and on finding supportive relationships (Spaaij and Schulenkorf, 2014), even with those ‘unlike’ them.

An interesting feature according to most of the literature on safe spaces, is what questions the link between a safe and a physical space. Although many participants mentioned how important it was for them to gather in the Memory Centre, where this space is located, it was not because of a physical sense of safety provided by this place, but because it facilitated the encounter with different people. It was the relational component in this space that enabled people to acknowledge each other and heal (Spaaij & Schulenkorf, 2014; Stengel & Weems, 2010), the wounds of armed conflict in the case of IDPs (Tomlinson, 2018) or other forms of violence, in the case of other members. Even for those attendees who did not feel in need of healing anything, this space worked as a safe scenario for learning, allowing them to express their views and explore their knowledge (Holley & Steiner, 2005), strengthening and empowering themselves (Tomlinson, 2018; Winnicott, 1965). Likewise, it could just simply serve to some of them to overcome loneliness (Schulz, 2019) when meeting with both their peers and potential new friends. These findings lead to the question if safe spaces are only for marginalized or discriminated people (The Roestone Collective, 2014). It was seen that commonly perceived non-marginalized people, as is the case of some host community members, might also need a safe space to gather, heal and discuss personal matters.

Finally, findings are in accordance to previous studies on safe spaces in Colombia, where people would improve their wellbeing as they re-configure stigmatizing identities. IDPs re-conceptualized the usual negative connotation of ‘victim’ (Osorio-Pérez & Breña, 2008). However, this was not accomplished only through the previous interaction of IDPs with their peers as Edström et al. (2016) and Arias (2004) would suggest, but also through the interaction with members from the host community who ended up seeing IDPs, as strong and empowered instead of lazy and helpless.

### **“Unión de Costureros” as a transformative social space**

A problem already recognized by Duncan (1996) with separatists approaches of safe spaces that segregate people from the broader society, is that they “may have an undesirable depoliticizing effect on a group, fortifying it against challenges from, and allowing it to

inadvertently assume independence from, a wider public sphere”(p.129). However, ‘Unión de Costureros’ is an inclusive space that allows an encounter between different social sectors. This is arguably the most important feature this space has. Benefits regarding the material, relational and symbolic dimensions that a transformative environment should provide (Campbell & Cornish 2012), were all found in this study and possible due to the plurality and inclusion of different members of society. Alternative forms of income to fund the collective’s activities, rent, bills and transport issues, as well as the development of technical and academical skills, was possible due to the knowledge exchange between this space’s different members. Participants could *build* social capital, but also *bridge* relationships with those who could help them achieve their goals. Some members were people from universities, NGO’s and government organizations, who help this space to gain legitimacy, funds and, although on its way to improve, visibility. Finally, people could not just heal and re-signify negative experiences, but also feel as contributing to Colombia’s peace construction and in the building of a broader collective memory. Likewise, although not explicitly mentioned, a re-construction of their ethos of conflict and emotional orientations (Bar-Tal, 2007), is also evidenced in how participants changed their discourse towards how they currently understand and feel about the armed conflict (and conflict in general).

These last ones were facilitated by a place where people can meet others unlike them, a fabric to work on together and a drawing workshop. Feeling accepted in an environment where people do not feel judged, helped elicit dialogues and reflections about conflict amongst the different society members. Such dialogues led participants not only to relate more to others, but also to become aware of their current reality and of actionable ways to improve it, what Freire (1973) called conscientization. Members from the host community re-configured what they thought about IDPs, bridging the gap between them and reducing somewhat the marginalization. At the same time, people started to think about themselves as victims as well, indirectly from armed conflict, but also from structural and symbolic violence of which they can also be perpetrators of (Rojas, 2016), realizing their responsibility as social change agents to improve their reality in and outside this scenario.

Building a broader and shared collective memory and ethos of conflict regarding Colombia’s armed conflict, and re-configuring collective emotional orientations, allowed host community members to connect with IDP members and to work with them in seeking

better conditions for all Colombians (which is what they want to achieve by covering the courthouse and making their stories and their fight visible), while social change was *already* evidenced by bridging the gap needed to work together. This space provided a place for encounter and contact between IDPs and people from the host community. Working together on a fabric with a similar goal (denouncing structural and symbolic violence) in a place where people are seen as equals, are some of the characteristics Allport (1954) stated with the contact hypothesis, that facilitated the reduction of prejudice. As such, these two groups changed and improved the way they see each other and themselves, finding similarities amongst them, rather than differences.

Thus, this paper has served to question the difference between safe and transformative social spaces and whether the last ones are only for “marginalized populations”. It suggests transformation cannot take place in unsafe scenarios and that it is through transformation that a space can become safe. Findings stress the possibility and importance of safe inclusive scenarios in post-conflict societies that are divided by violence, as a means to re-build the lost social fabric and, in this particular case, facilitate the incorporation of IDPs in host communities. As such, plurality and inclusion are the most important characteristics to build a transformative scenario.

This paper might be useful to identify and promote the characteristics needed for the creation of safe-transformative social spaces. However, as this research was based exclusively on the experience of a specific group in the city of Bogotá, further research in different contexts and other local strategies to promote peace is encouraged. Because of time-availability and Covid-pandemic, this research focused primarily on the experience of host community members. Thus, research including more participants and comparing experiences of different societal sectors, might contribute to a broader understanding on the challenges and ways to overcome them within a peacebuilding framework amid violence or armed conflict.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A. Topic guide – Social leader

#### Participants

This topic guide is aimed to interview the social leader that promoted ‘Costurero de la Memoria’.

#### Materials

Computer (Zoom)

Questions guide

#### Estimated time for the interview

40 minutes \*If the interview takes longer, it will be conducted in 2 sessions.

#### Interview development

##### Contextualization

After socializing the consent form, a brief explanation of the aim of the study and the topics that are going to be addressed in the interview are given to the participant.

“Good morning/afternoon. Thanks for letting me interview you. As it was already mentioned in the inform consent, this is masters research that aims to explore how the ‘Costurero de la memoria’ works and impacts its members. Therefore, the questions that are going to be discussed during this interview are related to this topic. It is important to remind you that there are not right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as you can. This interview is going to be voice-recorded, but all your information will be anonymized. Are you ok with this? Before starting, do you have any questions?”

##### Warm up questions

- How are you feeling today? How are you dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak?

##### Questions guide

###### Introductory / history questions

- Where did the idea of ‘Costurero de la memoria’ come from?
- When and where did it start?
- Who were the first members? How did you contact them?
- How was your first experience in this group? How did you feel? Can you recall that moment ?

###### Characteristics]

- What was/is the purpose of this initiative?
- What are the current projects you are involved in within this group?
- Nowadays, who can join the group?
- What happens when a person wants to join the group?
- Do you know other initiatives like this one?
- What do you think is special about this initiative different from others? Can you please give an example?

- How does 'costurero de la memoria' work?
  - What are the current projects that you are developing within this group
  - What is the purpose of each project?
  - Who are the participants in those projects?
  - Which particular activities do participants develop?
- What kind of things people sew about?

#### Experience

- What have you learned throughout this project?
- How is it to be involved in this group?
- What does 'Costurero de la memoria' represent in your life?
  - How does it help you?
  - What do you think your life would be if it were not there?
- What does sewing mean to you?
- What was your favorite piece of fabric?
  - Why?

#### Students Participation

- When did students start to participate?
- Why do you think they participate?
- Can you please tell me about your relationship with them?
- How do you feel working with them?
  - How do you think other members feel working with them?
- What have you learned from them?
  - What have you taught them?
- Which are the main 'take-aways' that you would like them to get from this experience?

#### Challenges

- Which are some of the challenges identified throughout this project?
  - Why do they represent a challenge?
- How did you overcome them?
- Can you recall a challenging experience that you would like to share with me?

#### Future

- Will this initiative be over after covering the justice of palace with your fabrics?
- What are the next steps in this process?

#### Closing questions

- Thank you so much for sharing this information with me. Is there something else you feel I didn't ask that is important to be addressed?
- Would you like to say something else?
- How did you feel during this interview?

## **Appendix B. Topic guide – Host community members**

### **Participants**

This topic guide is aimed to interview host community members of ‘Costurero de la Memoria’

### **Materials**

Computer (Zoom)

Questions guide

### **Estimated time for the interview**

40 minutes. \*If the interview takes longer, it will be conducted in 2 sessions.

### Interview development

#### Contextualization

After socializing the consent form, a brief explanation of the aim of the study and the topics that are going to be addressed in the interview are given to the participant.

“Good morning/afternoon. Thanks for letting me interview you. As it was already mentioned in the inform consent, this is a masters research that aims to explore how the ‘Costurero de la memoria’ works and impacts its members. Therefore, the questions that are going to be discussed during this interview are related to this topic. It is important to remind you that there are not right or wrong answers, so please be as honest as you can. This interview is going to be voice-recorded, but all your information will be anonymized. Are you ok with this? Before starting, do you have any questions?”

#### Warm up questions

- How are you feeling today? How are you dealing with the Coronavirus outbreak?

#### Learning about CM

##### Sources of information

- When did you first hear of ‘Costurero de la memoria’
  - How did you hear about it ?
- Did you know other people who knew it?
  - How many students do you know are already or were engaged with this initiative?

##### Motivations and initial expectations

- Why did you decide to join this initiative?
- What were you expecting?

##### Initial Contact

- How was your first experience in this group?
  - How did you feel?
  - Can you recall that moment?
  - How long have you been participating in this process?

**Relational dimension:** This dimension denotes the social connections and dynamics that result from participating in a particular space, as well as the quality and conditions that underpin those relations.

- Can you please tell me about your relationship with other groups of members of this collective?
- How do you feel working with them?
  - How do you think other members feel working with you?
- What have you learned from them?
  - What have you taught them?
- What types of conversations do you have with other members of the groups?

**Symbolic dimension:** This dimension refers to the psychosocial value and meaning that the participants can get from the participation in this space.

- What does “Unión de Costureros” represent in your life?
- What does sew mean to you?
- What was your favorite piece of fabric? Why?
- What keeps you participating in this project?
- What is something that everyone -as member of this group- should know?

**Material Dimension:** This dimension refers to the tangible, physical and even economic benefits that a context can provide to its participants. However, it also refers to the particular outcomes regarding the development of agency and skills and knowledge.

- What have you learned from this experience?
- How does it help you? What do you think your life would be like if it were not there?
- How do you think this group affects or impacts your life?
  - What can you get from here?
  - In what ways does this space have been helpful in your life?

#### Challenges

- Which are some of the challenges identified throughout this project? Why do they represent a challenge?
- How did you or the group overcome them?
- Can you recall a challenging experience that you would like to share with me?
- What can be improved?

#### Future

- Will you still come after the - justice of palace is covered/your project with them is over? Why?

#### Closing questions

- Already knowing this group, would you recommend someone to come here? Why?
- Thank you so much for sharing this information with me. Is there something else you feel I didn't ask that is important to be addressed?
- Would you like to say something else?
- How did you feel during this interview?

## **Appendix C. Participant information**

### **Beyond Safe Spaces: Building Transformative Scenarios in post-conflict societies**

**Mónica González Gort**

**Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science, LSE**

**[This information was translated to Spanish]**

#### **Information for participants**

Thank you for considering participating in this study which will take place between April 2020 and August 2020. This information sheet outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant, if you agree to take part.

#### **1. What is the research about?**

The purpose of this research is to understand how ‘Costurero de la memoria’ has impacted the life of its members, as a way to comprehend the importance of this kind of spaced in the midst of a post-conflict scenario. This is part of my Master’s degree programme on Social and Cultural Psychology and will be presented as my dissertation project.

#### **2. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form which you can sign and return in advance of the interview or sign at the meeting.

#### **3. What will my involvement be?**

You will be asked to take part in a telephonic or online interview through zoom o skype in order to share your experiences regarding your participation and involvement in the collective ‘Costurero de la Memoria’. It should take approximately 40 minutes of your time, although if not all the topics can be covered within that time, I would ask your permission to continue in a second session according to your time availability and preference.

#### **4. How do I withdraw from the study?**

You can withdraw from the study at any point until July 2020 without having to give a reason. If any questions during the interview make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from

the study, we will not retain the information you have given thus far, unless you are happy for us to do so.

### **5. What will my information be used for?**

I will use the collected information for a research project, as part of my master's degree programme....

### **6. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised?**

The records from this study will be kept as confidential as possible. Only myself and my supervisor will have access to the files and any audio tapes. Your data will be anonymised – your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study.<sup>1</sup> All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Any hard copies of research information will be kept in locked files at all times.

### **8. Who has reviewed this study?**

This study has undergone ethics review in accordance with the LSE Research Ethics Policy and Procedure.

### **9. Data Protection Privacy Notice**

The LSE Research Privacy Policy can be found at:  
<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Secretarys-Division/Assets/Documents/Information-Records-Management/Privacy-Notice-for-Research-v1.1.pdf>

The legal basis used to process your personal data will be Students “Legitimate interests”. The legal basis used to process special category personal data (e.g. data that reveals racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, health, sex life or sexual orientation, genetic or biometric data) will be for scientific and historical research or statistical purposes.

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**Limits to confidentiality:** confidentiality will be maintained as far as it is possible, unless you tell us something which implies that you or someone you mention might be in significant danger of harm and unable to act for themselves; in this case, we may have to inform the relevant agencies of this, but we would discuss this with you first.

To request a copy of the data held about you please contact: [glpd.info.rights@lse.ac.uk](mailto:glpd.info.rights@lse.ac.uk)

10. What if I have a question or complaint?

If you have any questions regarding this study please contact the researcher Mónica González Gort, on [m.gonzalez-gort@lse.ac.uk](mailto:m.gonzalez-gort@lse.ac.uk)

If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research, please contact the LSE Research Governance Manager via [research.ethics@lse.ac.uk](mailto:research.ethics@lse.ac.uk).

If you are happy to take part in this study, please sign the consent sheet attached

## Appendix D. Consent form

### Beyond Safe Spaces: Building Transformative Scenarios in Post-conflict settings

Mónica González Gort

#### PARTICIPATION IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY IS VOLUNTARY

[This paper was transcribed to Spanish]

I have read and understood the study information dated [DD/MM/YY], or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.	YES / NO
I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and that I can withdraw from the study at any time up until July 2020, without having to give a reason.	YES / NO
I agree to the interview being audio recorded	YES / NO
I understand that the information I provide will be used for the dissertation project of Monica Gonzalez and that the information will be anonymised.	YES / NO
I agree that my (anonymised) information can be quoted in research outputs.	YES / NO
I understand that any personal information that can identify me – such as my name, address, will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone than myself and my dissertation supervisor	YES / NO
I give permission for the (anonymised) information I provide to be deposited in a data archive so that it may be used for future research.	YES / NO

Please retain a copy of this consent form.

Participant name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_ name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For information please contact: Mónica González Gort, [m.gonzalez-gort@lse.ac.uk](mailto:m.gonzalez-gort@lse.ac.uk)

## Appendix E. Codebook

Global theme: Enabling/disabling conditions for participation		
Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Examples
<p>Motivations to join 'Unión de Costureros': The reasons why people decide to come to this space in the first place.</p>	<p>Personal reasons: Reasons to join this space that were not related to academic obligations</p>	<p>".. all my friends (J, M and F) had been part of the Seamstress Union for several semesters and let's say that I really like knitting and sewing...and the whole thing and since I had the opportunity to know DV, well I was very struck by everything about the armed conflict... I wanted to learn more" P01</p>
		<p>"So I wanted to know the Colombian conflict's history, to consolidate things in psychology and "to go help them [the victims]..I've always loved volunteering" P07</p>
	<p>Academic Reasons: Reasons to get to participate in this space due to academic obligations.</p>	<p>"I was part of a research group called Acción social y communities in my University... and it came the opportunity to do some field work in this space... so we started to participate... it was more because I belonged to that group, so when they started going, I did too". P02</p>
<p>Limitations: The identified challenges this space need to overcome in order to improve and increase participation and commitment.</p>	<p>Location: People who live in other city or far from downtown (where UC' is located limited their regular participation</p>	<p>"Sometimes it is not because you do not want to go, but because of the outward journey ... for example Yand I are 'Pilo-Paga', so the money for travelling was an issue ... also two hours out and two hours back. I live in Cajicá, she lives in Tocancipá, David in Chía ... we all live far away" P07</p>
		<p>"Well, a personal challenge is that, for example, the Memory Centre is very far away, so for example, getting there was expensive, it took a long time and the truth was that it was something like jugh ... I have to go ugh', that is it. Its not that I did not want to go to the seamstress, but that the trip made me very lazy ... but even though I still go... but that was a challenge that was very important to me" P09</p>

Diffusion and Visibility: This space lacks visibility and diffusion. Only people from the social field know it and access to information about this space is not widely spread	<i>"...participation is minimal because there's not enough advertisements... people who attend it is because someone who is in the group told them, but they do not find out through social networks or other communication channels" P04</i>
	<i>"I believe that it is still necessary to make it be known more (...) although it has achieved a lot, there are several events that have been done (...) sometimes they even sound on the radio and everything ... but I think that you can still like ... improve this communication issue...Perhaps use more social media" P11</i>
Misconception: People do not know what is really done in this space, who can come or join. Because of their mistaken ideas they do not join.	<i>"I feel that sometimes people think that just sewing is not changing anything, right? then they stop going .. e I once heard someone said "there are only old women, so why do I keep going, if I don't know how to knit or anything ..... too bad for the community, but I feel bad being around only by women" P01</i>
	<i>"because many people believe -I include myself in here - that the conflict has only been suffering, pain, war, deaths, injuries, and blood, and it stayed there. So I understand why people don't go...I was the same, I didn't have much interest in knowing that pain, that story ... because it is painful. But when you really go, you realize that yes: there is a dark, dense past of war and violence, but there are people who are getting up to keep going... that's what people should know about this space" P06</i>

**Global theme: Enabling conditions for transformation**

<b>Organizing Theme</b>	<b>Basic Theme</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Objective conditions: Place, artifacts and practices that frame and facilitate the construction of transformative social spaces	Distinctive place to gather: People find the Memory Centre where this space physically located, as powerful, but also as a means to meet people unlike them.	<i>"Well, I arrived, and I was very surprised by the place, I mean... the place was like the first state, because it transmits a lot of power. It is omnipresent. Just seeing the entrance with the monolith already made me feel many things... stronger" P12</i>

		<p><i>"Although the fabric could be transferred and we could sew in other spaces such as in the University, sewing in the CMPR was like wow. Because that was where people went, where you met everyone ... not only with your university colleagues, but everyone... the victims and all" P08</i></p>
	<p>Artifacts (fabric) The act and goal of sewing a fabric together: The fabric that people sew helped elicit dialogue amongst its members but also acts as a metaphor "sewing social fabric"</p>	<p><i>The fabrics, you sewed them in the company of all. The scenario is more or less a room, where long tables are glued, on top it is the fabric and people sitting around. Who arrives, greets, sits down and weaves, sews (...) sewing around a fabric with other people is a group exercise that has a goal. We all have to work to achieve that goal. And during the process we get to know each other, our stories, we find similarities and we find that the person who is knitting next to us has lived similar things and therefore understands my situation. At the end one knows that without the collaboration of the others, that fabric would not have been finished it or it would have taken much much longer" P04</i></p> <p><i>"You understand that they accomplish this through sewing... through artistic manifestations... that is something amazing... because it is a teamwork, in community... a constant dialogue between many different people, that we all want to construct the same thing: a better country" P01</i></p>
	<p>Workshop-memory pedagogy: This workshop helps participants realize what is conflict and their relation to it. People need to draw and share their drawing to others.</p>	<p><i>"The first thing we did was the pedagogy of memory, a written activity (...) what we did was to represent something that for us was very significant in our lives. It could be related to armed conflict or not. Not necessarily. Everyone draw on a piece of paper, and then we wrote in the back what that drawing represented, then we shared it with others...what we thought of it and what it meant to us" P03</i></p>

		<p><i>"The Pedagogy of memory was just that, capturing on a sheet of paper, through a drawing, how the conflict had touched each one of us ... So, it was very interesting to think about what conflict was ...and to get that actually we are not that far of that conflict. You saw that some people had a hard time coming up with that idea of why the conflict was not only war with weapons, but that there really was more ... there is intra-family violence, things in a school ... like really recognizing that these other forms of conflict also involved us all" P14</i></p>
<p>Relational conditions: The relationships and the way these relationships should be in order to bond and bridge social capital</p>	<p>Plurality and inclusion: All different kinds of people can be found in this space. Not just IDPs, not just students, but all kind of people.</p>	<p><i>"There is no exclusion of any person here. There is no skin pigmentation, there is no social stratum, there is no religion. Everyone who wants and needs to participate, who wants to sew ... can come here" P20</i></p>
		<p><i>"Anyone ... I really saw anyone. Something that I also found very cool was that there not only found women who had been victims of armed conflict, but who had been victims of different things (...)violence also permeates other frameworks. A victim is not just someone who suffered the consequences of two Colombian armed groups, but also those who have a violent husband in the house, whose children have entered into problems of delinquency or things like that ... society itself. So let's say that literally everyone can go ... to help others, but also those that recognize they can be helped too. So it doesn't discriminate" P15</i></p>
	<p>Sharing experiences: People are encouraged to share their experience (even those who are members of the host community). They believe that it is through sharing with others that healing, and learning can be possible.</p>	<p><i>"There is the most therapeutic part of me telling my story, saying what has happened to me as a victim... And to know other stories that perhaps, from being of the city or because of the life we've had, we don't know... or they haven't affected us too much" P17</i></p>
		<p><i>"she told us: 'I am not going to tell my life alone, because I also need you to tell me about yourself' That was magic for me (...)I told them about the death of my mom-she died from cancer, they told me how some of them have lost their children" P13</i></p>

	<p>Knowledge exchange: Participant could exchange different knowledge with the different society members involved. Be that academic or practical knowledge.</p>	<p><i>"It was normal. There was a time where there was an Émbera community ... and they taught us how to make handmade handles, and then I told them: hey, why don't you sell that in Usaquéen market?"</i> P03</p>
<p>Legitimacy and conscientization conditions: Conditions needed for a space aiming to be/achieve social change</p>	<p>Reflection of our reality in a broader sense: participants become aware of the context in which they live.</p>	<p><i>"You get that conflict is not only armed ... but that the conflict has many aspects ... we realized that conflict has structural violence, which is when the State takes advantage of the conflict to do its part, the conflict also removes and gives ... many things, and we are all affected. It is not just them, it's all of us"</i> P07</p>
	<p>Consciousness of our own responsibility to change reality: Participants become aware of their responsibility in improving their and other's living conditions</p>	<p><i>"as it [the conflict] is something that has affected all of us, like ... the conflict is not only in a rural area, or where there are guerrillas, but it is something that also really permeated all of society, including Bogotá"</i> P14</p> <p><i>"So, I learned to recognize myself as an active agent in the reconstruction of peace... in this space, but also in what I do outside, with my family, my friends..."</i> P16</p> <p><i>"I also feel that it helped us to be much more aware of the role that we have. Sometimes one thinks like ... 'what can I do?', one feels a little helpless, without hope... or we just don't not know how to contribute ... and there one realizes that from very small things like ... simply going to sew, one can contribute a lot (...) we are all Colombians, we are all involved in some way or another in Colombia's history and well ... that is, I feel that the mere fact of existing Colombia, of living in Colombia and being Colombian, one has a duty"</i> P16</p>

	<p>Social legitimacy: Participants knew the importance of this space in a broader sense. Its importance.</p>	<p><i>" this space must exist for its victims because it is part of their rights. But on the other hand, it is also important for the pedagogy they carry out, because in a certain way the knowledge generates awareness and pedagogy of citizenship, values of coexistence, tolerance...learning from other cultures" P04</i></p>
		<p><i>"That fabric that we made, was part of something bigger that was the covering of the monolith and that that was an act to make a group visible, a problem and I feel that showing more those things, listening more and seeing more the social impact , would make you more aware of the social impact that the practical fact of sewing a fabric has..." P09</i></p>
<p><b>Global theme: Perceived benefits from participation</b></p>		
Organizing Theme	Basic Theme	Examples
<p>Material benefits: Practical benefits derived from the participation of 'Unión de Costureros'</p>	<p>Learning opportunities: Participants could acquire practical, technical and academic knowledge; as well as improve or develop new skills such as sewing or elaborating handicrafts</p>	<p><i>"In addition to all the knowledge about the historical processes and the conflict in Colombia. As I already said...that one did not know or that perhaps we did but in a very superficial way (...) One also acquires knowledge of certain topics in the history of Colombia and even geographical, and also culinary skills hahaha..." P14</i></p>
	<p>Alternative forms of income: Participants obtain money from sewing products they sell in a market, which help them with rent and bills, but also with transportation.</p>	<p><i>Then <b>Virgelina</b> asked me to make the 47 tamales, which are the number of municipalities in Tolima.. I learned different things... all deeply rooted to one's land haha as to the territory, appropriate local knowledge, you know? That I will never forget. P01</i></p>
		<p><i>"...they also have something called the Memory Market and they make bags, holsters, handles ... all that... and they sell and finance the work of the Seamstresses Union and the Protector's network's projects". P04</i></p>

		<p><i>"Yes, I wanted to look for resources to finance and have at least 20 people always on the space sewing and working to at least guarantee them ...rent, services and food, right? with these guaranteed things you have no problem saying that you are not coming back, because your services have been cut off... you do not have food, right? that kind of things ... and transportation" P20</i></p>
<p>Relational benefits: The social dynamics, connections and reflections through those relations that participation facilitates</p>	<p>Sense of belonging and acceptance: feeling welcomed and not judged. Feeling part of the community</p>	<p><i>"...because at the same time it is a space in which everyone has well ... has a voice, right? No one is really judged as 'ah, why did you say that? you shouldn't ' it is like a debate, a well-argued argument in which each person has his or her point of view (...) people are like in a good disposition for what is going to be done, be it for sewing, to give their opinion, or whatever. I have never really felt like anything negative, or judgmental or that one is left out of the project... never" P18</i></p> <p><i>"At the beginning I did feel like 'what am I doing here?' There are people who have really had a hard time, who have gone through terrible stories and I just ... I have been very lucky ... Then I was like. How much can I say if nothing has happened to me? But then, as that was also nice, that they included you, even if you did not have a direct relationship with the armed conflict, you can participate... you become part of the community too". P15</i></p>

<p>Supportive social relations: participants could find in each other a supporting peer that would help them healing but also in daily life problems</p>	<p><i>"...the last day that we went there before the monolith was going to be clothed, my fabric was raw. But <b>Virgelina</b> said: that fabric must be assembled, it must be finished, because if we do not assemble it, AM has not done anything here. I felt horrible pressure ..and at that moment the other seamstresses - F and M - came immediately: 'don't worry, this is going to be finished, you're going to be able to resignify.. don't worry" So they helped us... they helped me because they knew, they have already done it, they have already lived it. They already knew what was to see your story sewed and displayed for everyone. I felt their support as when they said to me: I know what you are going to feel after making this fabric. They knew what it was, and so they wanted me to feel the same" P13</i></p>
	<p><i>"I am a little closed with my things, I think that they showed me a little that having the openness to tell, the strength to tell a story ... to accept those experiences that one has lived as part of one's life is very important .. how to share, how to build in order to heal. That's like what I had the most... because when i finally came out with my story, they all listened very careful... I cried a little bit and some of them hugged me" P08</i></p>
<p>Re-configure misconceptions and stigma: Participants changed the way they used to perceived 'victims'. And, in turn, IDPs realized they were not the only victims. That people from the host community also suffer</p>	<p><i>"It made me see many things ... I used to think that they were the victims, and poor things ... and I got there, and they don't see it that way. They made it a part of their life. They took a bad thing, empowered themselves and changed it to have a completely different position to what was happening... they are very strong and have managed to thrive despite all" P12</i></p>
	<p><i>"more important is that it made them [armed conflict victims] reflect, to realize that we are not the only victims, but that there are people with more serious victimizing acts than ours ...people from the city and who are not complaining and who have not yet had the possibility Neither to denounce, nor to speak, nor to tell anyone ... but it is through us that they have begun to do so" P20</i></p>

	<p>Partnerships: 'Red de protegedores': People consolidate a network with members from NGO's, university and other government institutions to support and help each other in logistics and funding, for example.</p>	<p><i>"So that is why we, this process, has to do with the Protector's network - that we are so scrupulous, because it is with academia, public institutions, international institutions and at the same time human rights organization (...) academia legitimatizes our practices, and other institutions help us with funding or pedagogy material to train and teach the members of this collective" P20</i></p>
<p>Symbolic benefits: The psychosocial value and meaning that participants found through involvement</p>	<p>Healing and re-signifying negative experiences: People find sewing and sharing experiences as a means to heal and re-signify the negative experiences held.</p>	<p><i>"For example, I am also part of the network of protectors ... which is like something bigger. The Seamstress Union is within that network. What we basically do is get representatives from different institutions together, to propose, to propose activities, forms of funding..." P02</i></p> <p><i>Sewing for me represents a way of healing wounds (...) As you spin, you build your story, your resignification to finally see the result. So, it is a means where you can build or deconstruct yourself. P03</i></p> <p><i>"Sewing is something I inherited ... then it has been there since my grandmother, my mother and even my aunt have taught me how to sew. And it is also a way for closure, to heal. The way in which one put a cloth on top of the other, of which one knitted, that one began to make the knot ... was like beginning to interlace things and close things. To close them and leave them on the fabric. Sewing is ..wow! I mean, it's very reassuring... it connected me to my past and gave me strength" P10</i></p>
	<p>Creates collective memory: Sharing experiences and finding similarities between them, creates a broader collective memory between IDPs and members from Host communities regarding armed conflict</p>	<p><i>"She said I have a proposal for you. Make a flag. flags are .... the large fabrics.. one has its history, in each flag ... 'it can be 4 flags or we can make a single one with the 4 stories .... 'Then we began to understand that for her, a flag was to capture the history of each person on 4 pieces of cloth. So we told her: ok, lets sew everyone's sory in those flags and then join them for life and she would laugh. and then she began to smile at us ... to speak ... DV passed by and she was just amazed ... because DF really did not speak to anyone like that. She was very quiet ... So, we joined our stories... they connected here in Bogotá" P07</i></p>

		<p><i>"One day she asked us to sew a Colombian fabric, we were like 7 or 8 and it was to realize that all Colombians (...) have a history that unites us through war and violence ... and that is very hard. Knowing that we all have that in common despite the fact that our stories are totally different ... I didn't even live here for a while and i realized that it was because of armed conflict. It affected us differently, but it affected us all" P08</i></p>
	<p>Peace construction: participants find this space as a small scenario where they could not only contribute to peace construction through the activities and goals proposed, but because it is itself constructing and re-building social fabric.</p>	<p><i>"I feel that in a word ... it would be a Peace Dialogue. This exchange of different knowledge, between people who do not know each other at all, very very different, but who are all willing to change the conditions of the country, change a mentality" P01</i></p> <p><i>I would summarize it in ... peace construction, because let's say that it is a space in which many things are built, not only memory-which is a very central part of the process, but I feel that community is also built. The relationships that one builds here transcend a little what is merely the academy, but strength and ties are created amongst its members and one gets to share much of oneself in those spaces. P09</i></p>

## Appendix F. Translated interview transcript

### Interview # 10

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I: So, I want you to tell me, when was the first time you heard about the seamstress?

P: That was in a class taught by a teacher named [REDACTED]. At that time, we were studying Qualitative research ... and I heard about the seamstress because some of my classmates were working with them, they were going there ... In that class we always had to do a research exercise and articulate it with social psychology. So, some colleagues did their research with the seamstress. That was the first time... and I heard it was super great because at that time, [REDACTED] who is like the leader of the seamstress, was like... she wanted to cover the entire courthouse in Bogotá with the fabric ... so it was like something very great. It was almost 3 years ago when I started to know this project.

I: Great... and at what point did you decide to become a participant of the process held in the seamstress?

P: Ok, after this ... there is a student's research group at Universidad of La Sabana, called 'Social action y Communities' from which I was a member...hahaha, and thanks to the study they were conducting, this research group began to get involved with the seamstress. So, there was the option to support and be part of this work and to participate and visit the Seamstress that is located in Bogota's downtown..., So that was the first time that I had a direct contact with them. It was not just listening to it and seeing some news on the internet, or hearing things from my colleagues, but I was already becoming part of the seamstress and the people who were there.

I: Can you tell me a little bit, what image did you have of the seamstress with all what you knew from your classmates and from searching and looking for information about them before getting to know them in person?

P: wosh, well [regarding the classmates]initially it was something very surprising because first it was like 'wow these people like in... 5th semester and they are already doing something like that...very important for the society, so at first instance it was that, it was like wow, my colleagues are WOW. It was them who began to involve more people, so it was also like 'this thing is something big', then, when I started to look at things online, I realized that everyone was like 'oh, the seamstress, the workshops that take place in the memory's center, the visibility n' all that ... then of course, it was like expanding this, it was not only at the University, but I realized that the Seamstress works with many more people and more places and not just Universities, but many people, many organizations ... many things that are involved. So, it was a big thing, so it wasn't like: I'm going to work with a person, right? no, I will work with many more that I am going to be knitting with. Not just weaving-literally weaving, but weaving many networks between people and institutions.

I: Ok, I understand ... and how was that first direct experience with them?

P: ush, well, uh ... the truth is that I remember that [REDACTED] prepared lunch for the whole group. So...it was like making strongest bonds with between the victims and us, the people who were in the research group; they wanted to engage us with the whole process. Then I remember that she made a lunch that is like a community pot, she makes every day ... So, people have to bring things and share them with all... rice, 'lechona'... whatever you bring or prepare, is for everyone. So, she did that lunch and she started talking about the conflict. 'conflict is not just armed conflict' she said. 'conflict is in everything... it is not bad, nor good...it is just conflict'. So, you always think about the conflict as something negative... and conflict is not always bad. Then she invited us to think what conflict was for us, our relationship to it... so it was something were everyone participated...so it was nice because then everybody started to tell their story, everything was very different, yet, the same. I did not here the same story twice, but you could always find similarities. So, we started going every Wednesday... and some Saturdays. The seamstress started opening on Saturday so that we could all go.... Because some of us lived very far and it was very hard to go there during weekdays... so, they gave us the option to go on Saturdays too. So the first time I arrive there, and I was like 'hi, I come from Universidad de la Sabana... and they were already like: welcome, this is the fabric, the middle... everyone presented themselves... they didn't even ask you why were you there... they already knew. If you arrive there, it was to support each other, to know each other... so you had to sit down, receive the middle, talk to people, to [REDACTED], her family... and start telling Colombia's armed conflict from a totally different perspective.

I: great.... and do you more or less remember what kind of people you met there... people you could talk or listen to?

P: Uh well, something very cool was that I spoke, first of all, with a lady who was knitting little faces. I was not sewing there or anything yet. So, she was sitting there, and she asked me where I came from and I told her that I was coming from Bosa, because I was staying there with my parents ... then the lady laughed and said: Oops what a long trip ... And we were then talking...because she told me that a daughter of hers was doing a project ... that the girl was from Universidad Javeriana, and that she was doing a project and that one day she said "Mommy, come with me". I mean, over there it is really like throwing yourself out and start talking for a while hahaha 'come on'. So, I kind of wow, because seriously, that lady was like 60 years.

I: hahaha how cute!!

P: So the lady told her daughter that she was coming here and here they were ... and she said that she had become too hooked because it was not that you were coming to learn very formal things 'look, in 1990 this happens....' NO. It was just to come, sew and interact in a different way. Then the lady told me it had been a really cool experience that she had learned many sewing techniques other than the ones she already knew-because she used knit. So, we continued talking and she was like... ok, now can you please tell me how was this originated? So.... At that time, I was new and I had a very vague idea of what this space really was... I told her that this started with many groups in which the Mothers of Soacha were participating too. Mothers of Soacha are a group of women who lost their children... they were killed and disappeared... and she started telling me that there is a link

between weaving and women. After that I started knitting with some girls who are part of a foundation called: Fashion wears black, and at that time they were weaving a black hair in a yellow fabric. So, we got there to knit and help them. They started telling us that they've been going there for a long time now... and that their idea was to show the Afro-roots on victims. They also wanted to display adversity through weaving. Then we just talk about their foundation and why were they there... so they started telling be about what the afro-hair represents, about the meaning of braids in Palenque . It was also a very cool thing because they are really very misrepresented. So those braids had a very powerful meaning in the afro culture. Then they told me the university they were from, that they were already graduates from it and that's it. Then a colleague from the research group I belonged to, [REDACTED], arrived, and there just chatting... then, [REDACTED] approached us and she gave us ... rice with potatoes

I: hahahaha what a good memory!!

P: more or less hahaha

I: hahaha, and what did you think when [REDACTED] gave you lunch ...

P: Ush... it was like no ... seriously? it was like no no no, ' I will have lunch later, don't worry' .. and she was like what? you will not receive me? Nonono, that's wrong ... then was like ok, fine ... food is not denied to anyone. So, at first I just couldn't receive her any lunch... I thought that they didn't have a lot of money... I didn't want to receive anything, ... I didn't want to take anything from them... and later I realized that it was a way to strengthen that bond. That it was not simply 'I will not receive you because of this' but, instead: that you are very crazy if you are not going to receive food!

I: hahahaha okay

P: also, haha like that power that food has, cooking. It is something like very strong, supportive, it is something from home, it is something from family ... caring ... It was like: I feel very good and well... thank you.

I: Yes, like 'I feel at home'

P: Yes! it was more ... like the smell, she was like a mother, very maternal, very woman ... to give everyone a bite ... she didn't ask if you had lunch ' No, it was 'let's have lunch, take it' haha I'm not even going to ask. And the same... there is always coffee and if you want coffee please take it, there is your cup.

I: Yes, that's true!! I did not remember the coffee! haha and well, how would you describe the work that is done there? what activities are done?

P: ok...I don't know how to describe it well.... Obviously, what the seamstress wants is to tell the story of the Colombian armed conflict in a different, different way ... that is through weaving. And it's not that the fabrics have to be perfect, no ... it's you. So, it is something amazing because this activity wasn't only done in the memory center, but that began to be

everywhere...in the university, in Ciudad Bolivar there is one, in Soacha ... it began to spread everywhere. It is something amazing and empowering because the experience that she tells is like ... like she has been banished ... how do you say?

I: Displaced ...

P: haha yes, displaced from many places where she has been trying to help or empower other people or ... and well, then arriving to the capital city... well there is nothing here. And she arrives and she founds Ciudad Bolivar...and she realized that here in Bogotá many conflicts also happen ... yes it does. That's when it starts to empower a lot of young people and a lot of people around this... collective memory.

I: Yes ... I wanted to ask you a little more about those relationships. Have you ever had the opportunity to tell a story of yours?

P: Yes, because the people we reached there always have a story, a voice or a reference of something that happened to them in relation to any conflict, not necessarily the armed conflict... so I did tell my story. Mi family is very poor. I could go to Universidad de La Sabana, but because of a scholarship. But it has been hard for me too...they listen me... and my classmates... They realized things about me they didn't previously now.

I: Thank you for sharing this, F... and do you remember any fabric that has caught your attention?

P: I remember that when ... when they covered the monolith, they did an event and we went there to sell wafers to raise funds for the seamstress and I remember a lot the fabrics with the braids the foundation did. It caught a lot of attention because it was yellow, it stood out and well... because that was the one that I helped sew on the first day haha and another one, was the one we sewed in with my university classmates. It was a tree... we painted it, cut the leaves and everyone in the university helped us writing some peace messages in those leaves and then sewed them into the fabric. Everyone helped... teachers, students, cleaning ladies...

I: hahaha

I: Yes, I know which one you're talking about haha and well, can you please tell me how did you feel sewing?

P: Ok, well first I feel that sewing started as that women's bond and I don't know, I think that always, from our heritage and from our mothers and grandmothers, it has been like a women's job. I am not saying that only women can do it, because we have also realized that in the sewing room anyone can go, but in the sense that this was something inherited. sewing is something inherited ... my grandma, my mom and even my aunt have taught me how to sew. And it is also a way to close, to heal. The way in which one put a cloth on top of the other, join them with a knot was like... starting to interlace things and close things. To close them and leave them on the fabrics... forever. Sewing is ... another is uff, it is very reassuring and soothing because one begins to think what I am going display in here ...

and then later it doesn't matter. it's not about making it perfect or knitting with a particular technique ... no. It was what came out, is that no one is judging anything, no one is waiting for you to tell what are you doing, no one ... yes? What matters is you, the fabric, your needle and the thread ... It is very relaxing ... sometimes one does not even realize how much time has passed, how much is missing ... no, one is in there completely focus on the fabric.

I: In the here and now

P: hahaha yes, exactly.

I: hahah ricgh, perfect ... and how has it been useful in your life?

P: In my life in general?

I: mhm

P: Well, I think it has first transformed the ties with my colleagues in the research group. I feel that it has taught me to open up more, because I am very reserved and additionally ... it has taught me that one needs the other, one needs the community, one needs the conversations ... one needs these spaces as to open up ... and that it is not bad to do it, because if you open up, nothing bad will happen ... nothing will happen if you bond strongly with another person ... no. There is nothing bad.

I: Wow, well this seems very interesting to me ... why do you say that nothing bad is going to happen ... what makes people feel safe to tell their stories in those spaces?

P: I really believe that the fabric, the people in the sewing room, the people who were there, there was no hierarchy, no one was more than other, no one was a bad person ...one felt like an equal. You did not feel that your story did not matter or that someone else's story mattered more ... but it really was like: we are here, we are the same and if you come it is for something, and if I am here it is for something too. So there was not that gap ... one would come and start talking to someone and those barriers emotional walls would start to go ... also because there was an assertive communication and it was like a different bond that allowed one to open, without feeling unprotected or afraid or some kind of ... negative feeling.

I: as judgments

P: Yes.

I: Ok ... and well, what skills do you think you developed there?

P: professionally, because I think a lot of prejudices were removed ... not only with regarding victims, from with my colleagues haha I changed my mind towards them. and personally I felt a little stronger, not only me -individually, but I felt stronger in my friend's relationships, with our bond ... professionally I began to work much more with the other

and I think that ... it helped me a lot to take time for myself, for activities related to problem solving and identity. Also to have empathy .. professionally to know well how to work in teams ... that's what I think.

I: Super. Thank you very much and well, this is what you have learned from this space... but I would want you to tell me also how you have contributed to the seamstress?

P: Oops, how did I contribute? I don't know hahaha I feel they helped me more than I helped them hahaha

I: hahahahaha if you don't have an answer right now, there is no problem ... hahaha

P: Yes haha, I don't have the answer right now

I: hahahaha don't worry! Its ok... so all of what you've been telling me are the positive things about the seamstresses... but what points or what things do you think should be improved?

P: The challenges ...

I: Yes, as opportunities for improvement

P: Ok, well, I think it is like to let know the population more about this, becoming more visible. I know that they're trying...and we know that it is open and that everyone can come here, but one knows from because of other people who have been to the seamstress, not from the seamstress itself ... so I think that there can be an improvement in information management.

I: media?

P: Yes, exactly

I: Ok, what other things? or would that be the main one? Diffusion...

P: Yes, because I believe that would be the main one, but I would also believe that...spaces ... I know that they have it, but obviously it could reach many more people, to impact many more people. I feel that this is often directed to adults... but I think it could also reach schools, children ... or that kind of things. I believe that [REDACTED] does work in schools, but not the seamstress as such. So I think it would be nice to have voices from smaller people ... or younger, at least.

I: That is very interesting ... I had not thought about it. Ok, [REDACTED] hmmm... we came here because we were studying psychology and we shared this particular interest in social psychology and armed conflict

P: yes ...

I: Would you recommend this to other people outside of this circle?

P: yes

I: How would I convince them to come

P: Well, I think this is something that is for everyone. I mean, there is no problem ... of 'you have to be from the social field, you have to have that.... social criticism ...' No. I mean, I really feel that this for everyone. And it is when we were knitting ... that one realizes that those who go do have this profile, but it is because most of them have an academic link or something ... or because they are directly victims, but let's say when we started knitting in the university, other friends of us began to come from other places, from other careers, who had nothing to do with it, people from engineering...business administration

. People began to arrive who studied political science, who studied business administration ... and obviously not everyone was hooked, because we are all different. . but yes. It was that, even if they came to see ... it was striking. Yes, it made them vibrate their body a little.

I: And why do you think these activities are done?

P: Because one begins to know things about oneself that one has not seen before. So you start ... well, not only about yourself as an individual, but you also start looking at things of the people who have surrounded you ... I don't know ... during 3 years in my career and they never realized, so it's like WOW. I think it is important because it begins to give voice to something that it does not have. Let's say, a cloth has no voice, but it begins to give you voice...like it helps you to express things that there is no word for. Is very cool.

I: I see... Well, as we are nearing the end, I wanted to ask you if perhaps you want to say something else or do you think I missed something important I need to ask?

P: No, M. I think not ... right now I don't know. If something comes up, I'll tell you haha

I: haha ok, perfect. Thanks for everything .... how did you feel during the interview?

P: Well very nice because remembering all this is very cool, it is not only left in the memory, but I realized that it is in many things of one's life, right? it was starting to revive, the emotions hahaha... all those kind of things were very cool and I felt very comfortable haha

I: hahaha good, I'm glad. No, but thank you very much for your time and for this very valuable information.