



# PEOPLE NEGOTIATING PEACE

**- civil society's involvement in peace negotiations –**

*By*

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*A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree:*

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**22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012**



*“You can imagine the peace agreement as being like  
the stones in a wall.*

*The work of local, insider civil society constitutes the  
cement that holds those stones in place.*

*Without the cement, the wall will fall down”*

(Sara Pantuliano<sup>1</sup>)

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<sup>1</sup> as cited in Hayman 2010:1;

### **Declaration Form**

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the materials used in this Dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed

Date

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22 May 2012

### *Acknowledgments*

I would like to thank those who contributed to the existence of the Erasmus Mundus MA in Human Rights Practice, and those who gave me the opportunity to be part of it.

To all the professors at the three universities – Göteborg, Roehampton and Tromsø – thank you for your dedication and for sharing your knowledge with us – your contribution is invaluable.

My most sincere Thank You goes to my supervisor, Dr Michele Lamb, for guiding my steps and always directing me with patience and understanding.

To my colleagues and friends in the Human Rights Practice MA, thank you for making this experience a wonderful one - it's an honour to know each one of you.

To my friends, for being there for me “when the rain started to fall”.

Writing this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of my family, who have showed unconditional love at all times.

Vă mulțumesc și vă iubesc!

## **Abstract**

The formal negotiations to reach peace agreements are a unique opportunity to creating social and political change, and those who participate in the negotiations - in what capacity, at what stage, to what degree and on what issues - matter.

Although the decision-making process directly affects them, members of civil society are too often not invited to take part in the negotiations, as traditionally the negotiation table has been considered to be a space for the arms-bearers and those who hold the power.

However, an organized civil society may prove to be critical for shaping peace, as it has the power to persuade, propose solutions and influence by example and by the integrity of their moral voice. The question is not whether civil society can contribute to the peace negotiations and to a lasting peace, but how it can do so. This study seeks to contribute to answering this complex question, by looking at ways in which civil society have effectively participated in peace negotiations, in order to identify the elements that have contributed to their effectiveness, the challenges and dilemmas they had to deal with and possible ways to overcome them.

**Key words:** civil society, peace negotiations, functions of civil society, Track One, advocacy, intermediation

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

ASC: Civil Society Assembly (Guatemala)

CBO: Community-based organisation

CSO: Civil society organisation

ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States

ELN: Ejército de Liberación Nacional (National Liberation Army)

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

INGO: International non-governmental organisation

IPCRI: The Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information

LWI: Liberian Women's Initiative

MARWOPNET: Mano River Women's Peace Network

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

NIWC: Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

OAU: Organisation for African Unity

REDEPAZ: The Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War

TRC: Truth and Reconciliation Commission

UN: United Nations

UNHCHR: United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UNIFEM: The United Nations Development Fund for Women

UNRG: Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms.....	ii
<b><u>CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....</u></b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION.....	1
1.2 PURPOSE OF RESEARCH AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	2
1.3 RELEVANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD.....	3
1.4 CHAPTER OVERVIEW.....	6
<b><u>CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW... 8</u></b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 CONCEPTUALISATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY.....	8
2.2 FUNCTIONS AND ROLES OF CIVIL SOCIETY.....	12
2.3 CONCEPTUALISATION OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	13
2.4 CIVIL SOCIETY AND PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	16
BENEFITS TO THE PEACE PROCESS.....	16
MODES OF PARTICIPATION IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	19
<b><u>CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY.....</u></b>	<b>22</b>
2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN.....	22
2.2 SELECTION OF CASES.....	23
2.3 DATA COLLECTION.....	27
2.4 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH.....	29
<b><u>CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS.....</u></b>	<b>31</b>
4.1 ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	31
ADVOCACY / PUBLIC COMMUNICATION.....	31
INTERMEDIATION / FACILITATION.....	34
4.2 INTERNAL FACTORS THAT HAVE INCREASED EFFECTIVENESS OF CSOs PARTICIPATION IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	36
STRUCTURE.....	36
STRATEGY AND ISSUES ADDRESSED.....	39
ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN.....	40

RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER ACTORS .....	43
SUMMARY OF INTERNAL FACTORS .....	45
4.3 OTHER FACTORS THAT HAVE INFLUENCED CSOS EFFECTIVENESS IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS.....	45
4.4 CHALLENGES.....	48
INTERNAL CHALLENGES.....	48
EXTERNAL CHALLENGES .....	48
4.5 DILEMMAS.....	49
4.6 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS .....	50
<b><u>CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</u></b>	<b><u>52</u></b>
5.1 A FUNCTIONAL PERSPECTIVE HELPS DEFINE EFFECTIVENESS .....	52
5.2 CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS HAS BOTH POTENTIAL AND LIMITATIONS.....	53
5.3 LESSONS LEARNED / BEST PRACTICES .....	54
5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	54
FOR PARTICIPATING CIVIL SOCIETY .....	54
FOR TRACK ONE ACTORS .....	55
<b><u>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</u></b>	<b><u>57</u></b>

### **List of Figures and Tables**

Figure 1. Civil society .....	9
Figure 2. Types of civil society .....	10
Table 1. Types of organisations included and not included in the research .....	11
Table 2. Case studies .....	26

# CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Contextualization

It is inherent to human nature to desire to be involved in processes that affect one's social life, well-being and personal security. For this purpose, as human beings we develop, we acquire skills and learn to use them to our advantage in our constant pursuit of greater security, comfort and fulfilment. In a conflict situation however, the simple desire does not suffice, and most of the times skills do not suffice either, since power is held by military and political actors. In such cases of armed conflict, people's lives are dramatically changed in every respect: from their attitudes and behaviour to economic and social aspects of their lives. Estimates have revealed that up to 90% of war and conflict casualties are among civilians, as wars become more about attacking populations than about armies fighting each other (Shaw 2005). Civil society also changes in such situations: for example, it can shrink, as "the space for popular, voluntary and independent organizing diminishes" (Orjuela 2004:59). This is especially the case when it comes to peace negotiations, since this has been traditionally viewed as a space of interaction only for official, power-holding, armed actors.

The political negotiations to reach peace agreements are a unique opportunity for creating the bridge to lasting social and political change, by addressing the underlying issues generating conflict, developing new rules of the game, and transforming relationships among parties to the conflict. Those who participate in negotiations can determine the substantive and procedural agreements that can lead to structural changes in the state and governance system, human rights, security, and development policies. Who participates in the negotiations - in what capacity, at what stage, to what degree and on what issues - is therefore critical.

The negotiations to transform a state of war and conflict into one where peace and non-violence prevail represent a complex process that includes many diverse actors discussing a wide range of political, constitutional and economical issues. Traditionally, negotiations to end armed conflicts have been regarded as a job for governments and leaders of armed groups involved in the conflict (Aall 2001:373), with concerned governments and international NGOs acting as conveners and mediators - and often behind closed doors in a foreign location (Barnes 2002:6). Most peace negotiations tend to be carried on including only the main belligerent parties, who do not necessarily represent the interests of all the diverse constituencies of the wider public that will be affected by the final agreement/solution reached. The “official” nature of the negotiations would most of the times overlook the “non-official” actors who did not take up arms in the conflict, and their potential contribution to bringing a stable peace. This includes civil society organisations and other marginalised groups (women, youth, minorities, internally displaced people) that may feel alienated from a settlement that is not “theirs” (Oliver 2002:93).

However, an organized civil society may prove to be influential as an agent of social and political change in peace negotiations, as it has the power to persuade, propose solutions and influence by example and by the integrity of their moral voice. Participatory models of peacemaking are revealed in peace negotiations worldwide, where non-combatant activists have chosen to use their right to participate in the decision-making process of their countries, and succeeded, to varying degrees, to actively shape the negotiating process and influence the substantive agreements reached.

## **1.2 Purpose of research and research questions**

The present research draws on examples of civil society involvement in five peace processes: Northern Ireland, Guatemala, Liberia, Israel-Palestine and Colombia. This study will not undergo a detailed analysis of all the intricacies and complexities of these peace processes. This has already been done extensively in lengthy studies analysing

these peace processes as a whole. Such a detailed analysis is not needed for the purpose of this research, which focuses on civil society's involvement in official peace negotiations. Thus, I will analyse the **elements and factors that have contributed to or have inhibited civil society's involvement and influence at the negotiations table** in Track One and Back-channel talks.

This research aims to analyse the different roles and capacities in which civil society organisations (CSOs) have effectively participated in and influenced official peace negotiations, in order to identify the elements which gave greater effectiveness to their participation. To this end, it analyses the different ways in which CSOs have interacted with the main actors of negotiations, the challenges and dilemmas they had to deal with, the factors that have influenced their involvement, the benefits and added-value that they brought to the peace process as a whole, as well as the disadvantages and weaknesses of their involvement in the negotiations.

The research questions that this study aims to answer are:

- How can civil society effectively participate in official peace negotiations?
- What elements make civil society involvement in official peace negotiations effective?
- What are the challenges and dilemmas of civil society involvement in official peace negotiations?

### **1.3 Relevance and importance of the research to the human rights field**

The percentage of civilian casualties in wars has risen to 80% in 2004 from only 5% in the early 1990s (World Movement for Democracy (WMD), 2004). People who are directly affected by armed conflict and live alongside the armed actors have a greater need and a greater potential to be included in the peacemaking process. And because

peace processes bring about changes to political, economic and social institutions and relationships in a society, people also have a right to participate in these decisions and make their voices heard in international arenas (McKeon 2005:567).

Traditionally, the right to participate in the decision-making process has been regarded as a political right: “a fundamental process associated with the organisation of consent within political systems” (Waldron 1998:6). Participation has been viewed as an important foundation of political order through providing active communication and interaction between the citizenry and those in control. This definition fails to fulfil the requirements of a human rights-based approach to participation, due to its centralisation of representation and its authorisation of exclusive practices (Secker 2009:709). As argued by Barnes (2002:10), “public participation in peace processes should also be understood within the wider context of the right to effective participation in governance”, or decision-making. Broadening understanding of participatory rights beyond rights of political participation gives a more comprehensive perspective on participation in a human rights context, as human rights require more active, effective and meaningful forms of participation in order to achieve their purpose.

The right to participation is a well-established principle of human rights law embodied in fundamental human rights documents such as the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (Article 21) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 25):

Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity [...] without unreasonable restrictions:  
(a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives;  
(b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors;  
[...]<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Article 21 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights;

These two important human rights documents do not specify what “taking part in the conduct of public affairs” means. However, a broad explanation has been given in a subsequent UN document, the UNHCHR General Comment No. 25. This document provides specific guidance to states on how to positively implement this right, stating a general obligation for states on the right to participate in public affairs, voting rights and the right of equal access to public service. The conduct of public affairs, referred to in paragraph (a), is perceived as a broad concept which relates to the exercise of political power, in particular the exercise of legislative, executive and administrative powers. It covers all aspects of public administration, and the formulation and implementation of policy at international, national, regional and local levels. The General Comment states that the right of direct participation supported by paragraph (b) is to be found in cases when people choose or change their constitution or decide public issues through a referendum or other electoral process. Citizens may participate directly also “by taking part in popular assemblies which have the power to make decisions about local issues or about the affairs of a particular community and in bodies established to represent citizens in consultation with government” (UNHCHR General Comment, para. 6). Therefore, as long as peace negotiations address public issues such as structure, political systems or the allocation of resources, they represent a form of political decision-making in which all people affected by these issues have a right to participate.

There have been many cases in which civil society participated in the decision-making process of a conflict, in all its phases: from early warning and response campaigns, working for the prevention of conflict escalation to creating awareness, fighting corruption, non-violently protesting against perpetrators, building trust between polarized communities, and to the post-conflict stages – creating a space for communication and reconciliation and providing support in the implementation of the peace agreements (van Tongeren et al. 2005).

To date, the vast majority of works written about civil society participation in peace processes focuses on other phases such as conflict prevention or the post-conflict stage. There is extensive literature describing peace processes step by step, but until now

there has been little systematic analysis of the specific roles of local civil society in the negotiation phase and even less regarding its potentials, limitations and critical factors. One possible explanation for this is that civil society is more active before and in the aftermath of a conflict, when it has more possibilities to organise itself and to engage in a large spectrum of activities that benefit from a better exposure and tend to be more effective both in the local community and at the international level. But during the conflict, and especially by the time peace negotiations are being pursued (after the stalemate of the conflict), local civil society may show signs of fatigue and it may even cede having a meaningful existence, leaving a big gap in the map of actors involved in the negotiations. This may not be necessarily the case for all types of conflicts, since they may have specific features which may influence civil society activity.

So far in the literature, the activities, roles, functions and characteristics of civil society have been mixed, not clearly distinguished from another and analysed generally with regards to the whole peacebuilding process, thus making it less obvious as to what the real contribution of civil society is in any particular phase of the conflict. This study will take a focused stand, analysing civil society (with its roles and functions) in peace negotiations.

It is often believed that civil society's influence on conflict management is indirect, limited only to advocacy or to applying pressure on negotiating parties for specific issues (Forster and Mattner 2006:14). However, the cases analysed further in this study give evidence to support the contrary: civil society can play an active role in influencing peace negotiations.

## **1.4 Chapter overview**

The first chapter of this research sets the scene for the discussion to follow, presenting the context and perceptions of civil society participation in peace negotiations. The second chapter offers an overview of the theoretical framework of this research and

its literature review, while Chapter 3 exposes the methodology employed for the purposes of this research. Chapter 4 is concerned with the findings of this research, and Chapter 5 and 6 present the conclusions and recommendations that follow from the findings of this research.

# **CHAPTER 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

The involvement of civil society in peacebuilding has only been researched by a few studies that deal explicitly with the subject. Some take an actor-oriented approach (van Tongeren et al. 2005) that describes the activities implemented by different actors. Others analyse roles and functions of different actors (mostly NGOs) in peacebuilding in general (Aall 2001; Barnes 2005; Debiel and Sticht 2005, Forster & Mattner 2006) or with reference to specific cases (Orjuela 2004 on Sri Lanka; Foley 1996 on El Salvador; Paffenholz 2003 on Somalia; Belloni 2001 on Bosnia). Another strand researches the effectiveness of NGO peace work in general (Anderson and Olson 2003). Evaluations of civil society's functions in peace negotiations are still scarce and they do not identify the elements that render their involvement effective.

## **2.1 Conceptualisation of civil society**

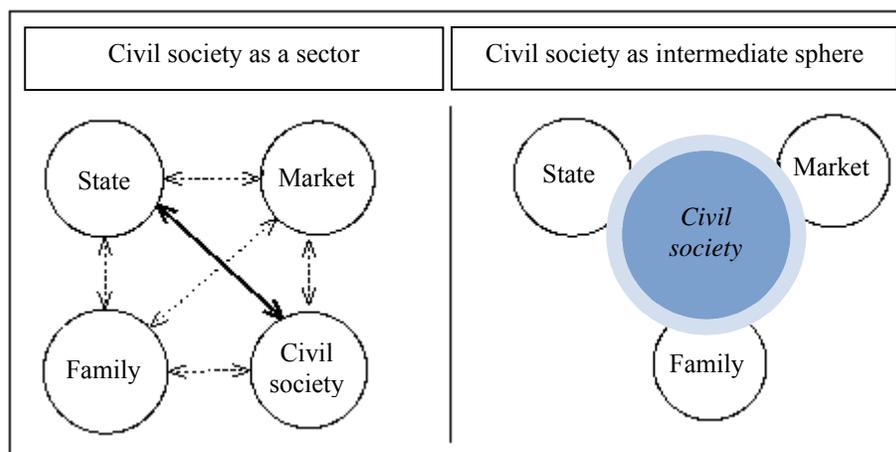
Historically, key thinkers like John Locke - who was the first to describe civil society as a body in its own right (Locke 1690), Charles Montesquieu (1748) and Jürgen Habermas (1992:374) referred to civil society as a power group distinct from the state and the market, but acting nevertheless in the public sphere.

However, in contemporary literature, civil society is a disputed concept that has no universally agreed-upon definition. It is widely used in many settings, seeming at times to be “the thing on everybody's lips” (Edwards 2004:2). Different scholars have proposed different working definitions of the term, from narrow definitions - mostly used in peacebuilding and development discourse - of formal, nongovernmental voluntary organisations (NGOs) that are generally presumed to ‘do good’ (Orjuela 2003:196) and which may complement the activities of governments and international organisations

(Sorenson 2002:24), to very broad definitions which cover all social relations – political, economic, cultural, national, religious, family and other – that are independent from the state and reflect a variety of interests: political parties, local communities, religious organisations, professional and scientific unions and associations, mass media and NGOs (Makhmutova and Akhmetova 2011:17).

Many scholars define civil society in relation to its position vis-à-vis other sectors of society, such as the state, the market and the family. Some see civil society as a sector of its own, situated between the other three sectors (Kendall & Knapp 2000). Others include businesses in civil society (Glasius 2004:1), while others (Merkel and Lauth 1998:7) view civil society as the space between societal sectors rather than a sector on its own (see Figure 1, below). Some development practitioners are inclined to identify civil society only with NGOs, like the Development Assistance Committee (DAC 2005).

**Figure 1.**  
Civil society



Because of its complexity, civil society “can be all things to all people” (Glasius 2004:3). It has been viewed as an arena where “people come together to debate, discuss, associate and seek to influence broader society” (CIVICUS 2010:17), or as a sphere of independent uncoerced human association (Walzer 2003:7), distinct from the state, political, private and economic spheres, but oriented toward the political sphere and

interacting closely with all of them. Figure 2 illustrates many, though not all, of the types of associations that can potentially comprise civil society.

**Figure 2.** Types of civil society<sup>3</sup>



For the purposes of this study, civil society is regarded as a social and political space. This view is different from third sector or non-profit sector approaches, which focus primarily on the economic role of CSOs. This study determines affiliation to civil society by considering functions and activities, rather than organisational form. I chose this approach because, in reality, actors can switch spheres (or belong to more than one), according to what their functions are at a certain moment. For instance, private companies can pursue revenues in the market sector and function as civil society organisations when advocating for removal of discriminatory tax provisions.

This study analyses civil society in different places and societies. Although historically civil society has been viewed as an almost purely Western concept (Paffenholz 2010), some differences between local understandings of civil society are worth mentioning, as they are influenced by local culture and political context. For

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<sup>3</sup> Source: van Tongeren & van Empel (2007:12);

example, in Latin America, since civil society gained importance mainly in the fight against military dictatorship in the 1960s, the concept widened subsequently to represent a neo-liberal concept “mainly stressing individual economic freedom and favouring de-regulation” (Birle 2000:232). Under this view, civil society becomes more “a political project, or a sphere through which to resist, pressure or influence the state, and increasingly also the market” (Glasius 2004). Africa’s civil society is seen in a much broader way which includes various organisations (traditional associations, male youth groups, elders and chiefs), but having similar functions as in the Western conception, although in a more rudimentary way (Appiagyei-Atua 2005:6). In the Middle East, civil society is differentiated between a ‘modern’ part (in the form of human rights organisations) and the ‘traditional’ one (Islamic movements) (Nefissa 2007:68).

The present study adopts a broad definition of civil society, which includes many different groups of people that convene in formal or informal associations to explicitly work for the promotion of human rights and conflict resolution, as suggested by Paffenholz (2009:16): “a public space between the individual and the state where a variety of actors seek to mediate relations between citizens and state authorities”. This definition is not solely restricted to NGOs, but it includes a vast array of public-oriented associations that are not formal parts of the governing institutions of the state.

This study focuses on local and community-based initiatives of civil society, thus it does not explicitly look at global civil society campaigns or international NGOs. Table 1 below shows which CSOs are and which are not included in this research.

**Table 1.** Types of organisations included and not included in the research

Organisations included in the research	Organisations not included in the research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)</li> <li>• Non-profit organisations</li> <li>• Community-based organisations (CBOs)</li> <li>• Associations / networks of NGOs/CBOs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities</li> <li>• Government established and funded organisations</li> <li>• Government established grant-making</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trade unions and federations</li> <li>• Professional associations</li> <li>• Employer / business associations</li> <li>• Sports / arts / cultural organisations</li> <li>• Religious organisations</li> <li>• Independent research institutes</li> <li>• Political parties</li> </ul>	<p>institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local and international grant-making foundations / agencies</li> <li>• International non-governmental organisations (INGOs)</li> </ul>
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## **2.2 Functions and roles of civil society**

In order to analyse the functions and roles played by CSOs in peace negotiations, I will refer to two established models for analysing civil society in the much-broader process of peacebuilding: the Merkel and Lauth’s functions model (Merkel and Lauth 1998) (as supplemented by Paffenholz (2010:24)) in conjunction with the roles model designed by Edwards (2004).

The functions model discerns five essential functions of civil society: *protection of society; intermediation between state and citizens; participatory socialization* (civil society seen as a school of democracy, teaching people how to engage in public life); *community building* and *public communication*. Paffenholz & Spurk (2006:13) add two more functions to this model: *monitoring authorities for accountability* and *advocacy*.

Recognizing that civil society “does indeed mean different things to different people” (Edwards 2004:3), the roles model establishes three roles for civil society: *civil society as associational life* (the world of voluntary associations that carry with them values such as cooperation and tolerance), *as the good society* (emphasising that their activities must be directed towards specific positive social and political goals) and *as the public sphere* (providing an open space where people can freely interact and share their ideas on issues pertaining to the public interest).

These models offer certain advantages to the present study, since their functional focus allows for inclusion of all potential civil society actors, even the ones who may sometimes be overlooked by other models (i.e. religious and ethnic organisations, or actors traditionally belonging to other sectors (business or family) that sometimes play a relevant role to civil society). These models place CSOs in a defined context, taking into account the effects that their existence and actions may have upon other actors that they interact with. Both of them suggest quite similar approaches for the analysis of civil society, since CSOs' functions and roles often overlap and complement each other. For example, the rich associational life refers to the function of socialization (school of democracy) and the role as public sphere concurs with the communication function. For this reason, this study will analyse civil society using a combined functions-and-roles approach that will critically assess CSOs' performance and effectiveness in the context of formal peace negotiations. The use of this model seems to have more potential for better analysis and assessment of CSOs initiatives.

Another approach proposed to analyse civil society is the actor-oriented model (Paffenholz and Spurk 2006), a model focused on the actors that constitute civil society and their characteristics. This research will not use this approach to analyse civil society, since it has some obvious limitations: it only answers questions of who is civil society, and not what it is doing or what its purposes are. Moreover, through this model, some important civil society actors may easily be overlooked, while the role of not-so-important players can actually be overestimated, which can conduct to serious limitations of the findings of the research.

## **2.3 Conceptualisation of peace negotiations**

Negotiation has been defined as “the process of combining different positions into a joint agreement” (Zartman 2009:212), with the purpose to solve an existing conflict. Historically, negotiations have begun to be used extensively since the end of the Cold War. If between 1900 and 1990 only 20% of the conflicts worldwide have been settled

through negotiation, this changed dramatically to 50% over the past 15 years (WMD 2004).

Negotiation is first and foremost a process - as Henry Kissinger said (1979), “Where you get is a function of how you get there”. It represents one of the most important phases of a conflict, and it only arises once the conflict is “ripe” (Zartman 2000, Gregg 2001). Ripeness occurs when all parties to the conflict feel that it is no longer possible for them to win the conflict by escalation of violence or by maintaining the stalemate at an acceptable cost (situation also referred to as a “mutually hurting stalemate”<sup>4</sup>), but that there is the possibility of coming together to find a jointly acceptable solution. This is the point when they start considering giving up violence and using their negotiation skills to gain advantages and end the conflict. In traditional diplomacy, negotiations only include the parties to the conflict – the political and military leaders of opposing groups, typically mediated by a third-party. This approach is based on the concept of *power* and is referred to as **Track One or official diplomacy**. The 1995 Dayton Peace Talks that ended the Bosnian war are an example of Track One diplomacy, where the formal negotiations were mediated by officials from the “contact group” of nations including the US, Russia, Britain, France and Germany (Anderlini 2004:18).

A variation of Track One negotiations are the **Back-channel talks** (term coined by Henry Kissinger (1979:138)), in which parties to the negotiations undertake private one-on-one discussions, communicating through intermediaries (third-party facilitators or mediators) until impediments are overcome and space is created for public talks. In the Philippines, official peace negotiations between the government and insurgency movements in the 1990s were characterised by “back-channelling”, particularly when the formal negotiations stalled.

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<sup>4</sup> As defined in the Glossary of Terms for Conflict Management and Peacebuilding, <http://glossary.usip.org/resource/mutually-hurting-stalemate> (last visited at 18.05.2012);

However, it has often been stated that official leaders “may sometimes be unable to adequately address the complex and dynamic inter-relationships” (McKeon 2005:567) that pertain to a conflict, since the conflict does not take place in a social or political vacuum. This is the reason why other additional channels of negotiations have appeared.

**Track Two diplomacy**, or unofficial diplomacy, stands for informal interaction among non-state actors and involves a wider range of parties with an interest in promoting negotiations. The 1990s Oslo peace process of the Israeli – Palestine conflict was initiated through Track Two diplomacy by Norwegian academics with contacts in both communities.

Half-way between Track One and Track Two, **Track One and a Half** appeared. This involves unofficial interaction between main parties of the conflict, in which they are trying to create a more suitable environment that can further resume the peace talks and bring a peace agreement. Former US president Jimmy Carter used it confidently in 1994 in North Korea, when the two states were in the middle of a nuclear-related crisis.

**Multi-Track diplomacy** refers to the involvement of a variety of actors in peacemaking activities at different levels of society—ranging from the Track One official actors to local, national or international groups from civil society and other sectors. By bringing different actors at the same table, it is hoped that they will understand each other better and will start cooperating more together. There have been many examples of dialogue groups all over the world, and they have proven their effectiveness many times. Guatemala and Northern Ireland stand out as cases where this symbiosis worked perfectly and achieved its purpose.

This section has presented the different types (or Tracks) of diplomacy that are most commonly used in international politics: the official and public Track One; the official and secret Back-channel; the unofficial and public Track Two; the unofficial and secret Track One and a Half; and Multi-Track – a mix of the previous models. There are

numerous cases of civil society involvement in Track Two and Multi-Track diplomacy, given that these sectors are more accessible to the civil society and do not require a specific power position to be held in order to participate. This research will analyse civil society's involvement in official Track One and Back-channel negotiations.

## **2.4 Civil society and peace negotiations**

### ***Benefits to the peace process***

Many scholars have argued that, as peace processes often result in political, social and economical changes, people in these societies have the right to be involved in them and should be able to make their voice heard in the final outcome (McKeon 2005, Rupesinghe & Anderlini 1998, Barnes 2006).

A quantitative study by Karatnycky and Ackerman (2005:6) analysing domestic civil pressure as a factor of political change in 67 countries, found that 70% of democratic transitions in the past 40 years were driven by grassroots civil organisations rather than top-level initiatives.

Their importance has also been stressed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who consistently called for UN peacemakers to have “greater consultation with and involvement in peace processes of important voices from civil society, especially those of women, who are often neglected during negotiations” (UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change 2004:38). Many scholars (e.g. McKeon 2005, Barnes 2006) also argue that civil society should be involved more in peace negotiations, for a number of reasons that represent potential benefits to the peace process as a whole.

Reasons to include CSOs in negotiations include their proven technical expertise and possession of credible data (Corell 1999:197), their ability to convince official actors

to adhere to principles and promote creative solutions, and their ability to focus public and media attention on the parties if they waver (Wanis-St. John and Kew 2008:23).

Civil society has the unique feature of being independent from all parties in the conflict. I am referring here to the ‘good’ civil society, which applies a defined set of values and moral standards in their actions, and not the ‘bad’ civil society which poses a challenge to peace in general and of which I speak in the next chapter. As they are not directly involved in the conflict, they can more easily win the confidence of combatants and **act effectively as a bridge between combatants** during negotiations (WMD 2004). Because of their perceived independence, civil society organisations are free to act when, for different reasons, official actors cannot (Fitzduff 2002:12). Since CSOs often do not have any mandates, political ties or implications conveyed to an official status, they can be engaged in dialogue to any of the parties and contribute to bringing a clearer understanding of “the other’s” position. Because they are not operating in an official capacity, they are often perceived as non-threatening and thus are more listened to, since at a practical level their suggestions could be easily dismissed if wished so. They often have access to sources of information and areas that Track One actors do not, and sources may engage more openly in a discussion with them than with an official intermediary (Barnes 2006:54).

Another factor that can benefit the peace process is the new perspective that civil society can bring to negotiations. Being closer to the wide society, CSOs are constantly exposed to what happens “on the ground”. They are able to understand the various challenges faced by the civilian population and propose feasible ways to address them. This expertise gives them a unique status in the negotiations, which can in turn produce **innovative, creative and non-coercive strategies** for a “people-focused peace agenda” (Brenk and van de Veen 2005) which can contribute to more successful negotiations.

Although civil society is not invested with the same type of legal, political or military power that states inherently possess, they nevertheless have another type of power that can prove to be very effective in the context of peace negotiations – the

“people power”. CSOs are actually articulating what ordinary people need and they represent their interests, which gives them legitimacy to speak and act on their behalf. This makes the **negotiations more inclusive, democratic and responsive to the needs and priorities of the wider population**, which in turn generates **greater public support**. This is, I believe, civil society’s greatest capital, because it can put substantial pressure on decision-makers to reach a peaceful settlement. Entities searching for power or aiming to secure their power may be more likely to listen when they perceive that CSOs have the support of large numbers of people who want change.

For their part, having their grievances heard, citizens feel ownership of the agreements reached and a degree of **responsibility for their implementation**. It is more likely to actively participate and abide by an agreement that you have been involved in or brought your contributions to, even when it is not a legally-binding contract, simply because participation enables broader ownership of agreements reached (McKeon 2005:573).

With a greater number of parties involved comes **greater transparency**, and with greater transparency the agreements reached tend to be regarded as **more legitimate**.

Another benefit for the peace process and the society as a whole is the contribution that civil society has towards **instilling democratic values**. Through public debates, democratic values and principles, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights, and government accountability, are emphasized. In South Africa for example, this created a more truly democratic state and society which surprised a whole world, given the deeply antagonized past that this country went through (de Klerk 2002:19).

Most importantly, civil society involvement in peace negotiations has the potential to lead to a **more stable peace**, as found in a study by Wanis-St. John and Kew (2008). They have analysed more than twenty different peace negotiations over the past 15 years across Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America, and found that all the negotiations characterized by high civil society involvement have resulted in sustained

peace and that most of the cases of low civil society involvement experienced a resumption of warfare. Without necessarily claiming causality between civil society implication and the stability of the peace, their findings show a clear advantage and benefit of civil society involvement to peace.

### ***Modes of participation in peace negotiations***

There is no single model for public participation in peace negotiations. Mechanisms can be very diverse in their scope of mandate and attributions. Three basic modes of involvement in peace negotiations have been found: representative participation through political parties; consultative participation where civil society organisations' voices are heard at the negotiation table and they may formulate recommendations; and direct participation, where all interested individuals engage in the negotiation process (Barnes 2002:8).

*1. Representative* decision-making *mechanisms* have offered opportunities to CSOs to take a place at the negotiating table beside the warring parties, provided they have sufficient support from the public.

This type of participation was best seen in South Africa and Northern Ireland, where the negotiations were designed to convene a wide range of parties in addition to the traditional ones. In the all-inclusive negotiations in South Africa, smaller political parties were invited to the formal peace process along with the two big actors, the African National Congress and the National Party. As the process opened up even more subsequently, all South Africans were invited to contribute their suggestions to designing the new constitution. In Northern Ireland, a model of directly electing political parties to the negotiation process brought to the negotiation table ten smaller political parties representing different categories of civil society to voice their concerns. After an agreement was reached, the whole public was invited to voice their opinion on it through a public referendum on the agreement.

This type of participation brought enough inclusivity so as to render the peace process as belonging to the people, and therefore the agreement reached presented a higher degree of stability on the long term.

2. *Consultative mechanisms* create spaces for civil society to express their views on the issues that are being discussed in the formal negotiations. In Guatemala, the Civil Society Assembly (an assembly of diverse organisations and institutions representing indigenous peoples, churches, unions, women's groups and others) has been given the opportunity to determine root causes of the conflict and propose "consensus" documents (McKeon 2005:572). The same type of involvement was found in the Philippines, where the National Unification Commission (appointed in 1992 to help revive stagnating peace talks) organised provincial, regional and national consultations involving both sectoral representatives and interested members of the public to assess roots of conflict and seek for solutions to deal with them.

In both cases, although the outcomes of the consultations were non-binding on the parties, they contributed to the final peace agreements. New spaces for discussion were created between different groups, which eased the inclusion of previously marginalized sectors of society in the peace process.

Although consultative processes may provide significant opportunities to identify incompatible issues and to building consensus, they are nevertheless a weaker form of participation than the representative mechanisms, since their connection with the official actors involved in the formal process is rather peripheral to the political debate. However, they have the possibility to influence the negotiations, as it happened in Guatemala, where the proposals of the Civil Society Assembly (ASC), despite their non-binding status, were directly or indirectly taken into account and incorporated in the final peace agreement.

3. *Direct participation* mechanisms create spaces where the whole public can play a role in reaching an agreement to end the conflict. Through these mechanisms, citizens get directly engaged in the decision-making process and are able to voice their concerns and

suggestions. In Mali, a series of inter-community meetings organized by local civic leaders helped by Norwegian Church Aid<sup>5</sup> resulted in local ceasefires and agreements on contested issues that over time led to the end of the protracted civil war. This was all the more spectacular as the previously agreed National Pact failed to bring an end to the armed conflict, before civil society took the lead in the negotiation process.

These three modes of involvement however do not cover all the instances of civil society involvement in peace negotiations. In cases where certain actors of civil society are invited to act as mediators/negotiators, they become directly engaged in negotiations. They are not representatives of society though, as they act in their individual capacity (although maintaining the same values as the civil society that they belong to), so their activities do not fit within the representative mode described above. Their engagement cannot be classified as consultative participation neither, as it always decisively influences the negotiations and the parties involved. They instead act as intermediaries between the power-holding actors, usually at their request. I will call this fourth mode of involvement *nominal participation*, since civil society actors engage in the negotiations only after being selected/invited by the official actors, in consideration of their qualities, skills or the influence that they can exert on the parties to the negotiation table.

In this chapter, I have clarified the concepts of civil society and negotiations that and summarised the existing theories concerning civil society functions and modes of involvement in peace negotiations. I have outlined a functional analytical framework to understand the functions of civil society in peace negotiations, and showed how this will be further used to answer the research questions.

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<sup>5</sup> A Norwegian-based INGO;

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

The idea of writing this research came as I was reading “People building peace II” (van Tongeren et al. 2005), a collection of stories depicting simple people making a difference in their communities, contributing to putting an end to the conflict that their society was going through. I was deeply impressed by some of the cases exposed and I have started to research more into the subject of how communities can positively affect a peace process. As I have developed a certain familiarity with official peace talks around the world, I became curious of ways in which citizens could affect and influence high-level, elite-led peace negotiations, so as to have their concerns voiced at the negotiations table.

Not surprisingly, throughout the history of conflict resolution, there have only been a few cases of effective civil society involvement in peace negotiations. Civil society’s contribution is considered to be effective when their opinions, concerns and proposals are reflected in the final peace agreement, or when they accomplish their clearly determined purposes (for example, brokering a deal to release prisoners or reaching a ceasefire agreement). The scarce number of cases that fit this description is caused by the traditional reluctance to have civil society engaged in the peace talks (Barnes 2002:9).

### **2.1 Research design**

This research aims to understand human behaviour in peace negotiations using an interpretivist position. In order to do this, it employs a qualitative “focus comparison” (Lijphart 1975), which holds that the specific features of the subject under study explicitly direct the inclusion of relevant cases for analysis. Therefore the range of choices narrows down to a few cases, resembling more or less a ‘closed shop’ (Ragin 1994). As Landman notes (2008:93), comparing few cases achieves control through the

careful selection of cases that are analyzed using a middle level of conceptual abstraction. This type of comparison is thus referred to as “case-oriented,” since the case is often the unit of analysis, and the focus tends to be on the similarities and differences among cases rather than the analytical relationships between variables. Choosing only one or two case studies may drastically limit the generalisability of conclusions, while too many cases present disadvantages such as the lack of availability of data, the questionable validity of measures, and the demands for mathematical and computing skills needed to analyze data (Landman 2002:899). In order to avoid these insufficiencies, this research takes a middle approach, employing a “few cases” comparison.

The method of comparing few cases is divided primarily into two types of system design, based on John Stuart Mill’s method of difference and agreement (Mill 1843): the “most similar systems design” (MSSD) and the “most different systems design” (MDSB). The former seeks to compare cases that share a host of common features in an effort to neutralize some differences while highlighting others, while the latter seeks to compare cases that share few common features and one or two of the explanatory factors seen to be important for the outcome. This research uses MDSB to distil the common elements of civil society involvement that have contributed to its effectiveness in the peace negotiations. This has been done in many studies that have identified a particular outcome that is to be explained, such as revolutions, military coups, transitions to democracy, or ‘economic miracles’ in newly industrialized countries. For example, Wolf (1969) compares instances of revolutionary movements that had significant peasant participation in Mexico, Russia, China, North Vietnam, Algeria, and Cuba.

## **2.2 Selection of cases**

A critical question is which cases to select. With only a few cases to be analysed, a random selection of cases is deemed as usually inappropriate (Höglund & Öberg 2011:116). Instead, cases are carefully selected to match the purpose of the study (Ragin 1989:15). This research analyses cases of effective civil society initiatives in the

negotiation phase of a peace process. I have narrowed down the number of cases through paradigmatic case sampling, choosing cases that are considered exemplar for their category. Thus, the cases selected for the purposes of this research are the ones mostly mentioned in literature as presenting a decisive involvement of local civil society in the peace negotiations.

The four modes in which civil society can participate in peace negotiations, mentioned in the previous chapter (representative participation, consultative participation, direct participation and nominal participation), lie behind the rationale for choosing the case studies for this research, as I have selected an illustrative case for each of these modes: Northern Ireland for representative participation, Guatemala for consultative participation, Liberia for direct participation and Israel-Palestine for nominal participation.

By comparing the four cases where civil society involvement in peace negotiations was effective, this study aims to identify the elements of civil society that rendered this effectiveness. As suggested by Landman (2008:39), in order to reduce selection bias, I will also analyse a case in which the dependent variable of my study (the effectiveness of civil society involvement in peace negotiations) changes. Colombia meets this criterion, as civil society involvement in the peace negotiations was regarded as ineffective (Accord 2004). Therefore, if the elements that are found to have led to effectiveness in the first four cases are not present in the fifth case (where civil society involvement was not effective), the importance of these elements is confirmed and there is a better prospect to draw general inferences from this analysis.

A similar research design has been used by Barrington Moore (Moore 1966) in what has been regarded as one of the best examples of case-oriented approaches. He analysed seven cases of successful polity modernisation and elaborated their important similarities and differences. Then, he contrasted the seven successful cases with an eighth unsuccessful one, to confirm the importance of the elements found through the first comparison.

The cases selected for the purposes of this study are all contained within a 20-year timeframe (between 1991 and 2011) and are illustrative for the dynamics of post-Cold War. This period has been characterized by a rise of negotiated peace agreements, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the end of the Cold War opened up the way for solutions to some long-standing conflicts (e.g. South Africa, conflicts in Central America and even Northern Ireland). Secondly, after the end of the Cold War it appeared that there were ample possibilities for international co-operation in resolving conflicts, which added up to a ‘peace escalation’ dynamic, wherein peace processes in one situation influenced and added momentum to peace processes in another, with multiple borrowings across processes (e.g. the success in South Africa led to possibilities in Northern Ireland, influencing the Irish Republican Army and Sinn Féin; Sinn Féin in turn encouraged the peace process in the Basque Country etc.) (ICHRP 2006:11). Table 2 on the next page gives an overview of the selected cases considered for the purposes of this research.

**Table 2.** Case studies

<b>Peace process</b>	<b>Agreement reached</b>	<b>Line(s) of cleavage</b>	<b>CSOs involved</b>	<b>Type of involvement</b>	<b>Effective</b>
<b>Guatemala</b>	Agreement for a Firm and Lasting Peace (1996)	Ethnicity Land	Civil Society Assembly	Consultative	Yes
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	Good Friday Agreement (1998)	Religion	Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) Initiative '92	Representative	Yes
<b>Liberia</b>	Acceptance and Accession Agreement (1994) Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2003)	Economic inequalities Excesses of the regime	Liberia Women's Initiative (LWI) MARWOPNET	Direct	Yes
<b>Israel-Palestine</b>	Israel-Hamas agreement on prisoners exchange (2011)	Religion Land	Gershon Baskin	Nominal	Yes
<b>Colombia</b>	-	Social and economic inequalities	National Conciliation Commission REDEPAZ	Mixed	No

## 2.3 Data collection

This research relies on analysis of primary data (reports, peace agreements and one interview) and secondary data (texts and documents). In order to obtain primary data for my research, I have contacted civil society organisations in countries where civil society has been present or has made attempts to be involved in the peace talks. I have tried to contact organisations via email and telephone, over the course of two months (November and December 2011)<sup>6</sup>. I have chosen them from an online database of local NGOs that have engaged in peacebuilding<sup>7</sup>, on the basis of their location, description and activities undertaken. However, only a few of them have replied, many of which told me that they do not have expertise on this subject and instead redirected me towards books, articles and other secondary analysis of the respective peace process. An interview was conducted with Gershon Baskin, founder and co-chairman of the Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) and the initiator of secret talks between Israel and Hamas for an exchange of prisoners in 2011<sup>8</sup>. The interview lasted 40 minutes, it was recorded and transcribed. It followed along the lines of an unstructured conversation via electronical communication means (Skype<sup>9</sup>). The choice of this medium was derived from Mann & Stewart's (2003) indications that Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) represents a new format where researchers can interact online and gather data for analysis, without having to go to the field.

Another type of primary data used are well-documented, fact-based reports written by peace activists or organisations that have had first-hand contact with civil society involved in these conflicts, documenting experiences and insights of local and

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<sup>6</sup> Attempts were made to contact the following organizations: Peace and Democracy Forum, Palestinian Peace Coalition, Peace Now, Israel-Palestine Center for Research and Information (Israel-Palestine); MARWOPNET (Liberia); Initiative '92, CAIN, Democratic Dialogue (Northern Ireland); Association of Foundations Phils. (The Philippines); Faith Community Network (Thailand); Initiative for Political & Conflict Transformation (Sri Lanka); Procuradoria de los Derechos Humanos (Guatemala); Asamblea Permanente de la Sociedad Civil por la Paz (Colombia);

<sup>7</sup> Courtesy of Insight on Conflict and Peace Direct London, <http://www.insightonconflict.org/>;

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Gershon Baskin, conducted on 13 May 2012 (referred to as interview Baskin);

<sup>9</sup> An online messaging and communication software;

international practitioners and experts, and people affected by conflict. Following is a list of the reports used as primary data for the purposes of this study:

- Accord (1996) Issue 1, *The Liberian Peace Process 1990-1996*, Accord Series, Conciliation Resources, London (referred to as Accord 1);
- Accord (1997) Issue 2, *Negotiating Rights: The Guatemalan Peace Process*, Accord Series, Conciliation Resources, London (referred to as Accord 2);
- Accord (1999) Issue 8, *Striking a balance: The Northern Ireland Peace Process*, Accord Series, Conciliation Resources, London (referred to as Accord 8);
- Accord (2002) Issue 13, *Owning the Process. Public Participation in Peace Making*, Accord Series, Conciliation Resources, London (referred to as Accord 13);
- Accord (2004) Issue 14, *Alternatives to War. Colombia's Peace Processes*, Accord Series, Conciliation Resources, London (referred to as Accord 14);
- Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2009) Final report, Volume III: Appendices. Title I: *Women and the conflict* (referred to as TRC Final report);
- MARWOPNET Liberia Activities Report (2003) (referred to as 2003 Report);
- NIWC Local Government Elections Manifesto (2001) (referred to as NIWC Manifesto);
- Anderlini, S.N. (2000) *Women at the Peace Table: Making a Difference*, The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), New York (referred to as UNIFEM);
- Fitzduff, N. & S., Williams (2007) *Cumulative Impact Case Study. How Did Northern Ireland Move Toward Peace?*, Collaborative Learning Projects, Cambridge (MA).

These reports present certain advantages over conducting interviews, since they have been documented and written at the time of the conflict or shortly after its conclusion, so the views expressed within are not affected by time, which can often be the case when conducting interviews over events that have happened long time before the time of the interview.

The peace agreements reached in these cases have also been taken into consideration as a means to assess the effectiveness of civil society involvement in the peace negotiations, based on the degree to which civil society proposals and concerns found their place in the final official documents adopted.

## **2.4 Scope and limitations of research**

While reliability and validity are essential criterion for quality in quantitative studies, in qualitative research terms like credibility, neutrality, consistency and applicability are deemed to be the essential criteria for quality (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). To enhance credibility and neutrality of this study, I have tried to reduce subjectivism and partiality by employing a rigorous selection of the methods used to gather the data and carry the analysis. This also reduces bias and therefore gives credibility to this study, as reliability is a consequence of validity (Patton 2001).

The scope of the findings of qualitative investigations is restricted (Bryman 2008:391). It is difficult to claim full generalisability when analysing only a few cases. This has an influence on the external validity, which is „the degree to which the results can be generalized across social settings” (Bryman 2008:376). Thus, this research aims to provide what has been called a *moderatum* generalisation – one in which aspects of the study “can be seen to be instances of a broader set of recognizable features” (Williams 2000:215).

Due to limitations of scope and space, this study does not provide an in-depth analysis of the considered cases, but rather uses them as examples for substantiating its main arguments. For the same reasons, it only focuses on the functional aspect of civil society involvement in peace negotiations. This has been chosen because of the lack of information on this aspect in literature. The paper will limit the comparison to five instances of civil society participation, one for each of the four modes of participation and one instance where the outcome of their involvement is unsatisfactory.

In conclusion, this research is methodologically based on primary data in the form of reports, texts of peace agreements and an interview, and utilizes secondary sources in the form of official documents and other texts referring to civil society involvement in peace negotiations. As this chapter had shown, selection of cases has been done respecting the research aims, respecting methodological demands in order to reduce bias; furthermore, these choices assumed their final form as result of a research process and in relation to their potential and limitations.

## CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

### 4.1 Roles and functions of civil society in peace negotiations

Applying the functions-and-roles model explained above, I found that the activities and purposes of civil society organisations in the context of peace negotiations fit within these two functions: advocacy/public communication and intermediation/facilitation.

#### *Advocacy / public communication*

In the cases studied, CSOs have managed to shape the agenda of peace settlements, either by sending representatives to the negotiation table (e.g. the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition in Northern Ireland; MARWOPNET in Liberia), or by organising official parallel civil society forums giving recommendations to the Track One actors (e.g. the Civil Society Assembly in Guatemala; the Opsahl Commission in Northern Ireland).

In **Northern Ireland**, “more than half of the peace initiatives considered to have contributed significantly to the peace process were initiated by civil society, and almost all of them were grassroots civil society movements” (Fitzduff and Williams 2007:13). The most influential advocacy-oriented civic initiative was a group of Catholic and Protestant community-based women peace activists engaged in lobbying political parties with their agenda. At first, they “lobbied for the existing political parties to include women in their candidate lists” (Accord 13:79). Being ignored, they decided to form a political grouping – the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) - to contest the elections, and they managed to win enough votes to secure a seat at the formal Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue. It was the only newly-formed political party - just six weeks old at the time of the elections - that managed to secure access to the official

peace talks. Despite the fact that it only had 1% of the popular vote, it was able to make a significant input into the negotiations (Accord 13:79), through successful advocacy on women's role in a peace process, victims' rights and reconciliation measures.

In **Guatemala**, the Civil Society Assembly (ASC) was established following the 1994 Framework Agreement that revived the stalled peace process. It was an innovative structure with a mandate "to discuss the substantive issues addressed in the bilateral negotiations and to formulate consensus positions" on them (Accord 13:49). The Assembly also organized meetings with the URNG<sup>10</sup> and government negotiators to lobby for its positions. Its activities were synchronized with the official negotiations so that they would not delay the negotiation process.

One of the clearest indicators of the success of the ASC was the inclusion of many of its proposals in the final peace agreement – in fact most were adopted directly by the negotiators. The ASC became a historical landmark because of its capacity for dialogue, negotiation and agreement between the different sectors that constituted it (Accord 13:53).

In **Liberia**, an exercise of personal will and determination to end the war led to the formation of a non-political, non-partisan group: the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI). Although being denied participation to the peace talks on grounds that women were not party to the conflict, they gained legitimacy to participate in the conference owing to their persistent lobbying with conference delegates and ECOWAS (UNIFEM, 19). Making sure their position statements reached the ambassadors and delegates from the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) and the ECOWAS, LWI succeeded in contributing to high-level regional meetings and in gaining the support of regional leaders and international officials.

The **Israel-Palestine** Center for Research and Information (IPCRI) - the only joint Israeli-Palestinian public policy think-tank in the world – has been devoted to

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<sup>10</sup> Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca political party (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity);

developing practical solutions for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By producing ideas and outlining solutions, it contributes to expanding the range of policy options available to decision makers and officials. Their aim is to “reach mid-level and policy-level actors in both Israeli and Palestinian societies, to influence government decisions that would advance peace” (interview, Baskin). On some occasions, their advocacy became an advising job at the highest levels:

There have been moments when we had a direct impact and a direct role. [...] I became an adviser for a secret team that was established by the Israeli Prime-Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He didn't trust the politicians in his cabinet, and the army - the place where he would normally go for advice - told him that they don't know how to advise him about peace. They could advise him on war, but not on peace. So he created a secret team [which] discovered me. [...] I had a key role for over two years on a weekly basis, meeting with people who were in direct advisory position to the Prime Minister on the peace process [...] They could not meet with Palestinians and yet it was very important for them to know what Palestinians were thinking, what kind of ideas were being generated [...] We would set a date, I would get a phone call [...] telling me what hotel and what room to go to. They would usually have different questions: what would I think about this or that idea, what would the Palestinians think. [...] It was very mission-focused, [...] very policy-focused. It provided me with the opportunity to come up with my own ideas and with policy ideas from IPCRI [...] (interview, Baskin)

In **Colombia**, the period between 1993 and 1999 saw an immense growth and diversity of activities and actors in peace mobilisation and organisation. Among others, the Comité de Búsqueda de la Paz (Committee for the Search for Peace) and REDEPAZ (the Network of Initiatives for Peace and Against War) brought together a series of social organisations and NGOs to advocate for being included in the negotiations. In 1995 the Episcopal Commission created the National Conciliation Commission to help bring the parties to the conflict together (Accord 14:20). However, despite of the increased efforts and magnitude of their involvement, civil society was not able to effectively influence the negotiations, which remained exclusively a business of the armed parties.

### *Intermediation / facilitation*

Another role that all CSOs analysed played in negotiations was of intermediation / facilitation between other parties involved in the peace process. In this role, CSOs function as a “(two-way) transmission belt” (White 2004:14), supporting both parties and mediating or channelling communication in both directions, as has been seen in the case studies analysed.

In **Northern Ireland**, NIWC representatives at the negotiation table played a critical role in mediating between parties from both sides, especially the extremists. During the 1996–98 talks, they prevented delegates to be drawn into a destructive spiral of blame that could have harmed negotiations (Accord 13:79). They were the only party that was willing to meet with all sides, thus becoming trusted mediators (Anderlini 2004:23).

A second contribution, equally significant to the negotiation process, was Initiative '92 (or Opsahl Commission, named after its chairman), which acted as intermediary between the wider public and the negotiating parties. They were a citizens' inquiry group established to take opinions from the community and political parties on the way forward, and present them to the decision-makers. Its findings may not have been particularly original, but its lasting contribution has been the fact that they encouraged the wider community to think and discuss the options for its future and to have greater confidence in the political process from whom it felt alienated for so long (Accord 8:47). The report they have produced (The Opsahl Report) suggested many of the possibilities for the Belfast agreement (Pollak 1993).

In **Guatemala**, ASC had an important role as intermediaries as well, as they struggled to keep all sectors of civil society informed at all times of the developments that appeared throughout the negotiations. Despite its consultative status, the Assembly succeeded to bring significant issues to the negotiating table, and most of its recommendations were directly or indirectly taken into account into the final peace agreement (Accord 2:94).

In **Liberia**, another impressive initiative directly involved in the peace negotiations - MARWOPNET (Mano River Women's Peace Network) - was formed under the auspices of ECOWAS in 2000, when a group of women leaders from local NGOs from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea joined forces in the belief that the solution to their countries' conflicts could be found through regional peace efforts. They have successfully mediated a cessation of hostilities between Liberian President Taylor and the rebel factions. They have also intervened and negotiated with the Government of Liberia the release of two officers of the Liberian National Bar Association, who were subsequently released as a result of their efforts (2003 Report, 3).

In **Israel-Palestine**, Gershon Baskin, founder of IPCRI, acted as intermediary between the Israeli government and Hamas, when he successfully initiated and negotiated a back-channel communication track between Israel and Hamas for the release of a captured Israeli soldier (Gilead Shalit) in exchange of 1000 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. Although it took him five years "to get the [Israeli] decision-makers to listen", he succeeded to convince them that his contacts in Hamas "lead to the people" who have authority to broker the prisoner's release, and subsequently brokered the deal between the two parties:

The stars lined up correctly. A new appointment of a new person in charge of the case<sup>11</sup> came into a situation where there had not been any negotiations for two years and they had [...] nowhere to start and I came along and I said to this guy the first day that he was appointed: «I have contacts that lead to the people who are holding the soldier. Listen to me. Give me a chance». And this guy was courageous enough to identify an opportunity and to test it. And when he [...] verified that it was real he went to the Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] and got a green light to allow this secret back-channel to run, on the condition that it remains secret (interview Baskin)

In **Colombia** too, civil society acted as intermediaries between the wider public on the one hand, and the government and other official actors on the other hand: by 1996 there was tremendous dynamism in the forums working for peace at local and regional

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<sup>11</sup> former Mossad agent David Meidan was appointed as new emissary to the Shalit case in April 2011;

level. In 1998, civic groups met repeatedly with the National Liberation Army (ELN) and “held extra-official peace talks that laid the groundwork for subsequent short-lived talks with the government” (USIP 2004:14). Civilian peace initiatives promoted support for the peace processes, contributed to democratic participation (despite the exclusionary negotiations in place), and defended the process with marches and statements.

This section has shown that civil society actors have used the two functions of advocacy and intermediation in peace negotiations, regardless of the mode of involvement that they have followed. However, there have been variations as to the degree to which they have been used, the range of areas that have been approached and the degree to which this technique has influenced negotiations. We will analyse these in the following section.

## **4.2 Internal factors that have increased effectiveness of CSOs participation in peace negotiations**

While conducting this research, I observed several patterns that have emerged in the successful cases of CSOs involvement in peace negotiations, which seem to have influenced the degree to which the civil society initiatives analysed have been successful: the structure of the organisation, the strategy that it adopted and the issues approached, the activities undertaken and the relations that it developed with other actors involved in the peace process.

### ***Structure***

Structure is a critical element of any organisation, since it can highly influence its success or failure. Being organized and having clear-cut responsibilities and functions can make a significant difference and can influence the outcomes of an organisation’s

actions. This is valid for CSOs as well, as many have shown that a good structure lead to success. Even smaller political groupings were able to make a difference to the outcomes when they organized themselves effectively and articulated coherent, persuasive analysis and proposals.

The most typical structure adopted by CSOs **in representative mechanisms** was the political party. Despite of the initial opposition to being labelled as “political”, NIWC chose this means of representation because it offered a proper counterbalance to the official actors at the negotiation table. NIWC included “women and men from diverse backgrounds: rural and urban; young and old; nationalist, unionist and 'other'” (NIWC Manifesto, 1). It was jointly chaired by two women from both the unionist and nationalist perspectives. This model of organisation proved to be the most successful in both gaining equal rights at the negotiating table, and ensuring a democratic constituency that would secure legitimacy and support from the wider public.

The structures for broader participation **in consultative processes** were more elusive. In Guatemala, ASC’s success was largely due to their impressive structure oriented to reduce the intense fragmentation and mistrust that had often characterized relations amongst civil society organisations in the past (Accord 13:51). The Assembly was structured in 11 sector groupings (self-funding social sectors invited to participate): indigenous peoples, churches, unions, women’s groups, academics, journalists, research centres, development NGOs and others. Each sector had its own organisational structure for internal discussion to define priorities and formulate position papers. Each sector delegated ten representatives to the ASC. Then, topical Commissions formed of two delegates from each sector worked to produce preliminary synthesis papers on specific topics (such as the role of civil society and the army in a democratic society, the identity and the rights of indigenous people, the constitutional reform and the electoral system, resettling refugees and internally displaced persons, and the socio-economic and agrarian reform), which were then debated in ASC plenary sessions until final consensus was reached (Accord 13:49). The Consensus Document would then be transmitted to the Government-UNRG bilateral negotiations for consideration. Despite the obvious

challenges and shortcomings, the ASC was able to formulate a consensus position on each of the five topics of their mandate before their deadline. Their high degree of decentralization and the clarity of the nature of their tasks and responsibilities largely contributed to the Assembly having their voices heard at the negotiation table and set a role model for CSOs in future consultative involvement in peace negotiations.

As for CSOs' structure **in direct mechanisms** of participation, there is no one pattern that has been followed by CSOs, since their structures and functioning are influenced by Track One actors and thus differ with every peace process. Liberian MARWOPNET was formed by roughly 30 umbrella organisations from the Mano River region across Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone and was open to all women, regardless of ethnic, social, religious or political background: “we had the illiterate women and those with doctorate degrees. All of us made up the LWI” (UNIFEM 20). Governed by a Board of Directors (elected for two years), headed by an executive board of twelve members (three for Sierra Leone, five for Guinea and four for Liberia) and trained on conflict transformation, conflict resolution, and techniques of negotiation, MARWOPNET proved to be a solid, highly-skilled civil society organisation which meaningfully engaged in the Liberian peace talks.

In the case of IPCRI, their advocacy department was very well structured, designed as Strategic Thinking and Analysis Teams (STATs): the Economic and Business STAT and the Political STAT. The latter looks into “developing strategies that would bring the parties back to the negotiations table or involve third parties (the USA, the Quartet<sup>12</sup>, the European Union, others) to help local adversaries to move [...] forward” (interview, Baskin). They “brought together experts who were respected in their communities to come up with proposals [...] in the form of policy papers or policy alternatives” on how to deal with the conflict issues, and try to convince the decision-makers to adopt them. The goal of the brainstorming meetings “was not [...] an

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<sup>12</sup> Reference to the Quartet to the Middle East, a group of nations and international and supranational entities established in 2002, involved in mediating the peace process in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is comprised of the United Nations, the United States of America, the European Union, and Russia;

agreement; what is important is that staff from IPCRI have enough material that comes out of these meetings to be able to [...] write a policy brief” (interview, Baskin).

As for the illustrative case of **nominal participation** in the negotiations (the case of the Israel-Hamas negotiation of prisoners exchange), structure does not appear to have been a decisive element to the effectiveness of the mediation. What mattered the most was the strategy adopted and the relation with the two parties involved in the mediation.

### ***Strategy and issues addressed***

A clearly determined strategy, with a defined focus and an unambiguous roadmap explaining how to attain the proposed objectives is the best recipe for success, and not only when it comes to accessing peace negotiations. Whenever the CSOs had a comprehensible strategy to engage with the official parties, they had a significant impact on the development of the negotiations.

NIWC’s strategy was to organize women through all their various networks and contacts to gain the necessary threshold of votes. At the negotiations, the NIWC was careful to ensure that both nationalist and unionist women were at the table at all times. They concentrated initially on procedural recommendations to the Rules of Procedure that governed the peace talks. They were sensitive to how these matters linked with process issues and were attentive to the underlying relationships between participants (Accord 13:79). They were later able to broaden the negotiating agenda to include issues such as victims’ rights and reconciliation, which found their way in the final version of the peace agreement<sup>13</sup>. They also initiated the idea of a Civic Forum as part of the Northern Ireland Assembly so as to institutionalize opportunities for broader public participation in politics – another proposal that was eventually incorporated into the agreement<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Provisions on victims’ rights and reconciliation are found in the final version of the Good Friday Agreement, in Chapter 6: Rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity, at para. 11-13;

<sup>14</sup> Good Friday Agreement, Strand One: Democratic Institutions in Northern Ireland, para. 34;

In Guatemala, the ASC brought important but previously neglected issues to the negotiation agenda, such as indigenous rights and identity, repatriation of displaced people, land, the role of the military in a democratic state, and constitutional reform (Accord 2:94).

The strategy that both LWI and MARWOPNET adopted in Liberian peace negotiations was to take a unified stance on issues that affected everybody: the human suffering caused by the war and the overriding need for peace.

As for IPCRI, their strategy was to focus on the technical aspect of the issue to be proposed, not the political one:

A lot of the issues have technical answers. And one of the chances to get results is to depoliticize them. For example, water is an extraordinary political issue, but it's essentially an economic and technical issue. And if you can come up with economical and technical answers that can resolve the dispute, you end up depoliticizing it. The challenge is to get the policy-makers to understand that they are arguing about a commodity [...] and not a political asset [...] (interview, Baskin)

In Colombia however, despite of the multitude of CSOs determined to advance the peace negotiations, a clear strategy was lacking to many of them, since their actions were not long-term oriented and their objectives lacked clarity. A peace movement cannot simply be critical, but it needs to create defined proposals to be taken into account by the negotiating table. Without a clear strategy, many engagement opportunities have been missed and this could have been one of the factors that rendered civil participation in the Colombian peace negotiations as ineffective.

### ***Activities undertaken***

An organisation's strategy shapes its activities, so the clearer the strategy and objectives, the more defined and focused its activities. I distinguished two types of activities in the cases analysed: direct (that have the immediate potential to model the

peace process) and indirect (aimed at influencing actors that can consequently influence the negotiations).

CSOs' involvement in peace negotiations through formal mechanisms is an example of **direct activity**, as in the case of NIWC in Northern Ireland and Gershon Baskin in Israel-Palestine, both of which played a critical role in mediating between parties from both sides, at the negotiating table and through back-channel mediation respectively. In the mediations, Gershon Baskin transmitted messages from one side to the other and made proposals as to what he thought it would be and not be acceptable to the other party for the advancement of the talks.

MARWOPNET has sent representatives on peace tours around the region, participated in over 20 international conferences and summits pertaining to peace and other humanitarian issues, advanced direct political action by state leaders and participated in the formal peace negotiations that ended Liberia's civil war in 2003. Their initiative to restart talks between leaders of Liberia and Guinea in 2001 came due to the escalation of the conflict, despite urgent diplomatic efforts by ECOWAS and the then Organization of African Unity. Appealing for an urgent meeting of the heads of the two states, in an amusing episode, they 'threatened' that in the case of a negative outcome, they would lock them in the negotiation room until they were able to "come to their senses". After a long silence, President Lansana Conté of Guinea burst into laughter, exclaiming that only a woman could have said that to him. He agreed to attend the summit, and he credited the women for changing his mind (TRC Final report, 46). MARWOPNET is among the few civil society groups that ever signed a peace agreement. They did so as key signatory witnesses. The UN recognised their efforts in December 2003, awarding them the annual United Nations Prize for Human Rights.

Producing paper briefs, position papers, policy papers or any other documents aimed at suggesting new approaches to the peace process amounts to **indirect activities** that may or may not reach the decision-makers. For example, NIWC produced high quality position papers and tried to model a fresh approach to politics based on

cooperation, non-competitiveness and a willingness to share ideas. The same approach was followed by IPCRI, which lobbied governments with policy briefs and policy alternatives, and proposed new ideas to be taken into consideration in the negotiations (interview, Baskin). Another instance of indirect activity was Northern Ireland's Initiative '92, which opened a communication channel between society and the decision-makers and disseminated their findings to all power-holders in order to influence their decisions.

Most of the organisations analysed have engaged in both direct and indirect activities. In Liberia, LWI conducted meetings, participated in demonstrations and presented a range of position statements to ECOWAS and the factional leaders. Prominent LWI activists were also present to voice their concerns at the Accra peace talks in 1994 where they successfully influenced the outcome of the meetings (Accord 1:31).

In Guatemala, besides the indirect activity of drafting synthesis papers and Consensus Documents, the ASC also had the possibility to review the final agreements signed by the parties on substantive issues and could endorse them "so as to give them the force of national commitments, thereby facilitating their implementation" (Accord 2:93), but it did not have the power to veto those it did not support. This proved to be a completely formal measure and a false direct activity, as even when CSOs disagreed deeply with the text, ASC approval was always granted, generally due to the sway held by the URNG over many of the participating organizations (Accord 2:94).

In Colombia, CSOs have also engaged in both types of activities, but since their strategy was not clearly defined, the activities also lacked consistency and continuation. They gave the impression to be anywhere and nowhere at the same time, and did not manage to put enough pressure on the decision-makers so as to have their concerns listened to and taken on board at the negotiations table.

## ***Relationship with other actors***

The most successful cases of civil society involvement exhibited strong ties with the other actors involved in the talks, especially with the power-holder actors. This comes as a natural result, since they are the ones making the decisions, so a good relationship with them gives the CSO a better chance to have its proposals taken into consideration in the negotiations. But maintaining good relationships is important not just with regard to power-holders, but to all the other actors involved in the peace process, for it enhances chances of creating alliances and joining forces for a greater result.

In Northern Ireland, NIWC remained true to their NGO roots and kept their feet firmly in both the world of electoral politics and in the world of public activism. At monthly meetings of the full membership, they discussed positions on forthcoming agenda items and provided information to the membership about developments in the political process. Members informed the representatives of their perspectives on the process. Because their membership was bi-communal (both unionists and nationalists), they provided guidance on approaches acceptable to either or both communities. The women also maintained regular contact with a range of community and NGO leaders on specific issues under discussion. They gave serious consideration to the views of those consulted. Inputs from both the membership and these networks meant that the NIWC positions could command cross-community support, which gave them a huge advantage at the negotiating table, as many of their recommendations were incorporated into the Good Friday Agreement.

Although promising at the beginning of their existence, ASC's relationship with the government and the business sector became somewhat erratic, especially after its president resigned and some of the leaders defected to leftist political parties (Accord 2:94). However, they had a good relationship with the other negotiating party, the UNRG, although some suggested that they were acting more like their voice than civil society's voice at times (Accord 13:53). As for the relation with the wider public, it soon became obvious that there were difficulties in keeping them aware of developments in the

ASC and in the official negotiations. It was difficult for those not linked to organized social sectors to have any interface with the process. Although a media sector was included in the ASC, they were not very active or influential and it was difficult to disseminate accurate information (Accord 13:53).

Liberia Women's Initiative attached much importance to maintaining good relations with all important actors in the peace process, in order to ensure their credibility and to raise awareness at the policy level: "it was critical to maintain links with the media, the diplomatic community, the United Nations, the European Union and the regional organizations. We kept them informed of everything that was happening and all the moves we made. So there was nothing hidden" (UNIFEM 43).

In the case of IPCRI, they found it

very helpful to make use of the diplomatic community - ambassadors of friendly countries who interact frequently with decision-makers [...]. Also the key people in the business world interact with decision-makers because of their wealth and their positions [...]. You need to identify what are the groups that influence the decision-making process and then to find individuals within each sector, each group, who you can turn into allies and use them as channels for influencing the decision-makers (interview, Baskin)

Unfortunately for Colombian CSOs however, the deciding actors in the negotiations were not as open to interaction as their counterparts in other peace processes. The negotiations were exclusive, carried mostly between power-holders, and communication with civil society was maintained at the minimum. However, CSOs also "showed deficits in coordination between themselves, such as the absence of alliances with diverse sectors of Colombian society, and a lack of a national and international communication strategy" (Accord 14:37).

### *Summary of internal factors*

This section has shown that some CSOs' internal aspects (good structure, clear strategy, focused activities and good relation with other actors) have appeared in all the cases where CSOs' involvement in the peace negotiations was effective. We may thus infer that they have contributed to their effectiveness, but more research would be needed to fully assess to what degree they were instrumental in gaining success in negotiations. A causal connection can however be established between the presence of these four elements and a higher degree of effectiveness of CSOs' involvement. This causality is reinforced by the finding that in the case of Colombia, where civil society involvement was deemed ineffective, these elements were either non-existent or very weak.

### **4.3 Other factors that have influenced CSOs effectiveness in peace negotiations**

The context in which CSOs operate is also critical to their capacity to play an influential role in the negotiations. External factors also carry a great importance on CSOs performance, as their presence can reduce or enhance the space for civil society, while also impacting the effectiveness of their actions. The following factors have been found to have influenced (either positively or negatively, depending on the context) CSOs participation in the negotiations.

**The behaviour of the formal actors at the negotiations table** towards CSOs greatly determines the degree to which their actions are successful and influence the outcomes of the peace process. Many times, no support from the government may mean no support at all, especially in conflicts where external actors are not present in the negotiations. For example, a switch in the behaviour of Guatemalan government was the first step towards an all-inclusive, smooth peace agreement. At the beginning of the peace talks, civil society was excluded, as the government hesitated to formalize any role for

the public in negotiations. Then they decided to include CSOs in the peace talks, “but only insofar as substantial issues were concerned, and not issues regarding future social and state structure” (Accord 13:49). This proved to be insufficient and in 1994, as talks were stagnating, CSOs were invited to fully have their say on all peace negotiations matters. The former closed talks became an assembly “open to the participation of nongovernmental sectors of Guatemala society, provided that their legitimacy, representative character and lawfulness have been recognized” (Framework Agreement, 1994).

**External political actors** can also influence civil society actions. The case studies show how strong regional political actors (e.g. ECOWAS and the OAU in Liberia) have the power to create suitable conditions for civil society involvement in negotiations, by using their political influence and donor support to push for more space for civil society to act.

**Violence** reduces the space for civil society peacebuilding, as it destroys and disrupts existing forms of social organisations and social networks by spreading fear, distrust and intimidation (Paffenholz 2009:22). However, the CSOs that I have analysed have managed to survive and even strengthen their structure, despite of the violence around them. In some cases the violence was already de-escalating and ties within society were growing stronger by the times CSOs gained access to the peace talks (e.g. Northern Ireland), while in other cases CSOs acted on the verge of violence, determined to put an end to it (e.g. Liberia).

**The media** can enhance the effectiveness of civil society advocacy through positive media coverage and strengthening particular images and stereotypes in society. This happens where the relation of civil society with the media is a good one. On the other hand, they can inhibit effectiveness by promoting negative views on civil society or refusing to promote it in any way. This was the case in Israel-Hamas negotiations, where the relation with the media declined after the mediator refused to release secret information to the media:

A good idea that could have a breakthrough in negotiations is only valid if it's not talked about in public. As soon as it's talked about, it's a dead idea. And that's a challenge for civil society because it [...] needs the press in order to get recognition and funding, but often [...] the publicity will kill what you're trying to do.[...] Often time people from the media would call to ask me [...] this and [...] that, and I would have to say «I do no comments», or «I don't know», or «I can't tell you»; and then when you want the press to publish something they say «Oh well you didn't cooperate with me last time, why should I cooperate with you now?» (interview, Baskin)

**Donors** are a key element that enables civil society initiatives. Unfortunately, lack of their support often means no or less effective CSOs initiatives. In most of the cases analysed, the financial help “came principally from domestic sources, with additional support from foreign donors (especially from ‘friends of the peace process’ countries)” (Accord 13:10). In places like Guatemala, where resources were scarce and competition for donors’ money fierce, broader social movements have formed NGOs in order to access funds from international donors. While this has undoubtedly enhanced their professional performance, it has also shifted accountability from the CSOs concerned to the donors themselves, and raised questions on the authenticity of their new agendas (Accord 2). Also, donor preferences for funding CSOs on a project-by-project basis limit CSOs’ opportunities to develop capacity, specialization, strategic planning, and long-term community investments.

**“Bad” or “uncivil” organisations** are groups that want to maintain the conflict, since it benefits them. They too are part of the civil society, but they represent extremist elements or groups of civil society who are generally not interested in a compromise and will do their best to create the conditions to destroy or hamper reaching an agreement. Their existence triggers distrust from donors and governments on all CSOs, and can obstruct or delay their involvement in the negotiations. ‘Bad’ CSOs were part of the picture in all my case studies, but their influence was fortunately not to a high degree and it did not impede civil society’s access to negotiations.

Apart from these factors that can either boost or inhibit CSOs participation, this study has found a series of challenges that civil society has to overcome in order to engage effectively in negotiations.

## 4.4 Challenges

### *Internal challenges*

- *Heterogeneity.* In Colombia, because of their variety and inherent organisational differences, CSOs spoke with different voices. They came in many organisational forms and exhibited a diverse array of interests, groupings and agendas that did not follow a consistent direction, which probably contributed to reducing the effectiveness of their engagement in the peace talks;
- *Organisational shortcomings.* CSOs, especially the locally-based one, often have organisational shortcomings. In Liberia, they were caused by their isolated location, a lack of communication means with the decision-makers, and a shortcoming of organisational capacities. Additionally, many of them were to a large extent dependent on international donor support which restricted their possibilities to physically attend peace talks even after they won their right to attend them (TRC Final Report, 47);
- *Weak coordination and networking between CSOs* affects their effectiveness in negotiations, as seen in the case of Colombia;

### *External challenges*

- *Civil society organisations are not wanted or welcomed at the negotiating table.* The power-holding actors want more power. They don't want to risk losing the power and prefer not to share it with anybody else. Therefore, "opportunities for

meaningful public participation in official negotiations are rarely offered and reluctantly given” (Accord 13:9). To cope with this challenge, Gershon Baskin never gave up advocating his ideas: “the biggest challenge is to get the decision-makers to take you seriously and to listen to you. [...] You have to have determination to be listened to. [...] ‘No’ is not an acceptable answer” (interview, Baskin)

- *Negotiations are being conducted in a secretive manner*, thus accessing them proves to be a very difficult, if not impossible task. This was overwhelmingly the case in Colombia, where “decision-makers failed to make vital connections between formal peace negotiations and civil society, despite numerous signs and the recognition that civil society can play a constructive role in addressing violent conflict” (Accord 14:94);
- *Marginalization*. Decision-makers “tend to dismiss activists in civil society as naïve or unwilling to get involved in the messy compromises of real politics” (Accord 13:44). This deliberate marginalization results in civil society being left out of the process where the important decisions and the political frameworks are determined. This was the case in Guatemala and Liberia in the beginning of the peace negotiations.

## **4.5 Dilemmas**

The case studies analysed show a series of difficulties and dilemmas that constantly appeared throughout CSOs’ engagement in the peace talks. Interestingly enough, these patterns have emerged in all the analysed cases (either throughout the whole negotiation process or at least at some point during the talks), regardless of the place of the conflict, the structure of CSOs or the type of engagement in the negotiations. CSOs have found it difficult:

- To establish how to properly and fairly choose their representatives at the table of negotiations, so as to ensure inclusion of all groups and avoid a monopoly of the civil society elite;
- To find ways that would allow them to maximize their influence after they were invited to take part in the negotiations;
- To organize themselves in a convincing cohesive structure that would secure their participation at the talks;
- To focus their concerns and make sure that their demands were realistic so as to be taken into consideration by the formal negotiation actors;
- To find ways to assure the power-holders that their involvement would not contribute to escalating of violence, and convince them that the confidentiality and efficiency of the peace talks will not be affected under any circumstance by their involvement in the negotiations;
- Most importantly, to ensure that their participation is meaningful rather than a superficial public relations exercise.

## **4.6 Summary of findings**

This chapter has analysed the five proposed case studies from several perspectives: their functions in the peace negotiations, the internal and external factors that have contributed to or inhibited their effectiveness in the negotiations, as well as the challenges and dilemmas that CSOs had to deal with throughout their participation in the peace talks.

The research has found that both the advocacy and the intermediation functions were widely used by CSOs to promote their ideas, proposals and concerns, however there were some differences concerning their engagement in these roles, arriving mostly from the particular context of each peace process and the diverse modes of participation employed by the CSOs analysed.

This analysis has found that the structure and strategy adopted by CSOs, as well as the activities they engaged in and their relationships with other parties in the peace process all widely contributed to enhancing the effectiveness of their involvement in the negotiations.

The present study also acknowledges other external factors that may have influenced the level of their effectiveness, in recognition of the fact that a peace process and its negotiations are complex, dynamic processes that depend on inter-dependent variables. Assessing them thoroughly is not, however, the purpose of this study.

Lastly, I have identified a series of challenges and dilemmas that CSOs must acknowledge, assess and overcome in order to be more effectively engaged in peace negotiations.

# **CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This paper has started with the words of Sara Pantuliano from the Overseas Development Institute (London), who compared a peace agreement to stones in a wall, and civil society to the cement that holds those stones in place and without which the wall may fall (Pantuliano, as cited in Hayman 2010:1). This research has shown what a strong formula for ‘cement’ should contain, in order to hold the stones together. In other words, it has identified the factors that contribute to greater effectiveness of civil society participation in peace negotiations.

## **5.1 A functional perspective helps define effectiveness**

A functional perspective can define effectiveness, by clarifying objectives and anticipated impacts. This study presents a new analytical framework to understand the functions of civil society in peace negotiations, moving away from an actor-oriented approach toward a functional perspective, focused on the concrete roles and contributions that different CSOs can have in the peace talks.

This study has answered the initial research questions, by identifying four internal factors that have contributed to a more effective participation in the complex process of peace negotiations: the structure of the organisation, its strategy and issues addressed in the talks, the types of activities undertaken and the degree to which it maintains good relationships with the other actors involved in the peace process. These four elements, when they are clearly determined and focused on specific objectives, finely shape CSOs effectiveness at the negotiations table. On the other hand, when they appear to be weak, unorganised and not clearly defined, they reduce effectiveness, as in the case of Colombian civil society.

## **5.2 Civil society participation in peace negotiations has both potential and limitations**

Starting from the premise that public participation in peace processes should be understood within the wider context of the right to effective participation in governance and decision-making, this study has found that participation of civil society in peace negotiations benefits the peace process, for a number of reasons:

- It lends legitimacy to the peace process by opening negotiations to a wider range of actors;
- It creates communicating channels between the wider public and the official actors in negotiation, to articulate and include in the agenda the interests of social groups, especially marginalized groups;
- It can contribute creative solutions and innovative ideas due to their extensive expertise;
- CSOs can more easily access sensitive sources and places otherwise restricted to the official actors.

However, civil society participation in peace negotiations also shows weaknesses / limitations: limited organizational capacity and access to funding, weak networking and coordination mechanisms among CSOs, sheer diversity of CSOs (hence different motivations and contributions), tense relations with government and other actors in the peace process. Some of them were solved by a better distribution of resources and adopting a functional communication and coordination strategy (e.g. ASC in Guatemala) Others, such as the external challenges pertaining to the context in which CSOs operated, were matched by the diversity of skills that CSOs brought to bear in peace processes, which facilitated the establishment of the conditions for talks, built confidence between the parties, shaped the conduct and content of negotiations and ultimately influenced the sustainability of peace agreements (e.g. NWIC in Northern Ireland).

## **5.3 Lessons learned / Best practices**

The following aspects have been found to either hinder or advance CSOs progress in negotiations, and thus represent instances of lessons learned and best practices of civil society participation in peace talks:

- A peace movement cannot simply be critical (e.g. Colombia). It needs to create concrete proposals for the negotiating table (e.g. ASC in Guatemala), have lobbying capacity and define strategic alliances with other actors at the negotiation table (e.g. NWIC in Northern Ireland);
- CSOs must have an effective communication strategy within the organisation and with other civil society representatives (e.g. ASC in Guatemala);
- An influence on political leaders always helps; securing it does not necessarily have to be done using political means (e.g. LWI in Liberia);
- CSOs should place emphasis on commonalities rather than disagreements with other actors, especially at the negotiation table (e.g. Gershon Baskin in Israel-Palestine);
- Civil society should strive to gain trust of Track One actors through straightforwardness and determination (e.g. LWI in Liberia, NWIC in Northern Ireland).

## **5.4 Recommendations**

### ***For participating civil society***

*Coordinate and communicate.* CSOs participating or seeking to participate in peace negotiations should coordinate among each other, by developing cohesive strategies and positions, and formulating joint declarations to be presented at negotiations. This would enhance the prospects of influencing the negotiations, as it happened in the case of the Civil Society Assembly in Guatemala.

*Mind the gap.* Also, Track two actors must try to understand the pressures under which Track one actors are, i.e. that they must ‘get results’ and ‘show success’ while making sure they serve their own government or agency’s strategic interests. Knowing what limitations the official actors face, CSOs can better position themselves and provide what the negotiations are lacking.

*Identify potential allies.* In order to ensure that ideas and proposals are listened to and likely to be taken on board by official actors, CSOs need to identify the individuals or groups that influence the decision-making process, turn them into allies and use them as the channels for influencing the decision-makers.

### ***For Track One actors***

*Open the negotiations.* Given that decisions taken in peace negotiations affect the lives of all people within one conflict, Track One actors should consider including representatives of non-combatant parties at the negotiation table and listening to their concerns and proposals, for a better understanding of what they need.

*Put effective process mechanisms in function.* Track One actors should explore the possibility and appropriateness of multi-party representative negotiations, multisectoral consultation processes, direct mass participation or nominal participation of civil society in direct peace negotiations.

*Support civil society as peace advocates.* Track One actors should provide political, financial and technical support as appropriate to civil society, especially when they are operating in a hostile environment. Their voices can play an important role in preparing the public and increase the legitimacy of the peace process.

This study recognizes the fact that different conflicts can see different negotiations and formulas to advance peace talks, however on a functional level, despite of the inherent differences between conflicts, civil society reacted similarly to challenges

and organised themselves along similar strategic lines, keeping a well-defined structure and good relations with the other actors in the peace process. Their activities added up to effective participation mechanisms that made a difference both in the quality of agreements reached – characterized by a range of provisions to address the underlying causes of conflict – and, in most cases, the legitimacy with which these agreements were viewed by the public. The comparative experiences analysed in this study show that peace negotiations with structured opportunities for broader public participation can widen the range of issues addressed, can help produce broadly legitimate peace agreements and strengthen the capacity for inclusive political participation in future governance.

In conclusion, civil society can secure a well-deserved place at the table of peace negotiations and peace may be negotiated from the ground-up, as long as CSOs organise themselves to effectively tackle challenges, solve dilemmas and advance solutions to the peace process. Although civil society support cannot replace political action, it critically shows contributions towards advancing and securing peace, and may prove to be the strong cement that holds everything together in a society.

#### **Justification for excess of words: 16112**

The excess of words is justified by the size and amount of data that was analysed for the purposes of this research, the complexity of the subject and the many perspectives that have been taken into account in the analysis.

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### **Useful websites:**

Insight on Conflict (London) – database of local NGOs involved in peacebuilding: <http://www.insightonconflict.org/about/>

Conciliation Resources (London): <http://www.c-r.org/>

United States Institute of Peace (USIP, Washington, DC) – digital collection of peace agreements: <http://www.usip.org/library/pa.html>