

The Contribution of Reconciliation and Victim Memory to Sustainable Peace in Colombia

A Dynamical Systems Analysis Pilot Workshop

May 20 – 24, 2015, Bogotá, Colombia



A report by

The Advanced Consortium on Cooperation Conflict and Complexity

Earth Institute, Columbia University for The World Bank Group

July 2015





All photos courtesy of the AC⁴ project team: Joshua Fisher, Kyong Mazzaro, Nick Redding and Christine Straw



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About the Authors

The Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity (AC⁴) is housed at the Earth Institute, Columbia University. AC⁴ strives to foster sustainable peace through innovation and integration. AC⁴ works to enable and support integrative research and practice on sustainable peace, constructive conflict engagement, and sustainable development. This is built on an understanding that building peaceful and sustainable societies requires a systemic approach, leveraging the expertise and knowledge of scientists and practitioners from across disciplines and areas of practice. By connecting thought leaders at Columbia University and around the world, AC⁴ works to build opportunities to apply leading-edge science to generate solutions for some of our most pressing social and environmental challenges.

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This report represents the views of the authors alone and does not represent the institutional views Columbia University or of The World Bank.

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Executive summary

In many fragile and conflict-affected states, strong civil society and the consolidation of peace are pre-requisite for national economic development. In the context of entrenched civil conflict, ongoing peace talks between the Government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and parallel initiatives aimed at fostering reconciliation and building peace, the World Bank Group (WBG) engaged governmental and civil society organizations working on memory and reconciliation in Colombia in a participatory process aimed at strengthening civil society programs in order to facilitate peacebuilding and enhance development in the country. Undertaken in collaboration with Columbia University's Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict and Complexity (AC⁴), the initiative involved piloting a Dynamical Systems Theory (DST) workshop to accomplish several goals: 1) Share efforts with other civil society organizations engaged in similar work on memorialization of victims and addressing narratives, attitudes and emotions; 2) Explore the dynamics – local, regional and national – that affect their individual and collective ability to constructively impact local communities and society; 3) Identify opportunities to leverage the participants' impact individually and cooperatively, in order to positively influence movement toward peace and stability within Colombia; 4) Strengthen the network of actors working on peace and reconciliation in Colombia, and 5) Develop and refine a DST-informed stakeholder engagement methodology and distill lessons learned to inform peacebuilding and development interventions.

The pilot workshop was organized over three sessions in which discussions and exercises moved progressively from the generalized macro level toward highly operational levels of analysis to accomplish the workshop objectives. The first session of the workshop focused on macro-level systems of violence and peace in Colombia by exploring elements of the broader system of violence, conflict, memory and reconciliation. The second workshop session focused more directly on the operations and programs of participating organizations to identify and synthesize common theories of change and factors that either enhance or inhibit project success. During the final session of the workshop, participants explored the network of actors and organizations working on memory and reconciliation in Colombia, as well as the interrelationships among them, in order to identify key actors, network hubs, and under-represented groups in the sector.

Through this pilot approach, the participating organizations engaged in a series of systems dynamics analytical exercises including system visualization and causal loop diagramming, focus group dialogues focused on system parameters and dynamics, and social network analysis. Through these exercises, participants were able to identify common themes and challenges and gain deeper insight into the system dynamics that impact their efforts to constructively manage conflict and build peace in Colombia.

Key lessons for strengthening civil society activities and development interventions around memory and reconciliation that follow from the workshop include:



- Civil society activities occur in a wider constellation of programs and projects, each with their own assumptions related to change, desired end states, and programmatic objectives. Enhancing inter-institutional engagement can reduce the likelihood of over-programming and can create a common set of goals and assumptions, leading to more streamlined and responsive programming;
- Organizations face several common challenges at the operational level. By exploring the system dynamics surrounding those challenges in concert, and by identifying inter-institutional points of convergence, organizations are able to gain insights into the functioning and impact of those dynamics, and can identify new leverage points for overcoming them;
- The factors that impact project success and the dynamics surrounding them are highly context dependent, and the underlying mechanisms function uniquely according to context. The utility of systems focused analytical approaches for providing actionable strategies for organizations depends on focusing assessments for more targeted intervention by identifying a clear problem set and context in order to conduct analyses of sufficient depth to provide clear insight into system dynamics;
- Cross-fertilization of system assumptions, strategic priorities, and operational constraints across organizations can facilitate the

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identification of shared foci and the articulation of a common discourse that can shape the planning and operationalization of implementable actions and activities; and

- Coordination among civil society organizations is challenging and requires a convening organization with a broad enough scope and mandate to facilitate communication and information sharing among the community of practice in work on memory and reconciliation across the governmental, civil society, non-governmental and international organization sectors.

In addition to facilitating the pilot workshop, AC⁴ conducted a project learning exercise to evaluate the pilot methodology using several qualitative approaches to data collection. Based on data collected through participant observation and triangulated

against exit surveys and debrief discussions with the facilitation team and WBG team, the pilot workshop proved useful for eliciting the assumptions that drive or underpin civil society actions that use memory and reconciliation as tools for consolidating peace. Likewise, the methodology provided useful frameworks and exercises to explore drivers of and obstacles to success in programming, with multiple participants expressing interest in employing the approach in their respective organizations. The methodology also appeared useful for strengthening the network of actors and organizations engaged in this work, with many participants noting the importance of continuing the cross-organizational dialogue initiated at the workshop.

Key lessons from the implementation of the pilot workshop include the following lessons



for developing and refining a DST informed methodology for informing peacebuilding and development interventions:

- To enable the selection of appropriate mapping and system visualization techniques, workshop objectives and context (i.e. programmatic planning versus risk assessment versus interagency coordination) need to be clearly understood in advance by the facilitation team as well as participants;
- In order to move more efficiently from system dynamics visualization to the generation of strategic action planning, and to reduce the time required to visualize system dynamics in the macro, meso and micro/operational scales, mapping and systems visualization exercises should be anchored around clearly articulated problem sets, and supported by sufficient subject matter expertise among the participants;
- Convening participants in an interagency format constrains the specificity of a system dynamics mapping exercise by introducing multiple contexts and perspectives into the workshop. In conducting interagency coordination, conceptual maps may be a useful addition to the repertoire of tools and visualization techniques, and may enable participants to synthesize a common understanding of system dynamics and assumptions around change prior to causal loop mapping; and
- Understanding the entire constellation of actors and stakeholders involved in the system is critical for coordinating parallel efforts and identifying strategies for overcoming common challenges. Sufficient time should be devoted to social network analysis to enable

participants to identify key actors, network hubs and under-represented organizations in order to strengthen and more effectively leverage the network of actors across sectors.

Based on participant observation methods and exit surveys, we find that the DST-informed approach described here offers unique opportunities to 1) provide new insight into systems dynamics, which can multiply the dividends of development and peacebuilding interventions, and 2) reinforce social and professional networks centered around a shared goal or initiative, which can streamline programming and encourage inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration. Further, we propose that AC⁴ and WBG can enhance these benefits in future workshops through the inclusion of a train-the-trainer component, which could have a potential multiplier effect by providing individual organizations the tools and capacity to employ systems analytical approaches in their operations. Finally, DST approaches offer specific value for strategic risk assessment by providing analysts, planners and development specialists with the requisite tools and methods for analyzing factors and dynamics across scales. For future WBG funded projects, we propose the development of a reconfigured DST workshop format to specifically inform social and political risk assessments with key dynamics that may not be captured through traditional analytical approaches.

1. Background

A strong civil society is needed for national development and lasting peace. In Colombia, multiple civil society organizations are involved in peacebuilding by creating opportunities to document and explore the historical memories of victims of the conflict and engaging with communities at risk of recurring violence to reduce the likelihood of retaliation. There is the potential to multiply the impact of these initiatives by creating a structure and processes to enable Colombian public and civil society institutions to work collaboratively to share information, collectively understand the dynamics of their local, regional and national communities, and identify complementary strategies to jointly leverage their efforts and optimize use of resources.

The current project was built on the understanding that convening representatives of organizations involved in peace and reconciliation in highly participatory DST workshops would enable them to more fully articulate their implicit theories of change, identify synergies and gaps in existing programming and jointly identify actionable opportunities and partnerships to more effectively target their organizational programming. This, in turn, would multiply the individual impacts of government and civil society organizations and thus increase the prospects for sustainable peace and development in Colombia.

The project was led by the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Unit (FCV) of the WBG, with advisory support from the WBG's internal Conflict Resolution System and grant funding from the President's Contingency Fund. To ensure consistency with broader

Bank support for peace consolidation in Colombia, the project has been structured as a sub-task of the Programmatic Approach to Peace and Post-Conflict Support in Colombia, led by the Social, Urban, Rural and Resilience Global Practice.

The FCV unit commissioned AC⁴ to design and conduct a pilot workshop in Bogotá, Colombia from May 20 - 22, 2015 in order to implement and assess a method for using a DST approach to accomplish the following key objectives:

1. Share efforts with others engaged in similar work on memorialization of victims and addressing narratives, attitudes and emotions;
2. Explore the dynamics - local, regional and national - that affect their individual and collective ability to constructively impact local communities and society;
3. Identify opportunities to leverage the participants' impact individually and cooperatively, in order to positively influence movement toward peace and stability within Colombia;
4. Strengthen the network of actors working on peace and reconciliation in Colombia; and
5. Develop and refine a DST-informed stakeholder engagement methodology and distill lessons learned to inform peacebuilding and development interventions.

The AC⁴-designed workshop occurred in three sessions with representatives from nine civil society organizations promoting memory and reconciliation activities in Colombia. The group included governmental and non-governmental organizations focused on a range of

activities including policy development, inter-group coordination, and direct client work. A list of participants is included as Appendix A.

2. Methodology

WBG and AC⁴ representatives collaborated closely on workshop planning and implementation. The WBG (specifically FCV with support from the WBG's Colombia Country Office) coordinated all logistics for the workshop including: identifying and inviting target organizations and individuals to attend, and arranging the venue (kindly lent by the Javeriana University's Instituto Pensar). AC⁴ designed the pilot workshop facilitation plan, specific exercises and activities, and the documentation and learning strategy in accordance with the theoretical work on DST that has been developed by Dr. Peter T. Coleman at Columbia University. This approach employs facilitated mapping and visualization of causal loop diagrams to identify key factors and dynamics in a system. This enables the facilitation team to aide in refining participants' understandings of the ways that systems operate, and the key leverage points that can drive change in a system. Importantly, this approach enables participants to visualize feedback processes in a system and thereby understand the ways in which an action can exert indirect influence on seemingly unconnected components, giving rise to unintended changes.

To prepare participants to engage in the workshop, AC⁴ provided introductory materials on applying DST methods to applications related to peace and conflict. Likewise, AC⁴ provided participants with an

agenda for the workshop (Appendix B). Prior to the workshop, participant organizations were provided the opportunity to complete a voluntary questionnaire about their organization and their work (Appendix C) in order to 1) provide AC⁴ facilitators with basic data about each organization as well as a sense of their focus and work; 2) prime participants to think about their organization's approach to creating positive change as preparation for workshop activities, and 3) assist participants in understanding system dynamics concepts. AC⁴ then collated submitted responses and refined the workshop facilitation plan to be more responsive to the organizations and participants attending the workshop.

In order to accomplish the objective of the Pilot Workshop, AC⁴ developed the facilitation strategy and plan for successive sessions to build incrementally over the course of the workshop. While the emphasis was on participant centered activities, the two AC⁴ facilitators provided introductions to applying a systems perspective, utilizing mapping tools, and providing contexts for the work of the group. Individual, small-group and large-group activities provided an environment for individual participant reflection, dialogue, synthesis of information, and the development of relationships across organizations and sectors. The final workshop agenda is provided as Appendix D.

During the first workshop session participants explored the macro-level systems dynamics of violence and peace in Colombia by examining their implicit and programmatic assumptions regarding the dynamic interconnectivity between violence, conflict, memory and reconciliation (Figure



Figure 1. Workshop participants engaged in a mapping exercise during Session 1, Identifying Common Themes and Assumptions at the Macro Level, working to describe the key primary and secondary factors and dynamics that contribute to violence in Colombia.

1). The goal for this session was to synthesize a set of assumptions and narratives that describe how constructive change can result from activities related to memory and reconciliation at a broad level. In the second session, the workshop then shifted to a more explicitly operational level in which participants focused on the programming and projects of their respective organizations to analyze the drivers of success and obstacles to the effectiveness of their operations (Figure 2). This session was aimed at eliciting the key system parameters that enable or inhibit constructive change resulting from their organizations' operations. In the final session, participants described the network of actors engaged in, or important to, work with memory and reconciliation in Colombia and the interrelationships between them (Figure 3). The purpose of this session was to strengthen the network of organizations engaged in work on memory and reconciliation by identifying key stakeholders, common actors, and important

social hubs common across multiple networks.

Because the pilot workshop included the dual goals of strengthening civil society's impact on peace and conflict management in Colombia and exploring the utility of DST-informed analytical approaches for WBG more broadly, AC⁴ included a learning and documentation component to the workshop. This consisted of two AC⁴ staff conducting quasi-ethnographic observation during the workshop via a participant observation approach to collect qualitative data on the effectiveness of the workshop format and exercises in accomplishing workshop objectives. This team triangulated the observation data by recording and analyzing the outputs of the workshop, documenting and analyzing facilitator and



Figure 2. Workshop participants engaged in mapping factors and dynamics affecting social participation during Session 2, Exploring Systemic Feedback Processes at the Operational Level, of the Pilot Workshop.



Figure 3. Workshop participants reflecting on organizational stakeholder maps created during Session 3, Identifying Key Stakeholder Networks, of the pilot workshop.

WBG reflections during the workshop, and conducting a participant exit survey.

3. Workshop outputs

Activities conducted during the workshop yielded a series of outputs that built successively to contribute to achieving the specified workshop objectives. Likewise, the participatory design of the sessions provided a platform for dialogue and relationship building. Activities and outputs of the workshop are described in the following sections.

Session 1 (May 20, 2015): Identifying Common Themes and Assumptions at the Macro Level

The first activity of the workshop consisted of an individual writing exercise to describe personal and organizational perspectives on the role of memory and narrative in

reinforcing *patterns of violence* in Colombia. This was followed by a one hour large-group debrief, where each participant was given the opportunity to describe their perspective. Key themes that emerged from this discussion include:

- “Truth” in the context of conflict is subjective and is, in part, defined according to power relationships that privilege certain narratives over others;
- Cycles of violence and vengeance reinforce conflict, perpetuating tensions in the country;
- There is a perceived political culture of hatred and retaliation toward ‘the other’ that reinforces and perpetuates the conflict; and
- Various parties have competing visions of the future and desired end states for the conflict, and those competing visions increase the complexity of reaching a sustainable solution.

A second individual writing exercise focused on the role of memory and narrative in creating *patterns of peace* in Colombia. During the large-group debrief, interestingly, the discussion among the group tended to focus on a perceived absence of programs and activities that build peace in Colombian society. Participants had difficulty identifying or conceptualizing patterns of peace despite representing organizations whose mission is either implicitly or explicitly connected to the creation and consolidation of peace. However, participants did discuss the elements that inhibited the development of patterns of peace, and were able to identify several confounding factors including:

- There exist significant challenges to reintegrating victims and perpetrators into Colombian society;
- Certain patterns of peace exist at a highly localized level, but are not replicable at the national level;
- Trust is lacking across groups and institutions that comprise Colombian society and needs to be restored in order to make progress on creating cycles of peace; and
- A superordinate Colombian identity would enable the construction of cohesive communities and disrupt the current culture of hate and punishment that defines the conflict.

The writing exercises and large-group debriefing discussions from the first session prepared participants to conduct a causal loop mapping exercise to enable them to visualize the drivers and inhibitors of peace and conflict according to the meta narrative generated in the previous discussion sessions. Participants worked in three small mapping groups to identify a central theme

and then identified the factors and the relationships between factors that contributed to the dynamics of the system.

As depicted in Figure 4, the first group created a causal loop diagram of the system surrounding “memory and reconciliation”. The highlighted area of Figure 4 isolates one particular dynamic that the group identified where increased violence decreases social participation, resulting in lower trust and negative views of the other. Those views of the other, in turn, lead to less willingness to work with the other, thus completing the cycle.

The second group identified “conflict” as the central variable, which was stratified into social, cultural, economic, interpersonal and political dimensions. One process identified by this group highlighted in Figure 5, shows a cluster of factors that relate to trust (forgiveness, fear, alternative methods of

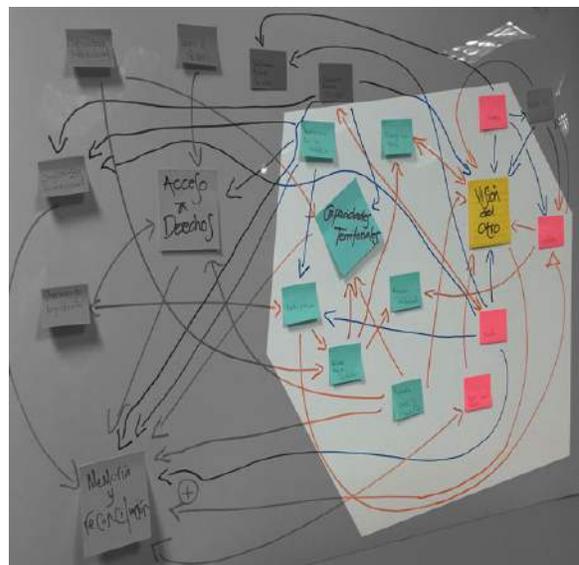


Figure 4. Session 1, Group 1’s systems map considering “memory and reconciliation”. The highlighted portion of the photo isolates one particular dynamic identified where increased violence decreases social participation, resulting in lower trust and negative views of the other. Those views of the other, in turn, lead to less willingness to work with the other, thus completing the cycle.

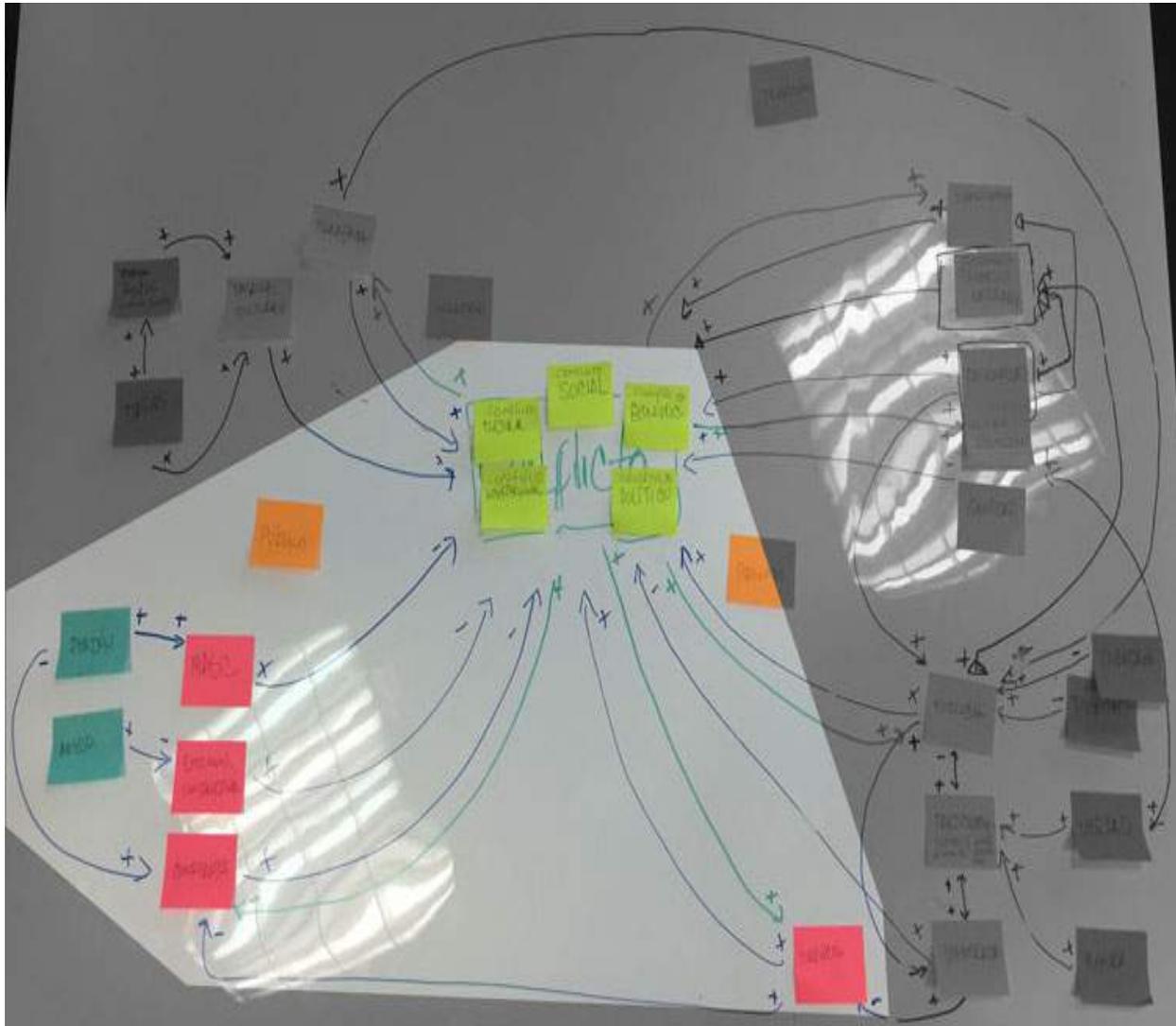


Figure 5. Session 1, Group 2's systems map considering "conflict" as the central variable and stratified into social, cultural, economic, interpersonal and political dimensions. The highlighted portion of the photo displays a cluster of factors related to trust.

conflict resolution, constructive emotions) and the relationship of trust to conflict and corruption in governance. As corruption increases, trust decreases, leading to increased conflict. Increased conflict, in turn, leads to more corruption in a reinforcing process.

Group 3 identified "level of peace" as their central concept to explore (Figure 6). One dynamic this group identified (highlighted area of Figure 6), is trust is reciprocally linked with vindictive memory such that

vindictive memory processes keep trust from building – and consequently levels of peace are unable to increase. Social inclusion is also illustrated here, having direct relationships with trust and level of peace.

At the conclusion of the first workshop session participants were debriefed regarding the experience of generating the maps. In general, participants agreed that the exercise resulted in a rich discussion, which facilitated generating a macro vision of the system. However, participants

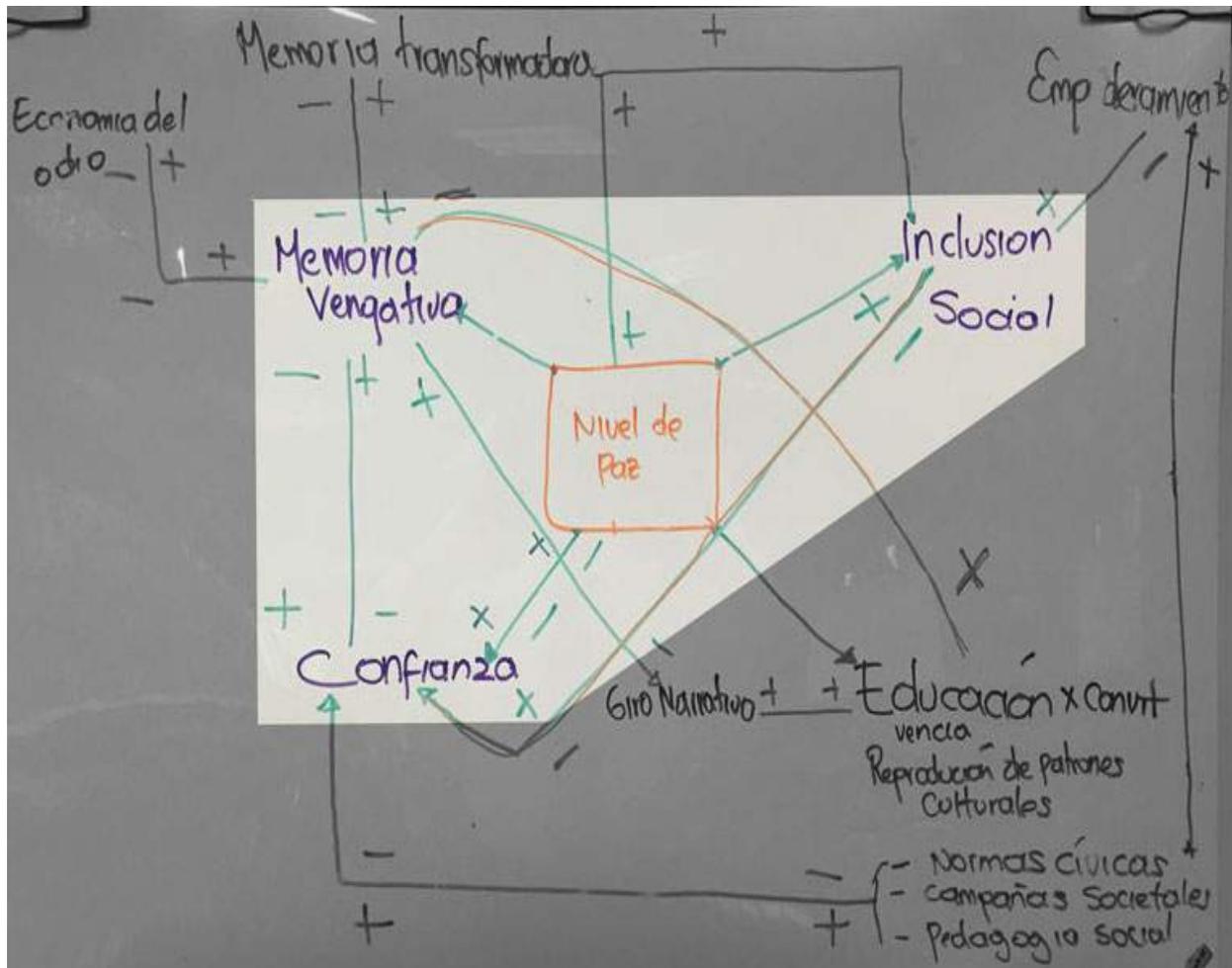


Figure 6. Session 1, Group 3’s systems map explored “level of peace” as a central concept with the highlighted area focusing on dynamics between trust, vindictive memory, level of peace and social inclusion.

expressed concerns that operating at the macro level of abstraction left out individual actors and territorial considerations, making it difficult to incorporate multiple perspectives and operational-level dynamics into a single visualization. They likewise expressed a need to distinguish between the utility of this approach as a process of change itself, or as a means of developing a product that can later inform change processes.

Session 2 (May 21, 2015): Exploring Systemic Feedback Processes at the Operational Level

The second workshop session was intended to move participants from the previous sessions’ macro conceptualization of work on memory and reconciliation into the operational level of their organizations’ programming. Through an initial writing exercise and subsequent facilitated small group dialogues, participants described specific projects that were representative of their organizations’ work, identifying

underlying theories of change and key factors that enable and prevent project success.

During the debriefing discussions, several factors that enhance or drive operational-level success were identified, including:

- Understanding relevant cultural values and framing interventions appropriately based around this understanding.
- Building on efforts that have already produced results, to leverage the power of systemic change.
- Focusing on psychosocial factors, including the interchange of experiences and articulating certain credos, such as 'do no harm.'
- Open opportunities for networking, including inter-institutional work to develop shared values and understandings for moving the work forward.
- Active engagement with multiple organizations to encourage continuity across memory and reconciliation efforts.
- Whether or not individuals feel safe in their communities.
- Organizations and institutions engaging in multidisciplinary approaches to address social challenges.
- Educational opportunities, such as how to build emotional awareness and training youth leaders.
- Encouraging strong civic participation and empowerment in communities.
- Efforts to actively encourage a place for the voice of victims in local and national governance.
- Ensuring sufficient living conditions for community members.

In addition to enhancing factors, the group identified a range of factors that inhibit operational-level success including:

- Insufficient coordination between governmental entities and operations.
- Lack of help and coordination in communities from their local authority structures.
- Public officials with insufficient education for carrying out their role.
- Citizens not trusting and/or lacking confidence in public institutions.
- Insufficient financial resources for organizations to carry out their project goals.
- Insufficient connections and coordination between organizations doing similar work.
- Stigmatization toward members of certain groups and the impacts of this on the ability to transition into mainstream society.
- Insufficient processes locally and nationally for long-term planning around change efforts.
- Continued perceptions that the armed conflict is a valid approach for resolving conflict.
- Feelings of vulnerability among individuals in communities.

Following the group discussions, common themes across organizations were identified, and two groups explored factors and dynamics through a second causal loop mapping exercise. The two themes groups elected to visualize were: "trust in civil society/state" and "social participation."

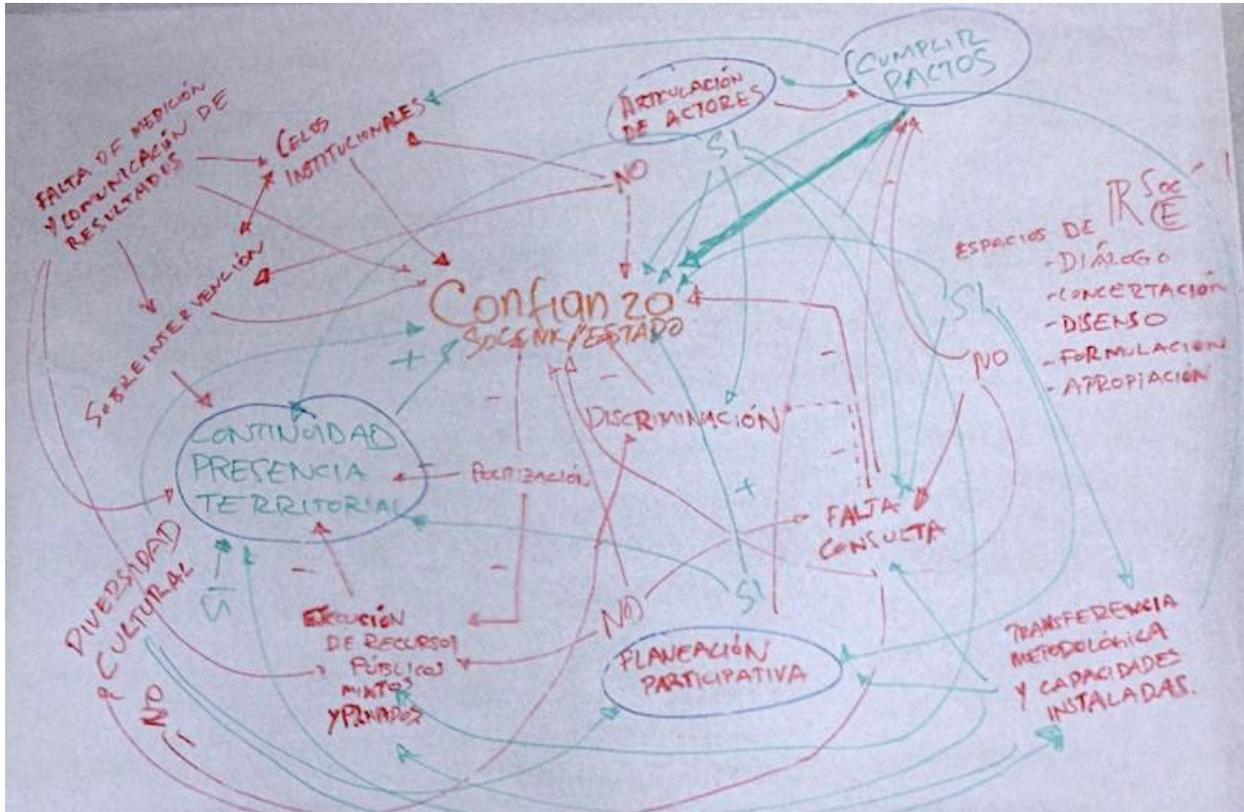


Figure 7. Session 2, Group 1's systems map focusing on factors and dynamics related to trust.

The first mapping group created a visualization (Figure 7) centered around what the participants viewed as a lack of trust in government and resulting low levels of civic participation. That lack of participation is exacerbated by the exclusion of relevant actors in civic and political discourses in Colombian society. Key system dynamics included in this visualization are described in later sections of this report.

The second group focused their visualization on social participation in political activities, and identified multiple associated factors that include: decision making, reliance on external actors, effective communication, and hopelessness (Figure 8). As with Figure 7, key insights from the causal loop diagram are discussed in subsequent sections of this report.

During the debriefing discussion, participants described that organizations tend to be isolated and that there is little cross-fertilization regarding the narratives used to understand the role of memory and reconciliation on peace and conflict broadly, and project-level success more specifically. The mapping approach helped to open communication, allowing the group to generate new, co-created narratives. Further, this mapping activity was useful for representatives from multiple organizations to be able to see and understand both the common themes across their work as well as the distinct approaches each employ. This process made it possible to identify, at the systemic level, the impacts that organizations are having, as well as what is missing that would allow organizations to be more successful. Through the process,

participants were also able to identify some of the ways in which the work of their organizations is disconnected from the communities they serve.

Some participants expressed that this approach may be helpful for building consensus around future action plans both within their organizations, and in larger collaborative efforts. Many participants also expressed the need for a continuation of the workshop. The work of collaboratively generating these maps (and that conversations that followed) should continue to further enhance information sharing and collaboration. Finally, multiple participants

suggested that workshops like this should have wider social and institutional participation, and include community members and other civil society organizations and sectors.

Session 3 (May 22, 2015): Identifying Key Stakeholder Networks

To identify key organizations that impact the work of the organizations participating in the workshop, each participating organization generated a stakeholder map to highlight the connections between beneficiaries, clients, funders, partners, regulators, and

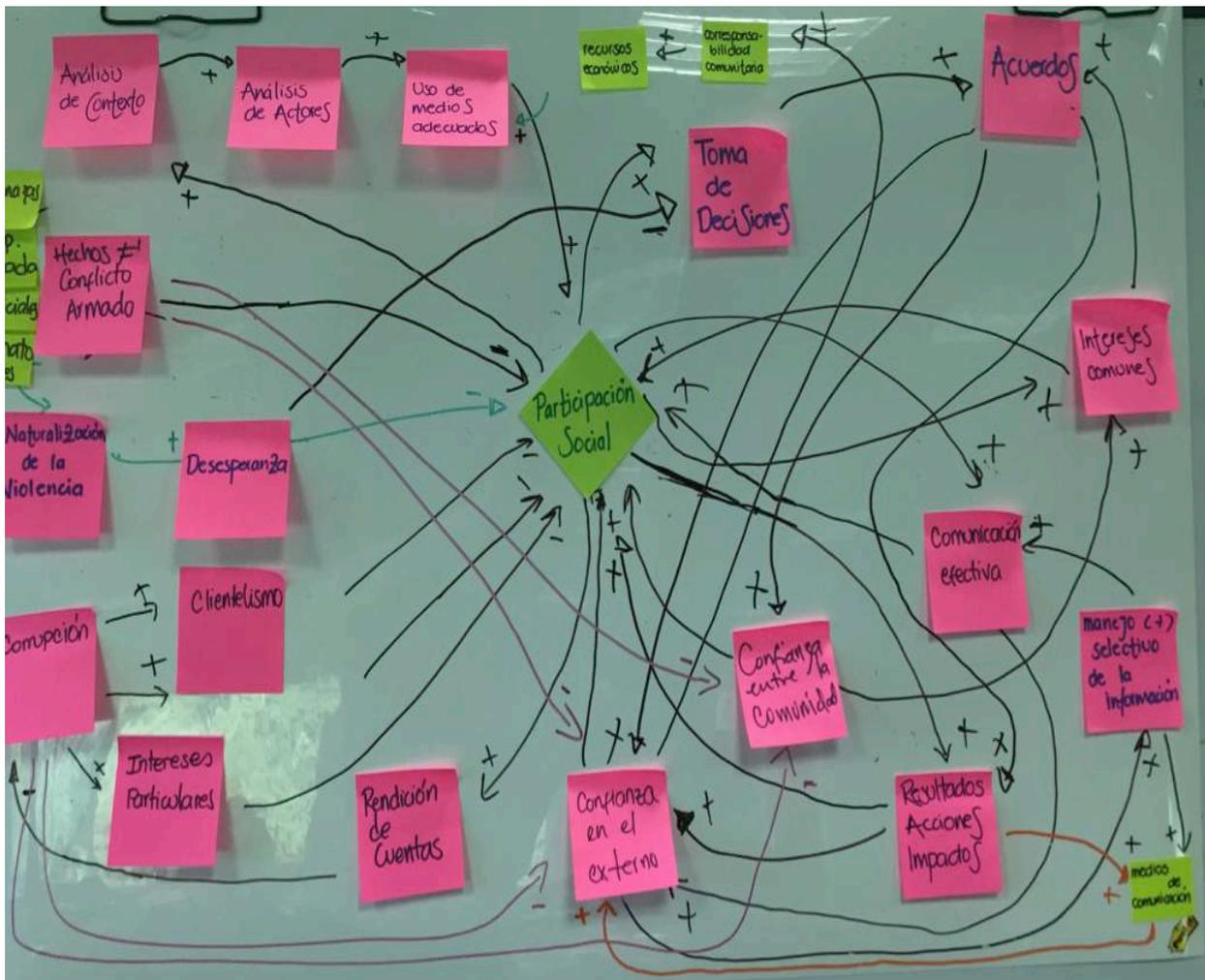


Figure 8. Session 2, Group 2's systems map focusing on factors and dynamics related to social participation.



Figure 9. Session 3 sample stakeholder map 1.

others that are significant to the work of their organization. Eight maps were created (Note: See Appendix A for the list of participating organizations). Two illustrative maps are provided here as Figures 9 and 10.

During the activity debrief, several themes emerged. Participants described that this activity was useful for identifying relationships as well as for understanding how they relate to other actors in distinct and/or similar ways across organizations. Likewise, the group discussed the ways in which the activity enabled them to share knowledge regarding the social connections among groups, and the nature of the relationships in terms of quality, effectiveness, etc. Further, the group discussed how these maps can help stakeholders identify the types of relationships, including the distinct qualities



Figure 10. Session 3 sample stakeholder map 2.

of nascent relationships, and the challenges associated with each. Participants concluded that more emphasis needs to be placed on creating alliances among groups involved in similar work, and that it is essential to consider the importance of power in relationship processes, such as the authenticity with which a government engages in a process or relationship.

4. Lessons learned

Based on data collected through participant observation methods and participant exit surveys, the workshop accomplished the project objectives described in section 2, of this report. Participants from local organizations focusing on memory and reconciliation as tools to reduce violence and promote peace in Colombia were convened in a participatory workshop to share efforts and insights related to their common work. In so doing, they were able to explore the factors that affect their individual and collective ability to constructively impact local communities and societies, and identify opportunities to magnify the impact of their work. Further, the workshop enabled them to explicitly identify the network of actors contributing to their work, and the opportunities to strengthen the network by identifying gaps, hubs, and key stakeholders. At the same time, the workshop was intended to serve as a pilot to explore the utility of DST-informed analytical approaches as tools to inform peacebuilding and development interventions. In the discussion that follows, lessons learned from this pilot workshop are distilled into two themes: key insights for strengthening civil society programs on memory and reconciliation, and

methodological insights for DST-informed stakeholder engagement.

Key Insights for Strengthening Civil Society Programs on Memory and Reconciliation

Participant observations on the workshop outputs reflect that during the pilot workshop participants were able to conduct initial explorations of factors, dynamics, and feedback loops that affect levels of violence and peace from the perspective of memory and reconciliation in Colombia. Participants were also able to develop more nuanced understandings of concepts such as *trust* and *social participation* and their role in reinforcing system dynamics around violence and peace. Based on that more nuanced understanding, participants were able to identify avenues for enhancing peace by leveraging system dynamics, albeit at a highly generalized level. The demonstrated value of DST-informed analytical approaches for (1) enhancing inter-institutional engagement, (2) identifying inter-institutional points of convergence, (3) expanding assessment for more targeted intervention, (4) increasing collective impact, and (5) contextualizing strategic stakeholder engagement, highlights the opportunity for utilizing this approach to inform development and peacebuilding programs. Future workshops designed with operationally focused targets have the potential to support participants and organizations in leveraging nuanced systemic understanding to build strategic collaborations with key stakeholders and adjust the development of projects, programs or activities, and ultimately increase their impact on development and

peacebuilding in Colombia. Based on lessons learned from the pilot workshop, the following key insights could be leveraged to magnify the impact of existing civil society programming on memory and reconciliation in Colombia.

1. *Enhancing inter-institutional engagement*

Civil society activities occur in a wider constellation of programs and projects, each with their own assumptions related to change, desired end states, and programmatic objectives. Enhancing inter-institutional engagement can reduce the likelihood of over-programming and create a common set of goals and assumptions, leading to streamlined and responsive programming.

The first objective of this workshop was to facilitate a process that would bring participants representing multiple organizations together to identify common themes, assumptions, approaches and programs related to their work in memory and reconciliation. As described in section 4, and as shown in the maps presented in Figures 2-8 above, participants were able to initiate a process of inter-institutional engagement. In particular, visualizations of causal loop diagrams created during the second session of the workshop focused on the themes of *trust* and *participation*, which had previously been identified as central themes during the macro analysis of the first session and were deemed common to the work of all participant organizations. This enabled participants to situate their assumptions about change in the system,

and their programming based on those assumptions, in the broader contexts of Colombian society and the wider constellation of civil society programs on memory and reconciliation. By shifting between macro, meso and micro/operational scales, participants gained a much clearer understanding of how their work contributes to the broader context of peace and conflict in Colombia.

2. Identifying inter-institutional points of convergence

Organizations face several common challenges at the operational level. By exploring the system dynamics surrounding those challenges in concert, and by identifying inter-institutional points of convergence, organizations are able to gain insights into the functioning and impact of those dynamics, and can identify new leverage points for overcoming them.

In addition to a situated understanding of their work and their assumptions, participants likewise gained specific insights into the multiple system dynamics surrounding the role of trust and participation in constructively managing conflict in Colombia at the macro level, as well as the dynamics that they confront at the operational level. In exploring these dynamics through a participatory process of inter-organizational engagement, participants developed a broader and more nuanced appreciation of the relevance and systemic impacts of these factors by comparing their experience and that of their own organization with others. While multiple common themes emerged through the

workshop process, the examples of trust and participation demonstrate the continuity of ideas across scale and workshop activities, which was central to the workshop design and enabled participants to gain more nuanced insights into the importance and impacts of such concepts on systemic dynamics.

3. Expanding assessment for more targeted intervention

The factors that impact project success and the dynamics surrounding them are highly context dependent, and the underlying mechanisms function uniquely according to context. The utility of systems focused analytical approaches for providing actionable strategies for organizations depends on focusing assessments for more targeted intervention by identifying a clear problem set and context in order to conduct analyses of sufficient depth to provide clear insight into system dynamics.

The second objective of the workshop was for participants to explore the dynamics of the systems of violence and peace in Colombia as seen through their work in memory and reconciliation. Through workshop activities, in particular the two causal loop diagramming exercises, participants were able to explore systemic feedback processes that enhance and/or inhibit each organization's work. Within the time constraints of this pilot workshop, participants began to jointly explore, understand and distill insights into these complex processes. By exploring the interactions between factors, participants

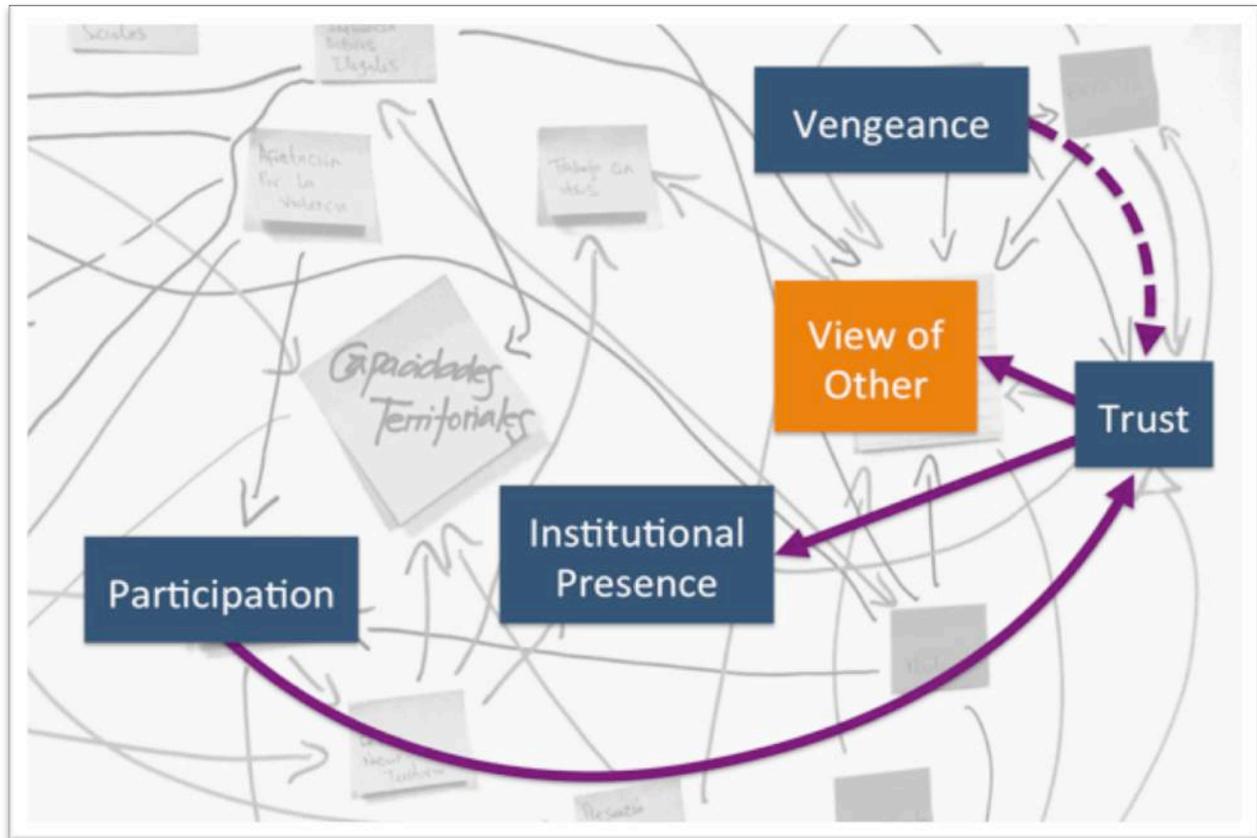


Figure 11. Session 1, Group 1's systems map with trust-related feedback loops explored.

were able to identify leverage points where focused actions or interventions could make tangible gains in other areas of the system.

For example, all maps incorporated the idea of *trust*, albeit in different contexts. Processes identified in the maps produced

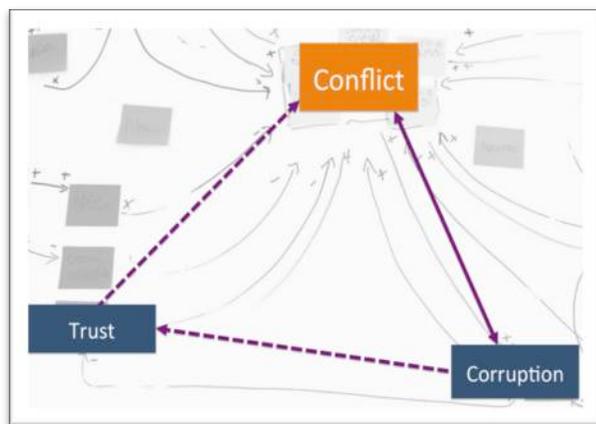


Figure 12. Session 1, Group 2's systems map with trust-related feedback loops explored.

during the first session of the workshop, illustrated in Figures 11, 12, and 13, reflect reinforcing dynamics (depicted by a solid line) and inhibiting dynamics (depicted as a dashed line) between trust and a series of other factors including: *view of [the] other*, *vengeance*, *participation*, and *institutional presence* (see Figure 11); *conflict and corruption* (see Figure 12); and *level of peace*, *social inclusion*, and *vindictive memory* (see Figure 13). In these examples, increased levels of one factor in a reinforcing loop serve to augment levels of the associated factors, creating a positive feedback cycle. Conversely, inhibiting loops demonstrate that increased levels of one factor actually serve to diminish levels of associated factors, thereby creating a negative feedback process.

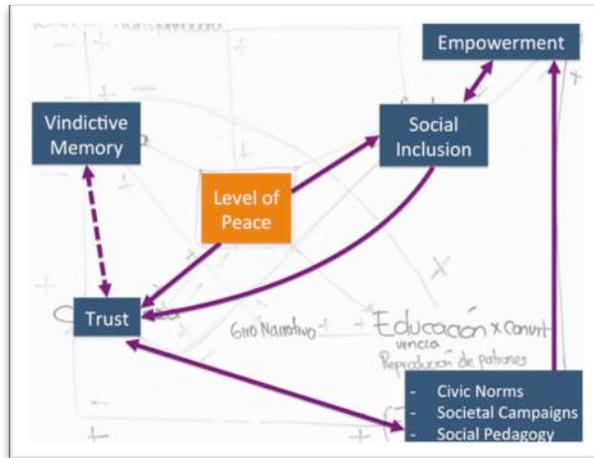


Figure 13. Session 1, Group 3's systems map with trust-related feedback loops explored.

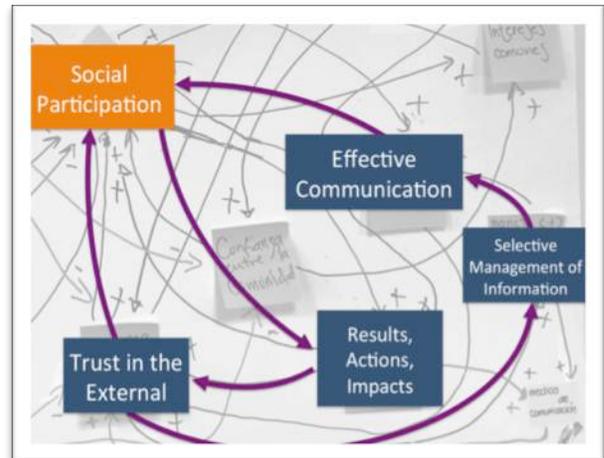


Figure 14. Session 2, Group 2's systems map focusing on the feedback loop including "trust in the external."

While the notion of trust was explored in further detail in the work of Session 2 (see figures 7 and 8), Figures 14 and 15 explored its articulation at the operational level. Here, the concept of trust was further distinguished as *external trust* and *trust within the community*, each with different factors affecting their increase or decrease. As Figure 14 shows, an increase in external trust increased *social participation* and subsequently *results, actions and impacts*, further increasing external trust. This group also noted an important reinforcing feedback loop between *effective communication* and *external trust*. Figure 15 shows the links between *social participation*, *trust in the community* and *common interests*. This range of conceptualizations of trust, offers one area for further exploration, definition and dynamics, particularly at the operational level with regards to the work of these organizations.

4. Increasing collective impact

Cross-fertilization of system assumptions, strategic priorities, and operational constraints across organizations can facilitate the identification of shared foci and the articulation of a common discourse that can shape the planning and operationalization of implementable actions and activities.

The third objective of the workshop included the participants exploring actionable strategies that could multiply the collective impact of their organizations. Three points of interest are notable. First, participants organically incorporated the application of their learning about the systems they are working in to their work. During Session 2, the map produced by group 2 (see Figure 16), displays a reinforcing operational process of the analysis of context and actors and the use of adequate means to increase social participation.



Figure 15. Session 2, Group 2's systems map focusing on the feedback loop including "trust within the community."

Second, during the final debrief, it was noted that multiple organizations are often working in the same communities with the same people. In light of this shared focus, an argument for articulation of a common discourse emerged. Using the example of the multiple conceptualizations of trust noted above, understanding similarities and differences will aid in clarifying goals, actions and potential impacts within communities and achievement across organizations, even if agreement on a single conceptualization is not possible. Finally, participants clearly noted the benefits of exploring the systems of violence and peace through a DST-informed analytical approach. However, they also expressed a real need for tools and capacity to enable them to take the next operational step to identify and develop implementable actions/activities that come from understanding complexity.

5. *Contextualizing strategic stakeholder engagement*

Coordination among civil society organizations is challenging and requires a convening organization with a broad enough scope and mandate to facilitate

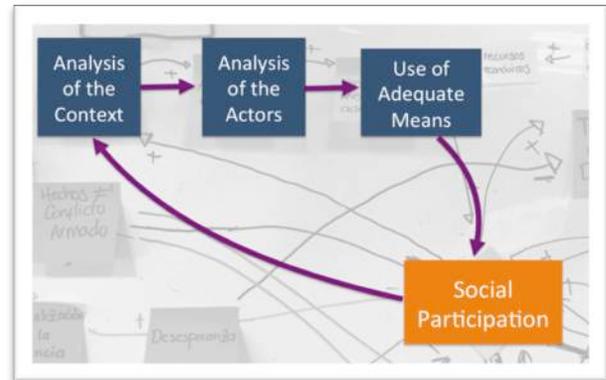


Figure 16. Session 2, Group 2's systems map focusing on an operational feedback loop

communication and information sharing among the community of practice in work on memory and reconciliation across the governmental, civil society, non-governmental and international organization sectors.

This initial workshop included a limited number of groups that were identified by WBG as integral to work on violence and peace in Colombia through the lens of memory and reconciliation. The fourth objective of the workshop, locating additional critical stakeholders and strengthening the network of actors, was addressed during the actor mapping exercise of Session 3. By the close of the workshop, the participating organizations appeared to recognize a common problem of isolation between other organizations and themselves. One participant noted, 'as organizations, we are very isolated from each other. But one of the things I learned was that through this medium, we could create relationships.' Additionally, several participants noted the problem of "over-intervention" (i.e. multiple organizations tackling the same issues and employing similar strategies). There further seemed to be a common recognition that it is precisely

due to the lack of connections between the organizations and a lack of coordination among organizations that this happens. Another participant shared the observation that ‘we all worked on the same issue, but in distinct ways; hence our shared interests. It is imperative for us to start going to the field together.’ Through the visualization of social networks and the subsequent debrief, clear hubs across each organizations’ network were identified that could serve a convening and coordinating role across civil society organizations.

Methodological Insights for DST-informed Stakeholder Engagement

The fifth objective of the workshop involved designing, piloting and refining a DST-informed approach to accomplish objectives 1 – 4 described above. Based on information gathered through participant observation as well as through exit surveys, the process of engaging participants in this DST-informed approach offers advantages over other facilitation techniques. We found that (1) the specificity of context and objectives, (2) a problem-oriented approach, (3) the availability of a repertoire of tools and visualization techniques, and (4) insights from social network analyses are key for the successful application of systems-focused analytical approaches to inform WBG peacebuilding and development programs and interventions. Specific insights into the DST-informed methodology are described below.

1. The specificity of context and objectives

To enable the selection of appropriate mapping and system visualization techniques, workshop objectives and context (i.e. programmatic planning versus risk assessment versus interagency coordination) need to be clearly understood in advance by the facilitation team as well as participants.

At the beginning of Session 1, open conversations wherein participants described the positive impact of their work set the stage for the larger conversation and elicited interest in moving forward with the DST-informed activities. However, the DST-informed approach requires participants to jointly agree on the scope and focus of a systems analysis and then to jointly construct underlying definitions of concepts included in systems visualizations. While at first the participants appeared somewhat hesitant to engage in a more open discussion and struggled to identify a common issue during the first mapping exercise, this changed as the workshop moved forward. Through continued dialogue and the exercise of co-creating causal loop diagrams, they were able to recognize problems, similarities, and differences among their organizations’ work, which allowed them to identify a common factor around which to build the map, and also to construct a common language for discussing the system that allowed the conversations to become fluent. Thus the methodology proved useful for accomplishing sharing (Objective 1), and by extension developing a shared appreciation of synergistic programming. However, this process of negotiation among participants

required considerable time. In future workshops, clearly specifying objectives and context a priori will streamline the initial discussions among participants, and thereby provide them with greater time for moving from systems visualization to strategic action planning.

2. *Problem-oriented approach*

In order to move more efficiently from system dynamics visualization to the generation of strategic action planning, and to reduce the time required to visualize system dynamics in the macro, meso and micro/operational scales, mapping and systems visualization exercises should be anchored around clearly articulated problem sets, and supported by sufficient subject matter expertise among the participants.

Another objective of this pilot workshop was to help participants explore the systemic feedback processes that serve to enhance and/or inhibit their organization's work (Objective 2). While the workshop design successfully enabled participants to begin to explore dynamics at the operational level, they also voiced that any factor, linkage, direction of influence, or dynamic was heavily context-dependent. Exploring dynamics at an abstract level made it difficult to definitively produce visualizations that represented multiple operating contexts. In response, multiple participants suggested that working on highly contextualized issues would be more useful, by enabling them to delve deeper into concrete examples. From the perspective of the facilitation team, being clear about the objectives of the exercise (e.g. pedagogical

versus data elicitation, or interagency coordination versus programmatic planning) may help clarify the types of mapping, prompts, and specificity of tasks that will allow the groups to explore system dynamics effectively. For instance, in some cases, conceptual maps might be more appropriate than the causal-loop mapping approach that was employed.

3. *The availability of a repertoire of tools and visualization techniques*

Convening participants in an interagency format constrains the specificity of a system dynamics mapping exercise by introducing multiple contexts and perspectives into the workshop. In conducting interagency coordination, conceptual maps may be a useful addition to the repertoire of tools and visualization techniques, and may enable participants to synthesize a common understanding of system dynamics and assumptions around change prior to causal loop mapping.

Regarding the utility of the DST-informed approach for realizing the third objective of exploring actionable strategies that could multiply the collective impact of organizations, the methodology employed in the workshop successfully enabled participants to identify programmatic priorities such as building trust, enhancing social participation, and other similar focal areas. However, the short duration of the workshop and the generalized context of working to coordinate multiple parallel efforts left insufficient time for fully articulating theories of change, drivers of success, and actionable strategies for

intervention at the purely programmatic or operational level for any single organization. Part of the difficulty relates to the nature of the exercise, and the fact that the work of participant groups was not anchored to a shared case or joint project. In this case, the DST approach requires working at a deeper level of abstraction. As a consequence, it was not possible to focus the conversation on specific challenges or enhancers. Rather, the workshop process led to the identification of generalized action items, such as *enhancing trust* in order to generate greater *social participation*, which provide individual organizations with a conceptual link and an evidence-based justification for focusing funds and personnel on specific activities and programmatic objectives.

The workshop process demonstrated that analyzing the complexity of a system and the dynamics that operate among factors in an interagency setting requires that participants reach a consensus around what factors/dynamics are relevant in the system, and the dynamics that operate among factors. This requires negotiation among group members regarding definitions, operating mechanisms, and interactions among factors, and that process of that negotiation produces new insights into system dynamics for all group members. However, the products of group negotiations, including system visualizations, may be difficult to effectively communicate to organizational colleagues who were not part of the analytic process. As a result, additional visualizations including conceptual maps may be useful tools to streamline group negotiations and coordination and may also aide in the communication of system visualizations to external parties.

4. The importance of social network analyses

Understanding the entire constellation of actors and stakeholders involved in the system is critical for coordinating parallel efforts and identifying strategies for overcoming common challenges. Sufficient time should be devoted to social network analysis to enable participants to identify key actors, network hubs and under-represented organizations in order to strengthen and more effectively leverage the network of actors across sectors.

The fourth objective of the workshop was to locate additional critical stakeholders and to strengthen the network or actors working on memory and reconciliation. This final activity in Session 3 involved social network analysis and stakeholder mapping, and generated rich discussions around the establishment of new professional and organizational connections among the participants. The identification of key actors that should be present in future workshops occurred throughout Sessions 1 & 2, but this was particularly prevalent in Session 3. Importantly, the process of stakeholder





analysis generated consensus around the need to have a local “convener” organizational/institutional entity that could coordinate activities and information sharing across civil society organizations in the future.

5. Recommendations

A key objective of this workshop was to serve as a pilot for the facilitated, DST-informed, stakeholder engagement process (Objective 5) that can be scaled to inform peacebuilding and development interventions inside Colombia and potentially in other WBG funded initiatives. AC⁴'s observations presented below draw on discussions with the WBG team.

Value of the DST Approach

Based on the experience from the pilot workshop, we conclude the DST informed approach allows for the articulation of personal and institutional knowledge and problem solving around common themes, challenges and dynamics faced in interagency settings. This is particularly useful for the refining theories of change,

streamlining activities, identifying and overcoming recurrent challenges, and multiplying successful implementation of initiatives at the macro, meso and micro/operational scales. Importantly, the DST approach offers the opportunity for a non-transactional exchange of information between participants. This was evidenced through the development and discussion of complex systems visualizations prompting participants to co-identify key actors, synergies, areas of interest, and common challenges.

We suggest that workshop activities, such as the DST-informed approach described here offer unique opportunities to 1) provide new insight into systems dynamics, which can multiply the dividends of development and peacebuilding interventions, and 2) reinforce social and professional networks centered around a shared goal or initiative, which can streamline programming and encourage inter-organizational cooperation and collaboration. Further, we propose that AC⁴ and WBG can enhance these benefits in future workshops through the inclusion of a train-the-trainer component, which could have a potential multiplier effect by

providing individual organizations the tools and capacity to employ systems analytical approaches in their operations.

Design Considerations

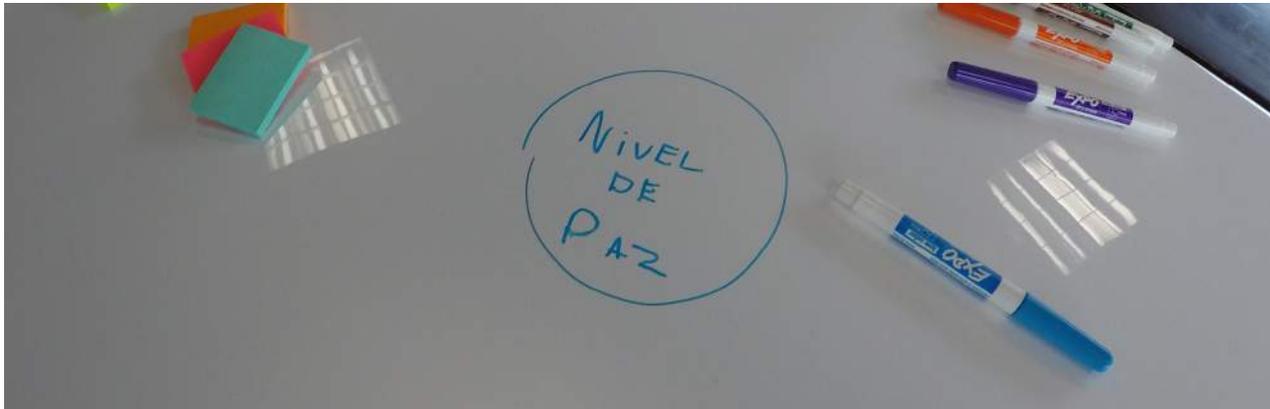
The DST-informed pilot workshop methodology is most appropriate for targeted interventions where the purpose of the workshop is clearly articulated. The workshop described here had the dual goals of training participants to employ system-based analytic approaches and to facilitate the generation of visualizations that could enhance programming. However, due to the range of actors, levels of operation, and organizational mandates that were represented in the workshop, the outputs of the workshop were necessarily general in scale and scope. While participants were successfully trained in DST analytical methods and while the workshop provided a useful forum for information sharing and social network strengthening, the actual analytical efforts were necessarily broad in scope and did not go far enough to provide any single organization with actionable strategies to inform specific programs. To overcome these challenges, we have included several recommendations below.

In order to overcome initial design challenges, we recommend that future DST-informed workshops include sufficient time in advance of the workshop to enable the facilitation team to collect pre-workshop questionnaires from all participating organizations in order to more effectively tailor activities and exercises to meet their needs. Designing DST-informed workshops requires identifying relevant themes and developing activities and prompts that match the profile and interests of participants. This requires pre-work in terms

of accessing participant information and drawing from different methodological frameworks for the design of the workshop. The initial pilot workshop was convened with a relatively short time preparation window, with multiple organizations confirming participation in the days immediately preceding the workshop. Thus it was not possible for the design team to tailor activities to the type of organizations in attendance or the scale at which they operate.

Second, while the DST approach could be less structured than the workshop described above and implemented in a shorter time frame, employing the approach to specifically identify and articulate actionable strategies for peacebuilding and development intervention requires a much higher level of programmatic and context-dependent specificity. In an interagency context, this requires having a clear and well-articulated problem set that organizations are collectively working to address, with participation from mid to senior level management who are knowledgeable in the organizational mandates and capabilities of their respective organizations. In an intra-organizational or programmatic setting, this requires having a central set of programmatic goals or objectives and the inclusion of personnel from multiple organizational tiers who are knowledgeable in various aspects of program implementation, ranging from mid-level managers with an organizational perspective to operational staff with deep knowledge of local or field-level dynamics that affect on-the-ground performance and constraints on implementation.

Third, given the time required for participants to negotiate common



conceptualizations of mutual problem sets, theories of change, and system dynamics, we propose that future workshops would benefit from an iterative design approach wherein participants successively engage in problem solving. For example, in one such design, participants would first collectively identify important dynamics through a systems-based analytical framework. The facilitation team would then collate that information, and prepare workshop and system analytic aides to streamline successive workshops that would be aimed at refining specific aspects of participants' understandings of the underlying social, political and economic mechanisms in order to be able to more clearly identify points of entry and leverage for intervention.

Further, we found that, during the pilot workshop, participants repeatedly expressed interest in applying a systems approach within their organizations to better understand the dynamics that affect their work and enable their operations staff to better conduct activities at the field level. Both participant observation data and responses from exit surveys demonstrate that the participants saw real and practical utility in the DST-informed approach, but did not feel confident that they would be able to apply it in an operational context.

This suggests that participant organizations would benefit from field-based workshops conducted at the local level with a targeted set of organizations and actors, which would build local intra and inter-organizational capacity for applying systems-analytical approaches to programming activities. We recommend that future workshops with participating civil society organizations include a train-the-trainer component so that organizational personnel are equipped to continue DST informed analyses with their organizations beyond the workshop. This is particularly necessary as implementing programs based on systems analytical frameworks will alter system dynamics, and require adaptive project management to build responsive development and peacebuilding interventions.

Finally, DST approaches offer specific value for strategic risk assessment by providing analysts, planners and development specialists with the requisite tools and methods for analyzing factors and dynamics across scales. For future WBG funded projects, we propose the development of a reconfigured DST workshop format to specifically inform social and political risk assessments with key dynamics that may not be captured through traditional analytical approaches. Analyses that consider the

interplay of factors and dynamics across traditional sector and project divisions as well as between macro, meso and micro/operational levels could be conducted through convening subject matter expertise from multiple domains to jointly analyze drivers, factors and dynamics that surround a proposed development or

peacebuilding initiative. This integrated approach would be leveraged to elicit information regarding system dynamics that are not immediately apparent from either sector-based or project based assessment frameworks.

Appendices

Appendices A through D are available upon request. Please contact Joshua Fisher at jf2788@columbia.edu.