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The Politics of Measurement in the Age of Localization: Comparing "Top-Down" versus "Bottom-Up" Metrics of Reconciliation

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How should we measure reconciliation after conflict when trying to achieve localization? This article examines a fundamental tension in international aid: the push for localization—the idea that aid is more effective when it is driven by communities themselves—versus the growing reliance on global metrics to assess progress. While international organizations and national governments use Global Performance Indicators and similar standardized metrics to evaluate complex phenomena like reconciliation, these "top-down" approaches often clash with the realities of the goals of localization. Using Colombia's peace process as a case study, we compare two national-level, standardized reconciliation barometers with a subnational, community-generated barometer. We find that standardized top-down indicators facilitate comparison, but often fail to capture local priorities. In contrast, bottom-up metrics generated through participatory methods provide context-specific insights that reflect more of the complexity of everyday experiences. At stake is a broader struggle over power in the peacebuilding field. While localization aims to center communities in aid processes, the proliferation of global and national metrics reinforces the authority of international and state institutions, shaping which voices and experiences count in reconciliation efforts. This dynamic ultimately hinders the effective localization of aid, as top-down metrics prioritize institutional agendas over local needs.

Comment mesurer la réconciliation après un conflit en vue d'une localisation ? Cet article s'intéresse à une tension fondamentale de l'aide internationale : la volonté de localisation, ou l'idée que l'aide est d'autant plus efficace qu'elle est portée par la communauté elle-même, et la dépendance croissante à des indices de mesure mondiaux pour évaluer la progression. Bien que les organisations internationales et les gouvernements nationaux emploient des indicateurs de performances mondiaux et d'autres mesures standardisées similaires pour évaluer des phénomènes complexes comme la réconciliation, ces approches descendantes se heurtent souvent aux réalités des objectifs de localisation. En utilisant le processus de paix de la Colombie comme étude de cas, nous comparons deux baromètres de la réconciliation standardisés sur le plan national à un baromètre infranational, généré par la communauté. Nous remarquons que les indicateurs descendants standardisés facilitent la comparaison, mais ne parviennent souvent pas à représenter les priorités locales. Par opposition, les indicateurs ascendants, issus de méthodes participatives, fournissent des ren-

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seignements spécifiques au contexte qui reflètent davantage la complexité des expériences quotidiennes. Se joue ici une lutte de pouvoir plus large dans le domaine de la consolidation de la paix. Bien que la localisation vise à placer les communautés au centre des processus d'aide, la prolifération des indicateurs mondiaux et nationaux renforce l'autorité des institutions internationales et étatiques, ce qui a une incidence sur les voix et expériences prises en compte dans les efforts de réconciliation. Cette dynamique entrave en fin de compte une localisation efficace de l'aide, car les indicateurs descendants donnent la priorité aux programmes institutionnels, et non aux besoins locaux.

¿Cómo se debe medir la reconciliación después del conflicto cuando se intenta lograr la localización? Este artículo estudia una tensión fundamental en la ayuda internacional: la presión hacia la localización (la idea de que la ayuda es más eficaz cuando está impulsada por las propias comunidades) contra la creciente dependencia de métricas globales para evaluar el progreso. Si bien las organizaciones internacionales y los Gobiernos nacionales utilizan indicadores de rendimiento global y métricas estandarizadas similares para evaluar fenómenos complejos como la reconciliación, estos enfoques ≪de arriba hacia abajo≫ tienden a chocar con las realidades de los objetivos de la localización. Usamos el proceso de paz de Colombia como estudio de caso y comparamos dos barómetros de reconciliación estandarizados a nivel nacional con un barómetro subnacional generado por la comunidad. Concluimos que los indicadores estandarizados de arriba hacia abajo facilitan la comparación, pero también que, con frecuencia, no logran captar las prioridades locales. Por el contrario, las métricas de abajo hacia arriba generadas a través de métodos participativos proporcionan información específica del contexto que refleja la complejidad de las experiencias cotidianas en mayor medida. Lo que está en juego es una lucha más amplia por el poder en el campo de la consolidación de la paz. Si bien la localización tiene por objetivo centrar a las comunidades en los procesos de ayuda, la proliferación de métricas globales y nacionales refuerza la autoridad de las instituciones internacionales y estatales, determinando qué voces y qué experiencias son las que cuentan en los esfuerzos de reconciliación. Esta dinámica, en última instancia, obstaculiza la localización efectiva de la ayuda, ya que las métricas de arriba hacia abajo priorizan las agendas institucionales por encima de las necesidades locales.

Introduction

The growing influence of nationally comparable indices has led to their broader use by non-state and multilateral organizations. These indices now exist for multiple phenomena of relevance to international aid, reducing complex concepts like democracy, transparency, democracy, and freedom into seemingly measurable metrics. International organizations and governments have also sought to measure increasingly complex and multidimensional concepts linked to international aid, such as reconciliation and peace (Caplan 2019; Cole and Firchow 2019; Özerdem 2019). In line with this proliferation, scholars of international relations have become increasingly interested in the question of why actors create global performance indicators (GPIs), or the metrics used to evaluate and compare the performance of different countries, regions, or institutions on various aspects of social, economic, environmental, or political activities, and what gives these yardsticks actual power (Broome and Quirk 2015; Kelley and Simmons 2015, 2019; Best 2017; Fisher and Fukuda-Parr 2019; Honig and Weaver 2019; Aue 2021; Koliev, Sommerer, and Tallberg 2021; Rumelili and Towns 2021; Western 2021; Beaumont and Towns

2021a). Much of this research shows that GPIs serve as agenda-setting tools for the international community, establishing a common set of standards or promoting liberal values around human rights, as outlined in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Easterly 2015; Guevara and Kostić 2017).

Scholars have argued that international organizations use measurement to secure funding, set agendas, and legitimize their positions rather than to ensure accountability to local populations (Boswell 2009; Andreas and Greenhill 2011; Kelley and Simmons 2015; Bächtold 2021; Gray 2023; Hellmüller, Goetschel, and Lidén 2023; Littoz-Monnet and Uribe 2023). Indeed, the act of measurement can also be a tool for creating distance between organizations and the complex, often violent, everyday contexts they operate in (Beerli 2017). Yet, the international aid sector, whose primary purpose should be to support economic development, improve living conditions, provide humanitarian assistance, and promote stability and peace in recipient countries, is progressively accepting that aid effectiveness largely depends on its ability to respond to local priorities and variations (Autesserre 2014; De Geoffroy and Grunewald 2017; Fisher and Fukuda-Parr 2019; Gibbons and Otieku-Boadu 2021). Localizing aid—shifting power from international to local actors by addressing local priorities—has become widespread across bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. (Baguios et al. 2021; Slim 2021; Firchow and Wingender 2023, 341; Herrold 2023).[1] To date, it is not clear whether current efforts at establishing progress and accountability measures in the sector actually support or hinder this "local turn" (Diehl 2024, 8). Ultimately, we lack compelling empirical data about the relationship between GPIs and national measurement efforts like barometers and efforts at localization.

This article examines how to reconcile the localization of aid with the proliferation of national and international GPIs, especially for complex concepts like peace and reconciliation. Using Colombia as a case study, where several efforts have measured the country's progress toward peace culminating in a historic peace agreement signed in 2016, we compare three barometers of reconciliation: two based primarily on internationally derived, top-down GPIs, and one on subnational, locally produced, Everyday Peace Indicators (EPIs).

The resulting comparison highlights how GPIs and national barometers are embedded in social networks and professional fields whose internal logics and incentives influence what ultimately is deemed worthy of measurement. We show that top-down indicators conceptualize reconciliation in ways that are quite distinct from how everyday people experience and think about it. This mismatch is out of alignment with the goals of localization to achieve locally led aid because measurement efforts like GPIs and national barometers (which often guide international aid) do not sufficiently take into consideration subnational and regional variation. Donors and governments may say they care about localization, but the types of measurement tools they create and use belie their rhetoric and introduce potential problems. The goal of our analysis is not to advocate for localization but to understand how local, national, and international conceptualizations of peace are in alignment or misalignment. Ultimately, we seek to clarify questions and assumptions about whether international approaches complement those of the everyday in conflict-affected contexts in order to clarify how and when different measurement frameworks should be used.

By comparing top-down and bottom-up indicators of reconciliation, we show how expert-led measurement efforts lack the same breadth and context-specificity of community-generated metrics. Bottom-up measurement systems are naturally broader, allowing for multiple issue areas to be included depending on context and

[1] Notably, there is no consensus in the literature around the definition of localization. Yet, efforts have also been made to measure localization by using GPIs. See *Featherstone, Andy. (March 2019).* Localization Performance Measurement Framework (LPMF). *Network for Empowered Aid Response (NEAR).* https://www.near.ngo/lpmf.

needs and demonstrating that priorities related to measurement are very context specific. Our analysis suggests that government agencies and international organizations are often siloed and protective of their mandates, reinforcing their power through measurement to maintain institutional legitimacy. As a result, universal measurements like GPIs hinder effective localization, particularly in complex fields such as peacebuilding. Bottom-up measurement approaches, rather, show that international aid to conflict settings should be the purvey of multiple institutions and actors, rather than just particular professional sectors such as "development" or "human rights."

This article proceeds as follows. We first bring together two literatures on the power of GPIs, coming from international relations (Andreas and Greenhill 2011; Broome and Quirk 2015; Kelley and Simmons 2019; Beaumont and Towns 2021a) and the politics of measurement and "social space," rooted in anthropology and sociology (Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Boswell 2009; Fourcade 2011, 2017; Merry 2011, 2016; Goodale 2018). Together, these two literatures focusing analytical attention on two key concepts, practices and symbolic power, that help clarify why the creators of indicators include particular metrics and exclude others. We then introduce the idea of top-down versus bottom-up measurement systems and review the three reconciliation barometers compared in this article. The third section applies this theoretical framework to our empirical findings and analysis, comparing a bottom-up barometer to two top-down barometers. We compare the indicators' breadth and content, linking similarities and differences to each barometer's position within the peacebuilding field. These similarities and differences support our argument that GPIs and national barometers reflect the agendas and power dynamics of their creators and can therefore run counter to localization efforts. This not only limits their effectiveness as tools for local accountability; it also limits their effectiveness at actually doing what they claim—in this case, measuring reconciliation.

Measurement Practices as Symbolic Power

In the last decade, a variety of global trends have created opportunities for measurement "entrepreneurs" to influence multiple policy domains through the construction of indices and barometers (Kelley and Simmons 2015, 2019). According to Kelley and Simmons, rising global competition, democratization-driven accountability, and new information technologies have empowered small organizations to influence nations by deploying their own GPIs. These GPIs, whether for corruption, student assessment, or aid transparency, rank countries or regions against each other to leverage the power of comparison toward particular policy goals. There has been exponential growth in the last decade, with at least 159 such GPIs created between 2015 and 2018 (Kelley and Simmons 2019).

Rather than relying on the force of the state's brute economic strength or legal authority, GPIs and related metrics rely on a softer form of "symbolic power" (Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Merry, Davis, and Kingsbury 2015), whose force comes from a variety of mechanisms (Kelley and Simmons 2015, 2019). On one level, the mere act of collecting and synthesizing data in novel ways can be powerful (Mac Ginty and Firchow 2024). For example, as countries increasingly publish social indicators, actors can propose alternatives to economic measures like GDP, expanding discussions to include well-being and health. Indices also tap into reputational concerns. For example, a low ranking by itself may not matter to a particular country, but a ranking that is lower than a neighbor's or competitor's might. Finally, the power of indices depends on the authority and legitimacy of their creators. Indicators are endowed with the assumed expertise of the people behind them, which may be codified in the form of academic pedigrees, official positions, celebrated outputs like reports, and more.

In the broader context of the global rise of "audit culture" (Power 1996; Strathern 2000; Shore and Wright 2015), these sources of GPI power reflect the power of measurement systems more broadly in other fields, both domestic and international. Ranking, for wines, schools, and more depend on information gathering, reputational concerns and assumed authority for their power (Boswell 2009; Andreas and Greenhill 2011). These literatures underscore that a simple theory of measurement-as-power is insufficient to explain the proliferation of measurement frameworks across diverse fields. Each new measurement framework is essentially a gamble on whether it will in fact have any influence at all, which is never guaranteed. Yet, actors still create them, motivated to gain "flag-planting" advantages or to signal alignment with established interests (Cooley and Snyder 2015; Kelley and Simmons 2015; Seabrooke and Wigan 2015; Beaumont and Towns 2021b).

Regardless of its influence, creating an index is an attempt to seize power. (Barnett and Duvall 2005). It is part of the competition between actors within fields, which exists as much in a knowledge-based field like peacebuilding as it does in fields where competition occurs over the production of goods (Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Barnett 2018; Barnett 2020). figure 1 demonstrates the jostling of the peacebuilding sector, with each ancillary sector pushing for a vision of peacebuilding that aligns more closely with their core field. Is peacebuilding primarily about reinforcing state institutions, for example, or should it be focused more on tools like dialogue and, as Firchow has discussed elsewhere, small-p peacebuilding activities (Firchow 2018, 2020)? Through the symbolic power of measurement, we can see how the sector is pushed or pulled depending on the agendas and mandates of the organizations involved in the peacebuilding space. This jostling happens through myriad means, such as UN reports, state policies, or, indeed, the construction of barometers and GPIs.

Beaumont and Towns (2021c) draw on Bourdieu's metaphor of a game to explain this relational approach to competition over power through measurement, where "referees," "players," "coaches," and others try to wield influence over how measurement tools are designed and wielded. Here, the notion of measurement-as-practice is key (Bourdieu 1990; Bigo and Madsen 2011). Measurements do not simply reflect supposed realities that exist as "the local" or "the global," but as practices constituted by actors who are always operating within their own "local" milieux, whether they are a farmer in rural Colombia or a state bureaucrat in Bogotá. This theoretical approach is in line with others that question simplistic binaries like local vs global and "bottom-up" vs. "top-down" (Johnson 2016).

Bourdieu's notions of practice and symbolic power are fundamental to his idea of social space that runs throughout his work (Bourdieu 1989, 1996, 2013). Bourdieu viewed society as structured around professional fields where actors compete for both material (goods, resources) and symbolic (authority, recognition) capital. Some fields, like law, have clearer rules and forms of capital. Some fields, like law, have more defined forms of capital and rules to govern them. For example, lawyers are endowed with authority when they pass the bar exam in their national jurisdictions. Other fields, like peacebuilding, are less bounded, intersecting with numerous other fields, like international development, human rights, security, and more (figure 1). In these less bounded fields, much of the struggle over capital revolves around competition over defining the boundaries and borders of the field itself.

Here, struggles over measurement can play an outsize role. For example, the Human Development Index was effective at challenging the assumed orthodoxy within international development that progress is akin to gross domestic product, pushing it to consider social indicators like health and education as equally valid. However, the HDI was also effective at helping the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) establish itself as an international authority on development. The UNDP was not necessarily better placed than other international organizations to combine indicators of income, health, and education into a composite index—and

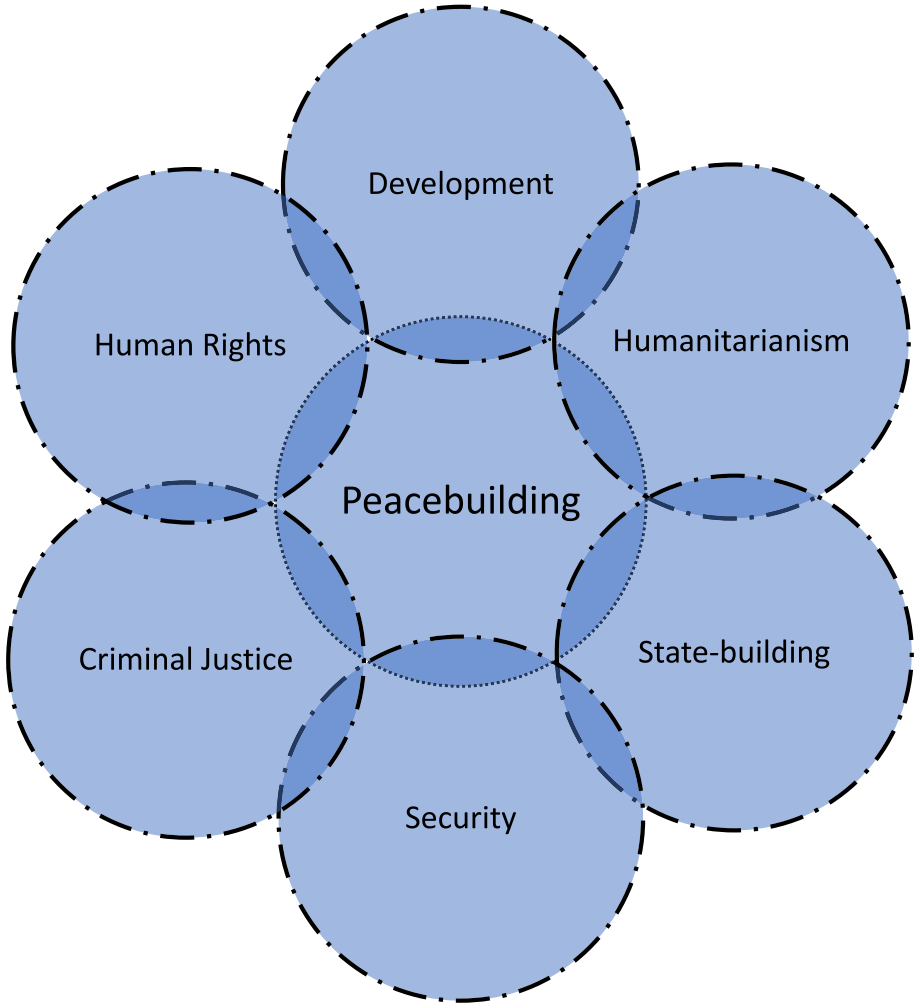

Figure 1. The jostling of the peacebuilding "social space".

was accused of redundancy at the time (McGillivray 1991). But in partnering with established authorities like Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq, it was able to shift the boundaries of the international development field and position itself as one of its main referees.

Since the UNDP began its annual Human Development Reports, measurement frameworks have spread across fields with more porous boundaries than international development. Peacebuilding is one such field, allowing actors from various sectors to participate due to the diverse actions needed to address conflict. To put this concretely, a nonprofit organization traditionally working in the development space will have an easier time recasting itself as a peacebuilding organization in search of peacebuilding grants than would a peacebuilding organization applying for traditional development projects. Here we try to map this set of relationships, drawing on an idea in sociology of "interstitial" or "weak" fields—semi-established social spaces that exist in between and at the margins of other, larger and more established fields (Vauchez 2011; Medvetz 2012; Dixon and Tenove 2013; Beaumont and de Coning 2022).

Since 2003, when the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation launched the South African Reconciliation Barometer, several reconciliation barometers have emerged in peacebuilding (Cole and Firchow 2019). These are composite gauges of observable indicators, like GPIs, collected through surveys, usually done through longitudinal instruments to measure change in public opinion over time regarding the legacy of conflict and changes in the most critical relationships affected by conflict. GPIs standardize measurements across countries for comparison, while barometers focus on specific regions or countries, adapting to local contexts. Sometimes, barometer findings influence GPIs. For example, if a barometer reveals local concerns not captured by GPIs, new indicators may be developed or existing ones adjusted. Yet, most barometers are guided by GPIs, especially when those barometers are created by international organizations, and sometimes GPIs and barometers use indicators interchangeably. We can see that there is considerable diversity in barometers, reflecting not only the diversity of national contexts in which they are created, but also the instability of the broader peacebuilding field and struggles over the right to define one of its core concepts (Cole and Firchow 2019).

In our analysis, we are limited in what we can say about the political struggle over reconciliation barometers in Colombia. Our methodology allows us to compare the end results of these struggles but not to reveal the intricacies and dynamics of the struggle itself. As we note below, such research would be a welcome addition to debates over measurement in the peacebuilding field. We now turn to this debate by comparing three efforts to measure reconciliation in Colombia.

"Top-Down" versus "Bottom-Up" Approaches to Measurement: Reconciliation Barometers

Simplistic binaries between local vs. global or domestic vs. international obscure how all actors, whether in the countryside or the capital, in Bogotá or Washington, DC, operate within their own immediate social spaces and how these different spaces are often "entangled" in complex and nuanced ways (Johnson 2016). We use "top-down" and "bottom-up" to distinguish whether measurement frameworks include the people they aim to represent and how close their creators are to the problems being measured. In the case of reconciliation barometers, these are the individuals and communities impacted by violence and the polarization it fosters. "Bottom-up" approaches, we argue, are by definition inclusive of and proximate to these affected populations.

From the perspective of individuals and communities in countries recovering from violent conflict, postconflict interventions labeled variously as "peacebuilding," "human rights," "security," or "development" do not play out in isolation or necessarily appear conceptually distinct from each other (Dixon and Tenove 2013; Dixon 2016; Firchow 2017). Rather, any particular project operates within a larger system of local, national, and international processes, blending professional and academic fields into hybrid interventions (Mac Ginty 2010). Interpretivist social scientists have long debated whether indicators created by external experts can accurately measure complex concepts like human rights, democracy, development, and peace (Merry 2016; Goodale 2018), democracy (Schaffer 2000), development (Chambers 2007; Holland 2013; Gaillard et al. 2016), and peace (Mac Ginty 2013; Firchow and Mac Ginty 2017). This discussion hinges on an assumption that externally created indicators cannot fully reflect the realities of those experiencing these concepts (Chambers 2007; Schaffer 2015; Merry 2016).

Concerns raised by these critical scholars engage mainly quantitative work by policymakers seeking to measure these phenomena, in particular those interested in localization and concept validity. In relation to peacebuilding, this concern attends to "the local turn" in peace and conflict studies (Autesserre 2010; Mac Ginty and

Richmond 2013; Paffenholz 2015). The "local turn" is an ongoing attempt to understand better what constitutes "the local" and harness local perspectives more usefully to make peacebuilding more effective (Mac Ginty 2015). The aid sector increasingly emphasizes localization, with donors calling for international assistance tailored to specific contexts through locally led approaches that involve everyday people in decision-making and shift power from international to local actors (Baguios et al. 2021; Gibbons and Otieku-Boadu 2021; Byatnal 2022; Firchow and Wingender 2023).

This direction, however, leaves much open for question in the measurement sector. Top-down indicators like GPIs aim for universal comparability and international reputation but often overlook how everyday people experience the realities they measure—an essential factor in reconciliation and peacebuilding (Hinton 2010; Obradouić and Howarth 2017; Firchow 2018).

Here, we draw a distinction between the national expert, embedded in a professional field, and the local, everyday person. An expert has a high degree of officially recognized knowledge or skill in a particular subject or activity—often legitimized through certificates, degrees, titles, or institutional affiliation—who is regarded as a reliable source of advice and guidance. The everyday person is someone in their day-to-day life who is not considered or legitimized as an authority or specialist on a given topic. Depending on context, these are interchangeable identities, and people can and do assume both. In this article we use top-down metrics that were designed by national experts to be universally applicable across Colombia. Although not strictly considered GPIs, the reconciliation barometer indicators are used universally across a country to consistently measure across space and time. Experts have an incentive to derive universal measurement because it affords those experts authority and legitimacy. Generally, this happens at the international or national levels, where such measurement can have broader policy relevance and impact. However, we could imagine scenarios where experts might seek to create metrics at the community level, such as through project monitoring and evaluation or in the rarer case of ethnography. Yet, subnational measurement metrics produced by experts are not the same as bottom-up metrics, which are generated using participatory research methods.

Debates over reconciliation illustrate the jostling that animates the peacebuilding field by its closely related neighbors like security, human rights, and international development (see figure 1). Although the meaning of reconciliation has divided scholars, it is fundamentally a concept that encompasses the idea of repairing and reviving relationships that have been particularly harmed by the actions of one or more of the parties involved (Lederach 1997; Assefa 2001; Bar-Siman-Tov 2004; Brudholm and Rosoux 2009; Verdeja 2009). Reconciliation is not seen as a means of eliminating differences or conflict but as a process of working through contention and living with differences through interdependence (Du Toit 2018). Bloomfield (2006) discusses reconciliation as an "umbrella term," encompassing four main pillars: justice, truth, healing, and reparation, with a possible fifth: development. These pillars, in turn, map much of the debate and struggle over how to define reconciliation, including between the three measurement frameworks at the center of this analysis. Such conceptual heterogeneity provides fertile ground to illustrate struggles between international actors, as well as governments and citizens, over the legitimate right to define what reconciliation is and how it should be measured.

The three reconciliation barometers analyzed in this paper were developed in Colombia and reflect different approaches to indicator construction: two aligned with GPIs and one bottom-up, community-generated barometer. They highlight different aspects of reconciliation in their measurement frameworks, which we suggest correlate with their creators' respective positions, needs, and priorities around conflict response. We use the construction of these reconciliation barometers to em-

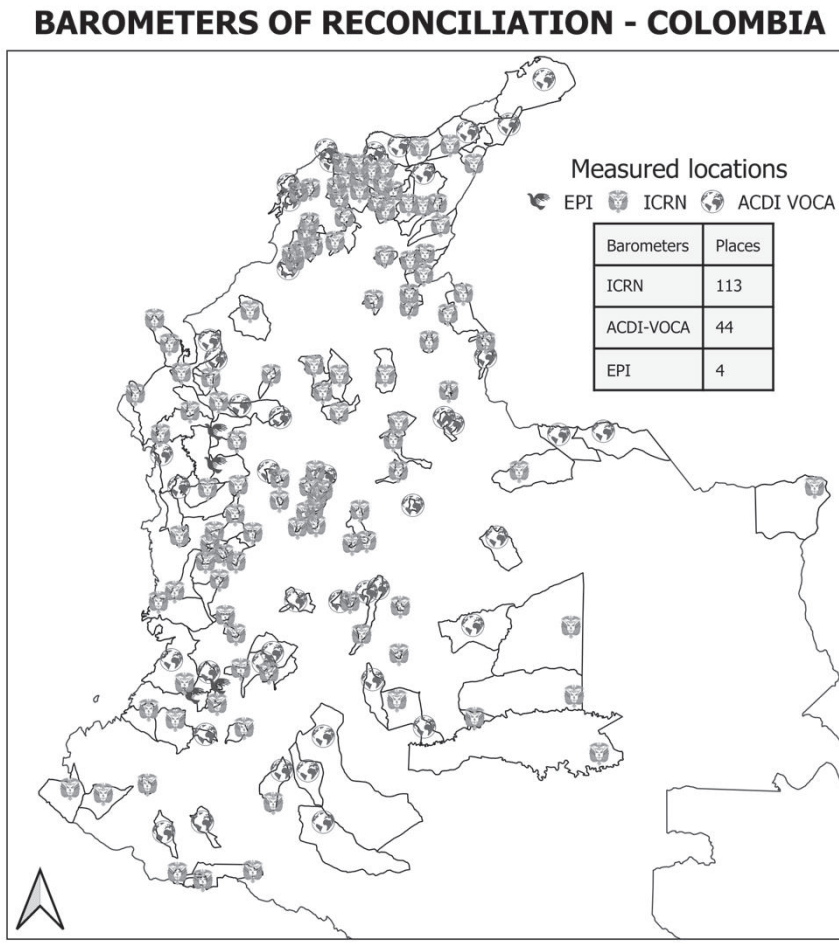

Figure 2. Municipalities where the barometers have carried out surveys

pirically illustrate how international organizations choose indicators not only to set agendas but also to make claims about their expertise and assert the need for their mandates in the peacebuilding sector.

Reconciliation Barometers in Colombia

After decades of armed conflict that resulted in significant loss of life and displacement, a breakthrough occurred in 2016 when the Colombian government, led by President Juan Manuel Santos, signed a historic peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This agreement aimed to end over 50 years of conflict and included provisions for rural development, political participation for former rebels, disarmament, and measures for transitional justice, such as a truth commission, a restorative justice mechanism, and reparations for victims.

Emerging out of the momentum from the Colombian peace process, at least three groups proposed their own indices of reconciliation: one bottom-up and two nationally driven; these three efforts will be analyzed in this paper (see figure 2). The EPI dataset of community-generated indicators of coexistence or *convivencia*, funded by the National Science Foundation and United States Institute

of Peace (USIP), was produced using a collaborative methodology developed by academics with the purpose of producing bottom-up knowledge and participatory statistics (Chambers 2007; Firchow and Gellman 2021).[2] While scholars designed the methodology, the indicators themselves were created using participatory action research, reflecting the priorities chosen by participants. Therefore, the EPIs themselves should be considered "bottom-up" because they are uniquely produced by people in their everyday communities. The EPI measurement of everyday coexistence was developed through various stages of fieldwork since 2019, comprised of 60 focus groups and community meetings with over 1,000 local residents in 15 Colombian villages across the departments of Antioquia and Cauca.[3] Using participatory research methods, EPI utilizes focus groups and participatory activities to work with community members in order to identify their own indicators to assess changes in coexistence in their own localities.

The first stage of data collection for everyday coexistence indicators was comprised of community members generating indicators through focus group discussions. The research team led three focus groups in each community with men, women, and youth. Working with local residents, the researchers followed a strict set of criteria to select a diverse and representative set of ten to fifteen residents for each of the three focus groups. In these groups, community members discussed the signs they use and look for in their communities to judge whether or not they experience more or less coexistence, with questions such as "what signs indicate that your community experiences more or less coexistence?" These were then vetted and ranked by both focus group participants and the community at large through a simple voting process. This final exercise was a rigorous vetting of indicators, resulting in a list of 1,167 coexistence indicators along with the number of votes each indicator received. These indicators can then be used to measure concepts, design interventions, and evaluate results. The choice of indicators helps reveal community priorities and how communities see their own experiences. The indicators coded into an inductive codebook are weighted according to the number of votes they receive, although the EPI methodology does not seek to calculate a single "coexistence" score, rather to demonstrate the holistic and multidimensional nature of this concept as it is defined according to lived experience.

The Victims' Unit of the Colombian government (UARIV), established through Law 1448 of 2011, designed and deployed a national reconciliation barometer, the *Index for Conditions of National Reconciliation* (ICRN), in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).[4] The ICRN, which was funded by USAID, reflects an entirely top-down framework. The ICRN is a reconciliation barometer composed of four dimensions: trust, democracy, victim's rights, and territory, with each dimension disaggregated into twelve categories. The barometer was developed to measure reconciliation at the city level, although using a standardized set of indicators for all cities. It was based on a four-part methodology designed by Professor Juan Diez Medrano (1992): (1) defining the concept of reconciliation, (2) identifying the dimensions of reconciliation in the frame of transitional justice in Colombia, (3) creating indicators in order to quantify these dimensions, and (4) standardizing the index through statistical manipulation. The index was piloted in Bogotá, Medellín, and San Carlos (Antioquia), alongside secondary data collection through institutional mappings, interviews with key actors, consultations, and media

[2] In this paper, we refer to this framework as EPI. https://www.everydaypeaceindicators.org

[3] This article focuses only on EPIs indicators of coexistence in Cauca and Antioquia, or *convivencia* in Spanish, which combines the concepts of coexistence and social cohesion in Spanish and which we used as a proxy for the concept of reconciliation. Drawing on the "peaceful coexistence" literature (Nadler et al. 2008), coexistence was chosen instead of reconciliation based on consultation with a broad cross-section of subject matter experts working in Colombia.

[4] In this paper, we refer to this framework as the ICRN—Índice de Condiciones para la Reconciliación Nacional. UARIV stands for Unidad para la Atención y Reparación Integral a las Víctimas, commonly referred to in English as the Victims' Unit.

monitoring. The ICRN combines four dimensions, split into ten categories, which it incorporates into a total reconciliation score as follows: trust (29 percent), democracy (18 percent), victims' rights (32 percent), and a dimension called "territory" (21 percent), which includes coexistence, culture, economy, and security.

The Colombia office of the Washington, DC-based, international development organization ACDI/VOCA launched a national reconciliation barometer in 2017 and has since carried out two nationally representative surveys at the municipal level. The ACDI/VOCA barometer is actively tied in with the organization's USAID-funded work on reconciliation in Colombia and forms part of its policy and programming portfolio under the project *Program of Alliances for Reconciliation* (PAR). The barometer is divided into six higher-level dimensions, which are further divided into twenty-seven categories with no weighting. It has been measured twice through nationally representative household surveys in 2017 and again in 2019. In both cases, just under 12,000 individuals over the age of sixteen were surveyed in forty-four municipalities. The barometer uses a stratified probability sample at national, regional, and municipal levels, prioritizing twenty-seven municipalities for ACDI/VOCA's reconciliation efforts. Many of the key components of the barometer were based on the work of Professors Angelika Rettberg and Juan Ugarriza, who conducted desk research, fieldwork, and interviews to identify and analyze variables of reconciliation in Colombia (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016). As such, the team behind the barometer occupies a hybrid position within the peacebuilding field, straddling academia, the international community, and the not-for-profit sector. Therefore, the ACDI/VOCA-led, and USAID-funded, Colombian Reconciliation Barometer represents more of a hybrid approach to measurement that started with top-down conceptual expertise and was further informed by local knowledge.[5]

Methodology

To analyze the themes that emerged from the indicators in each of the three indexes, we grouped them into coded categories developed through a coding process for analyzing the EPIs. We chose this coding process because it reflects multiple themes over twenty-seven categories, therefore allowing the depth and breadth necessary to understand where measurement priorities lie for each barometer. The EPI coding process also involves a systematic coding system using defined categories, whereas the two other indices do not code their indicators and only group them thematically.

The EPI coding process begins with the initial generation of a codebook, based on a thematic analysis of EPI indicators . The EPI codebook uses both inductive and deductive methods, grouping indicators into subcategories, categories, and dimensions (See figure 4). A team of three Spanish-speaking coders coded the indicators in all three frameworks in Spanish into a codebook developed for EPI work in Colombia (see Appendix). Three people involved in the codebook development coded the indicators independently, and a fourth reconciled them based on a cascading set of rules, whereby first- and second-order categories were matched across a minimum of two out of three reviewers. In the minority of cases where there was no match, the reconciler reviewed each indicator and selected the final categories. Because each coder coded all indicators, it was not necessary to derive inter-coder reliability scores. Each indicator was allowed up to two categories during our coding process. The percentages presented in this analysis are therefore based on the total number of categories, not the total number of indicators. All of the coded categories were then sorted into six dimensions: Armed Actors, Security, Dealing with the Past, Rights and Dignity, Culture and Society, and Livelihood and Health.

[5] In this paper, we refer to this framework as ACDI/VOCA. https://www.acdivoca.org.co/barometro/. Rettberg and Ugarriza (2023).

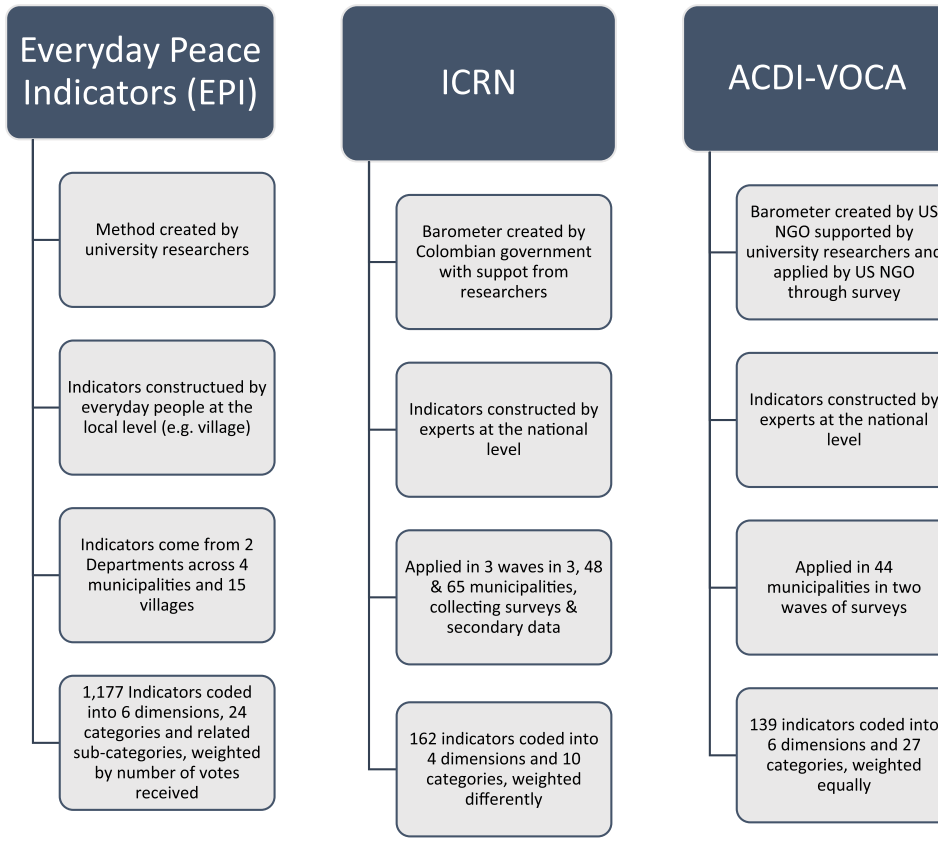

Figure 3. Overview of the compared tools

Using the EPI codebook, we compared themes across the three barometers with consistent definitions for each indicator. We treated questions in the ICRN and ACDI/VOCA barometers like indicators, and eliminated those that were not explicitly measuring reconciliation (for example, demographic questions and questions about respondents' experiences of violence). In total, we coded and analyzed 139 ACDI/VOCA indicators, 162 ICRN indicators and 1,177 EPI indicators (See figures 3, 4). Subsets of EPI indicators were unique to the communities they were collected in, whereas the ACDI/VOCA and ICRN metrics are universally applied across Colombia.

In addition to our coding analysis, we conducted a linguistic analysis using pragmatic analysis of the indexes in order to see how the language used in each tool used qualitatively different linguistic approaches in each category. This involved using NVIVO for content analysis in order to determine how the indicators function as speech acts, as well as investigating the power dynamics and social norms that influence the interpretation and reception of these metrics. This analysis helps uncover the broader social and political functions of indicators, revealing how they shape and are shaped by the context in which they are situated. Sociolinguistics, pragmatics and linguistic anthropology or ethnography are closely interrelated fields of study that help us to frame the relationships between language and society. Most importantly, for our purposes of comparison between bottom-up and top-down measurement efforts, these areas of study remind us of the integral ties between society and language, which are fundamental to their interpretation. Pragmatics, aids sur-

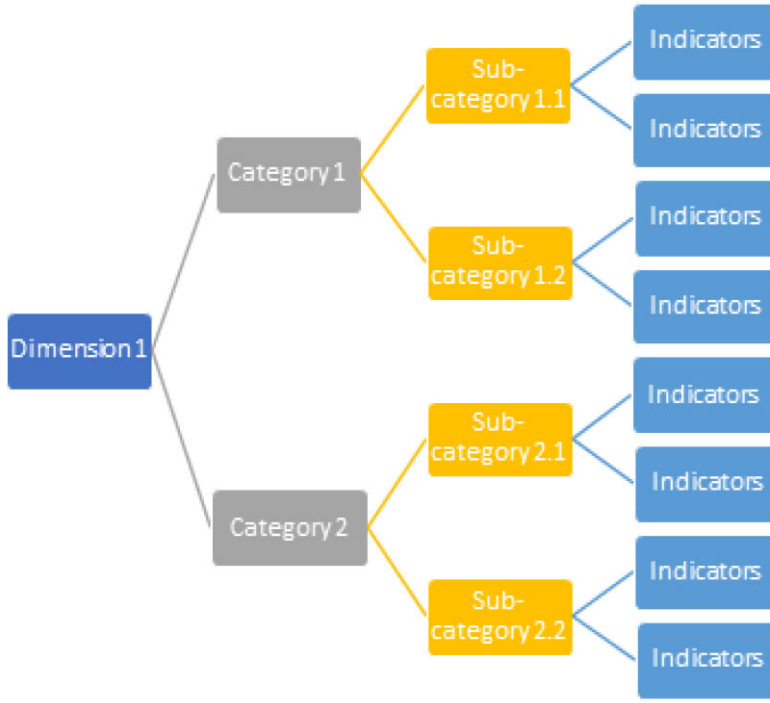

Figure 4. Dimensions, categories, subcategories and indicators in the EPI framework

vey content analysis by examining how words and sentences gain meaning in social interactions (Yuling, Sha, and Park 2019, 4). In studies on the translation of surveys, the use of pragmatics and linguistic ethnography has proven an effective tool at exploring how best to go about effectively translating a survey from one language to another (Yuling, Sha, and Park 2019).

Findings and Analysis: *Coded Indicator Comparison across Indexes*

Each of the metrics analyzed here measures reconciliation within a complex peace transition, which has often resembled repeated cycles of violence rather than a clear break from the past (Sánchez and Uprimny Yepes 2011). The three approaches each define reconciliation differently and therefore reflect different dimensions of reconciliation across the country (figure 5). Using the codebooks to compare the three barometers, we find that the EPI-Antioquia indicators and the ACDI/VOCA barometer bear the most similarity, with both tools focusing on indicators of *culture & society* (38 percent and 34 percent, respectively), but with ACDI/VOCA placing more emphasis on the categories of *security* (16 percent) and *dealing with the past* (19 percent) (see figure 6). The ICRN and EPI-Cauca indices, on the other hand, are more concentrated: the ICRN is concentrated in the themes of *dealing with the past* and *rights & dignity*, which together constitute 70 percent of the instrument (42 percent and 28 percent, respectively); the EPI-Cauca indicators are concentrated in *culture & society* (60 percent).

In the EPI codebook, the dimensions of *rights & dignity*, *dealing with the past*, and *security* are the most state-centric, covering state-guaranteed rights, transitional justice mechanisms, and institutions like the military and police. The top-down ICRN tool is heavily concentrated in state-centric notions of reconciliation, seeing rec-

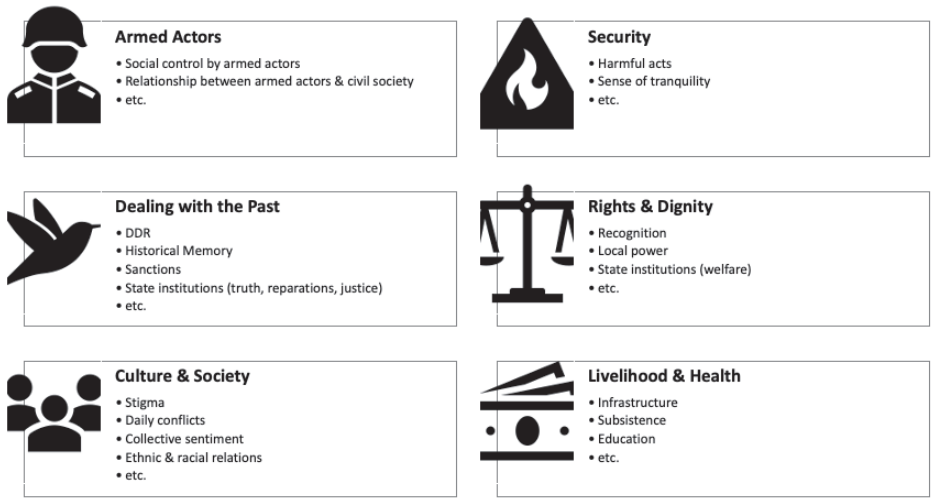

Figure 5. EPI dimensions

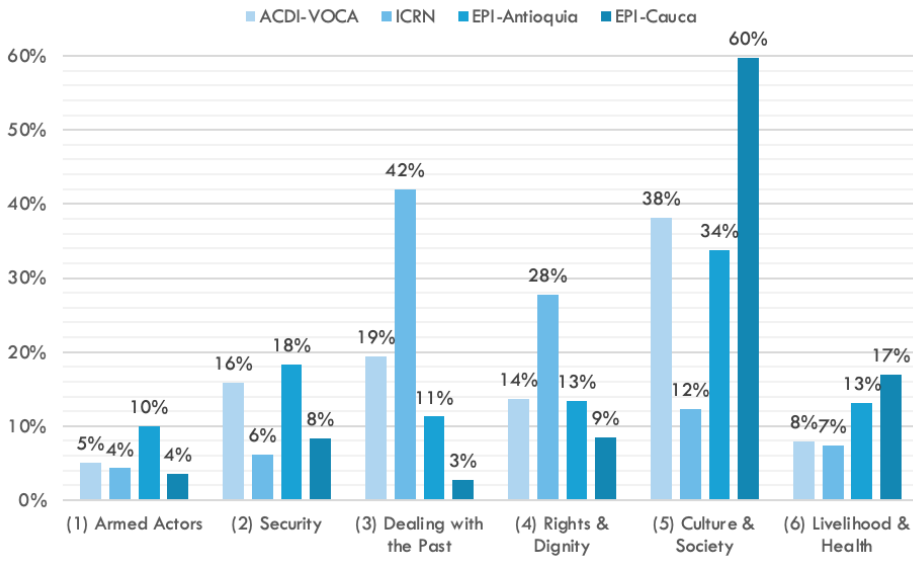

Figure 6. Dimensions of reconciliation

onciliation as a product of state-based interventions into Colombia's postconflict landscape through policies and programs. The bottom-up EPI framework, on the other hand, is concentrated in areas outside the state, seeing reconciliation more as a function of social relations and economic livelihood. The top-down ACDI/VOCA model of reconciliation is more balanced across state-based and non-state dimensions but still places more of an emphasis on state-based dimensions than EPI. On one level, one might expect such measurement diversity for such a complex and multifaceted concept like reconciliation. However, when we look at *how* the tools are different, we can see a correspondence between their respective definitions of

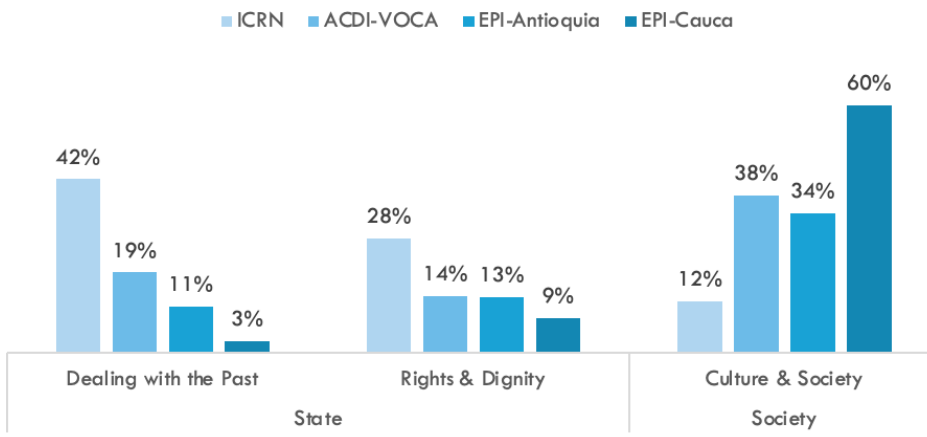

Figure 7. State vs. society

reconciliation and their particular positions in the social space of the peacebuilding field.

The ICRN's concentration in the state-centric dimensions of *dealing with the past* and *rights & dignity* is reflective of where in the peacebuilding social space the actors behind the ICRN are coming from: a state-based organization charged with carrying out a justice-heavy approach to reconciliation. Both *dealing with the past* and *rights & dignity* are heavily weighted by issues related to the state and state-based institutions, such as whether or not the state has sufficiently diffused the truth, its treatment of demobilized ex-combatants, the fulfillment of its promises to provide reparations, and its provision of guarantees of social welfare and other rights. The Colombian Victims Unit occupies a position within the peacebuilding field that intersects with criminal justice and human rights (see figure 1). It was established under Colombia's landmark Law 1448 of 2011, which created the largest administrative domestic reparations program in the world for victims of Colombia's armed conflict (Dixon 2016; Firchow 2017). On paper, the law was praised for being holistic and thorough (Summers 2012). In practice, the law was not feasible, promising reparations to millions of Colombian citizens as a path to national reconciliation (García-Godos and Wiig 2018). Realizing these unachievable promises fell on the Victims Unit, which was caught in a balancing act between justice and peace to justify its mandate: on the one hand, to recognize the rights of all victims of the armed conflict; on the other hand, to promote reconciliation and sustainable peace.[6] This balancing act, we suggest, ultimately informed the unit's reconciliation barometer, leaning toward state- and human rights-centric indicators in place of the social dimensions of reconciliation that stand out in the ACDI/VOCA and EPI instruments. To contribute to such a lofty goal as reconciliation, the Victims Unit could only draw on its existing resources and expertise. Defining reconciliation as rooted in dealing with the past and promoting human rights gave them a concrete starting point.

In contrast to the ICRN, the ACDI/VOCA barometer is more inclusive of non-state, social elements of reconciliation, which are included under the dimension *culture & society*. These include issues like neighborly relations, cultural practices, and race and identity—all areas where the Victims' Unit has minimal tools to create change and where its recognized expertise as a state institution does not necessarily lie (see figure 7). ACDI/VOCA is a development organization tied closely to the US government, which "has proven expertise in agriculture, economic growth,

[6]Law 1448, Articles 1 and 8.

resilience, finance, and equity and inclusion" and is a "trusted implementing partner for the US government."[7] ACDI/VOCA's donor, USAID, "demands quantitative metrics related to projects' major objectives."[8] The ACDI/VOCA barometer uses data to understand reconciliation, promote resource-efficient actions, identify obstacles, reduce polarization through facts, and encourage dialogue between the government and international actors.[9] This flexibility and funding allowed the ACDI/VOCA to base its measures on scholarly research and local consultations (Rettberg and Ugarriza 2016). ACDI/VOCA created a national barometer that could measure a broader array of the dimensions of reconciliation. Broadening the scope spoke to ACDI/VOCA's strengths in areas not traditionally associated with reconciliation activities, such as livelihoods and economic development. Creating a reconciliation barometer helped ACDI/VOCA Colombia move into the country's peacebuilding and reconciliation space, a new sector for them in Colombia, which forms part of their broader equity and inclusion line.[10] The exercise of measurement, and the establishment of a barometer, gave them the legitimacy as experts in reconciliation in Colombia and established them in the reconciliation space when they were coming from more of a development background. Having Colombian academics do fieldwork and literature reviews gave them legitimacy, which was what they most needed to establish themselves as thought leaders on the subject in Colombia and vis-à-vis USAID.

As a locally oriented framework, the EPI model is not fixed or researcher controlled. Rather, it starts with community-specific visions of reconciliation at the village level, which can in turn be aggregated at municipal or regional levels depending on the context. There is, therefore, significant variation not only within the EPI tool but also between different contexts where it is applied. This permits the use of EPI indicators as a proxy for everyday people's understanding of reconciliation in order to compare to expert conceptualizations.

The concentration of these three tools across conceptual dimensions is measured by the coefficient of variation (CoE) and the slope of the lines in figure 7, with higher CoE values and steeper slopes indicating greater concentration. Notably, the regional EPI indices are both the least and most concentrated of the three: EPI-Antioquia has a CoE of 0.53, while EPI-Cauca is 1.01, compared to 0.70 and 0.90 for the ACDI/VOCA and ICRN barometers, respectively. In practice, this means that the EPI-Antioquia barometer captures the most aspects of daily life related to reconciliation, while the EPI-Cauca tool captures the least, with the other two somewhere in the middle.

We draw attention to these differences not to make value judgments as to whether, by itself, more or less variation provides for better or worse barometers of reconciliation. Rather, these differences highlight key analytical points about the politics of measurement in the age of localization: top-down measurement metrics are naturally more reflective of their organizational agendas than locally derived metrics, which will necessarily vary according to context and local agendas. When it comes to complex social concepts like reconciliation, in blurry fields with porous boundaries like peacebuilding, national measurement metrics will always struggle to capture the full extent of subnational variation. For example, although the ACDI/VOCA barometer picks up very similar priority areas to EPI in the campesino communities of Antioquia, its aggregate definition of reconciliation varies significantly from the

[7] https://www.acdivoca.org

[8] Email communication from ACDI/VOCA Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting & Learning Team, November 22, 2024.

[9] https://www.acdivoca.org.co/barometro/sobre-el-barometro/. Rettberg and Ugarriza (2023).

[10] Before this project, ACDI/VOCA had implemented the "Improving the Social Status, Increasing Incomes of Afro-Colombian and Indigenous Peoples" or ACIP program. However, this project was primarily centered on the economic empowerment of ethnic minorities rather than peacebuilding or reconciliation related activities. https://www.acdivoca.org/projects/afro-colombian-and-indigenous-program-acip/

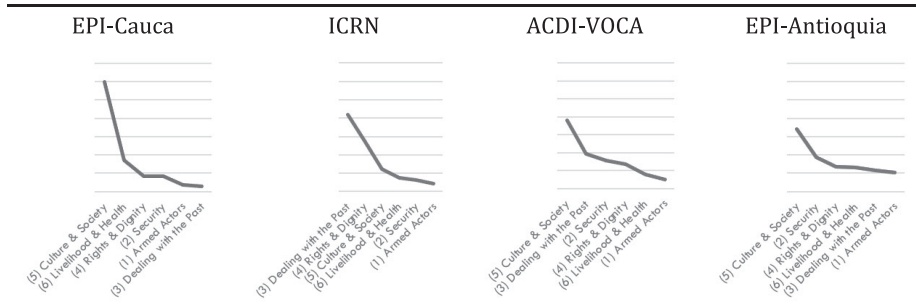

Figure 8. Variation across dimensions. Higher CoE values = more concentration

Afro-Colombian communities of Northern Cauca, captured in the EPI Cauca tool. As such, if the ACDI/VOCA tool were to indicate that there was less reconciliation in Cauca than in Antioquia, this is likely to be due more to issues of internal validity, since the population in Cauca defines reconciliation for themselves quite differently. While EPI indicators in both locations highlight the importance of *culture & society* in defining reconciliation, Antioquia and Northern Cauca are ultimately markedly different regions. Both were heavily impacted by the armed conflict and continue to struggle with the presence of armed groups, and both play key roles in the international drug trade, but they are quite unique socially and politically.

In Antioquia, EPI worked in predominantly campesino communities, while in Northern Cauca, EPI worked with Afro-Colombian communities. The campesino villages in Antioquia are rural, farming communities with traditional state-based political structures (mayors, governors) and local, community-level committees called *Juntas de Acción Communal* (Collective Action Groups, JAC). The Afro-Colombian villages in Northern Cauca are also rural and also rely predominantly on farming, but they are more tightly connected through a separate quasi-political network of traditional and local leaders, the *Proceso de Comunidades Negras de Colombia* (Process of Black Communities in Colombia, PCN). The dominance of *culture & society* indicators among these Afro-Colombian communities reflects the importance of social relations, traditional custom, and local culture in understanding and measuring reconciliation.

This is not to say that the Colombian state does not need to deal with the past in this region. Rather, it highlights the relative importance of social relations for local communities to define reconciliation on their own terms—and the ways that these relations vary (see figure 8), demonstrating that the state, and the international community supporting these actions, should take a much more holistic approach to peacebuilding that includes many of its related, ancillary sectors. Top-down metrics, even those developed at a subnational level, could not capture this kind of regional or local variation. Yet, such variation is key not only to measuring reconciliation but also to fostering it, which is why we can see that bottom-up measurement is fundamental to the peacebuilding enterprise, in particular if we are concerned with peace and reconciliation at a local level.

Findings and Analysis: *Variation in Measurement Language*

Our comparison also indicates that, in addition to the thematic differences between expert and bottom-up measurement, the two approaches use language differently, thus capturing meaning in unique ways. That is, just as there are regional variations in the ways that Colombians understand reconciliation, there are important differences in the ways that they talk about it—national-level measurement frameworks

do not capture this variation. This matters, furthermore, not only for the accuracy of a barometer but also for the cultural signals that survey questions communicate depending on how they are framed. Language, for example, that comes from an educated, urban center such as Bogota sends unwritten sociodemographic signs to people about who they are speaking to through the survey. In other words, the kind of language and syntax that is used signals to the respondent their sociodemographic position vis-à-vis the speaker (or survey developer in this case). This means that any answers will take into consideration the recipient of the response, which can lead respondents to answer according to how they usually interact with that group in their society, and thus introduce the potential for bias. As Silverstein's "indexical orders" demonstrate, these individual signs are then linked to wider ideologies and articulations of social class (Silverstein 2003). As Pan et al. put it, "language use signifies whether the speaker is in a close relationship with the listener, whether he or she is in a superior position relative to the listener, and whether they are talking in a formal or casual situation" (Yuling, Sha, and Park 2019, 5).[11]

In surveys in rural Colombia, for example, phrasing that is highly indicative of the educated elite would immediately signal to a respondent the presence of the government or a funder—in other words, an outsider. The same would occur conversely if rural language was used in surveys with urban elites because of the indexical nature of how language reflects cultural values and priorities (Copland and Creese 2015). table 1 shows the language differences between the expert- and community-led barometers, using examples from each index that were coded into the same high-level dimension. As with our coded content analysis, we find that the ACDI/VOCA barometer is closest to EPI in terms of the accessibility of the language used in the survey. However, the lack of specificity regarding the location or the immediate concerns or identification of locations renders it less proximal to the respondent than EPI. Overall, the EPI indicators are more conversational, exemplifying dialogue you might hear friends using in a casual context. For example, in the first row of questions about ex-combatants, the ICRN indicator is not phrased in a way that would come up in casual conversation. Someone may mention to a friend that they are not comfortable living next to ex-combatants, but they likely would not ask them out of a list of five options who they would not want as a neighbor. The EPI questions are also more direct, providing specificity about the actors of concern, which the others do not, remaining more broadly applicable to a wider spectrum of concerns and actors. Although all three are often looking for similar information, ICRN and ACDI/VOCA are attuned to multiple tensions across contexts, whereas EPI only picks up tensions to do with ex-combatants, as this was a concern for the community that produced the indicator. Such differences are quite significant from the perspective of pragmatics and indexicality because of the potential effect of the question phrasing on the respondent.

Significant linguistic differences arise from how communities describe daily experiences compared to the broader terms used at the national level. For example, illegal actions like small-scale mining, carrying arms, and growing coca emerged in the barometers, though there are important differences in the language used to refer to these. In the ACDI/VOCA barometer, for example, an indicator is phrased as "in my community, illegal mining or carrying arms is looked at positively" (*en mi comunidad es bien vista la minería ilegal o el porte de armas*). Using the words "illegal mining" here, however, marks a distinction between sanctioned and nonsanctioned activities, which was not always present in the EPI indicators, where the line between legal and illegal was sometimes less clear. This varied by context, however, with some

[11]This is what Charles Sanders Peirce termed indexicality, or the ability of linguistic signs to imply meaning without referring to the significance directly. Peirce argued that theory of signification consists of three interrelated parts: the sign, the object and the interpretant or who is signaling what and how that is being interpretated by the receiver (Peirce 1955). We produce social meaning implicitly by interpretation or "interpretive leads between what is said and the social occasion in which it is being produced" (Blommaert and Blommaert 2005, 11).

Table 1. Comparison of survey questions from four dimensions

Dimension	ICRN	ACDI VOCA	EPI—Antioquia
Culture and society	*English*: Of the following groups of people, who would you NOT like to have as a neighbor? *Spanish*: De los siguientes grupos de personas, ¿me podría decir a cuáles de ellos NO le gustaría tener como vecinos?	*English*: Are the people in your neighborhood willing to work with people who have committed harm in the armed conflict? *Spanish*: ¿Las personas de su barrio o vereda están dispuestas a trabajar con personas que han hecho daño en el conflicto armado?	*English*: Are bad comments made by civilians for the money that ex-combatants receive? *Spanish*: ¿Hay malos comentarios de civiles por el dinero que reciben los excombatientes?
Economic activity and livelihoods	None	*English*: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? The illicit cultivations are well respected in my locality. *Spanish*: ¿Qué tan de acuerdo o en desacuerdo esta´ con las siguientes afirmaciones?—Los cultivos ilícitos están bien vistos en mi entorno	*English*: Do farmers feel forced to grow coca? *Spanish*: ¿Campesinos se ven obligados a sembrar coca?
Rights and dignity	*English*: To what agencies do you usually go to in order to denounce a crime? *Spanish*: ¿A qué entidades suele recurrir en busca de ayuda para denunciar un delito?	*English*: What's worse for someone in your community: stealing from a neighbor or stealing from the government? *Spanish*: ¿Qué es más grave para una persona de su barrio o vereda: robarle al vecino o robarle al Estado?	*English*: Does the government fill the justice void left by the guerrilla? *Spanish*: ¿El estado llena el espacio de justicia que dejó la guerrilla?
Dealing with the past	*English*: From the activities that you know have been carried out in your municipality in order to repair victims of the armed conflict, which ones have you participated in? *Spanish*: De las acciones que usted sabe han sido llevadas a cabo en su municipio para reparar a las víctimas del conflicto armado, ¿en cuáles ha participado?	*English*: Have the victims of the armed conflict in your locality been repaired and compensated? *Spanish*: ¿Las víctimas del conflicto armado en su barrio o vereda han sido reparadas y compensadas?	*English*: Has the Maravillo school received funding for collective reparations? *Spanish*: ¿La escuela del Maravillo ha recibido dotación por la reparación colectiva?

communities in the EPI barometer using both "crop substitutions" and "illicit crops" to refer to coca. Other words used in the top-down instruments that did not appear in the EPI indicators included "crimes" (*delitos*) and "infractions" (*infracciones*). The EPI indicators referred frequently to conflicts, but they were more daily conflicts like those between neighbors. This also likely marks the distinction between the urban context, where the top-down surveys were mostly derived, and the rural context, where the EPI indicators were sourced.

Discussion

Top-down indicators and GPIs often miss subnational variation due to survey design and question framing, reflecting the priorities of institutions instead of conflict-affected communities. The differences and similarities among the three approaches to measuring reconciliation reviewed in this paper suggest different forms of indicator use and policy relevance for measurement systems. Barometers using community generated indicators can offer a more detailed and varied assessment of a particular social concept because they can pick up on the local variation, knowledge, and language that external actors may have difficulty accessing. Barometers using top-down indicators or GPIs draw on more universal language to access ideas and themes without the same context-specificity, conceptual breadth, and diversity of bottom-up metrics, generating more generalizable data and insight informed by institutional priorities.

Yet, these differences and similarities reflect more than intellectual debates or explicit agendas. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of scholars like Bourdieu and Merry, we argue that these metrics reflect broader social and political struggles over defining the boundaries and authority of the peacebuilding field (Bourdieu 1989, 1991; Fourcade 2011; Merry 2011; Merry, Davis, and Kingsbury 2015). This struggle is especially pronounced in peacebuilding, where the sector's porous boundaries allow various actors to compete for influence and resources (see figure 1).

By looking at measurements in international aid before, during, and after conflicts through a localization lens, we can see how the struggle between sectors plays out by examining the indicators used by each actor to measure progress. The variation between metrics reflects broader debates over what count, as legitimate efforts for reconciliation and where the peacebuilding field's boundaries should be drawn. Do people prioritize retribution (Aloyo, Dancy, and Dutton 2022) or development (Pham and Vinck 2007)? Is reconciliation primarily a state-supported process (Sharp 2013), or do everyday relationships take precedence (Lederach 2005)? As Bloomfield (2006) notes, the process of reconciliation cuts across all these domains in practice—yet, as we have shown, the aspects that actors choose to emphasize at any given time depend on their institutional priorities. These are academic debates, but they also reflect broader struggles between organizations over the right to define what the peacebuilding field is and, thus, stake their place within it.

The power of measurement does not simply flow from the authority of those who create metrics. Rather, the act of measurement is itself a claim for authority (Bourdieu 1989, 1991): a power struggle over the right to represent what reconciliation—and the peacebuilding enterprise more broadly—*should* be. From this perspective, we can see that the creation and dissemination of indicators is not only a struggle over policy directed at policy-makers and decision-makers, but a struggle for legitimacy targeted also at other actors who may be in competition for symbolic power. This is especially true, we contend, where concepts are complex and contested and the policy targets less clearly delineated. When we look at the concept of reconciliation, a highly complex and subjective concept that anchors much debate within the fields of peacebuilding and transitional justice, debates over the meaning of reconciliation are motivated not simply by explicit policy positions or advocacy agendas. Rather, they are rooted in larger questions over where

the boundaries of those fields lie and in the resulting competition over what should matter to them.

Understanding why actors include or exclude certain measurements in top-down barometers and GPIs is crucial for developing a more complete theoretical framework. This is particularly vital for complex and variable concepts like reconciliation. Top-down barometers and GPIs often miss subnational contexts, limiting the international community's ability to foster sustainable peace in conflict-affected societies like Colombia. Top-down barometers will guide international investment at a national rather than subnational level, missing the variations in what different areas prioritize when it comes to peace and reconciliation. We find evidence for this in the large differences between the EPI barometers sourced in Cauca and Antioquia. This variation empirically demonstrates that communities define concepts like reconciliation in significantly different ways at the subnational level. We also find key differences in the language used between the national and EPI barometers, stemming from the use of a localized vernacular by the EPI tools and generalizable language in the ACDI/VOCA and ICRN barometers. This can have a significant impact on the results of the data collected by the different tools.

As a state-based actor that occupies space between peacebuilding, transitional justice, and human rights, the Colombian Victims Unit required more external control over its measurement approach, we suggest, as it sought to draw the lines of the Colombian peace process in line with its own institutional mandates and positioning. The resulting concentration of the ICRN in topics related to rights and state-based peace processes reflects these broader incentives and interests. In contrast, the US development NGO ACDI/VOCA based its tool on analysis done by Colombian scholars to create a national barometer that could measure a broader array of the dimensions of reconciliation. Broadening the scope spoke to ACDI/VOCA's strengths in areas not traditionally associated with reconciliation activities, such as livelihoods and economic development, and provided the organization with the legitimacy to be perceived as a thought leader in the peacebuilding and reconciliation space in Colombia.

Our study adds important nuance to debates over reconciliation in peacebuilding and to literature on GPIs through a deep dive into the content of measurement frameworks. There are important limitations to recognize. First, while our methodology allowed us to compare three measurement tools that resulted from symbolic struggles over measurement in Colombia, we did not delve into the actual struggle itself. Such research would be a welcome addition to broader debates over the meaning of reconciliation in peacebuilding. Second, by basing our assessment on the EPI coding scheme, there is a fair critique that both the ICRN and ACDI/VOCA frameworks could not capture local dynamics as well as EPI. However, we chose to use the EPI codebook as our basis of comparison precisely because it represents the most holistic and detailed representation of categories possible among the three barometers. For example, in the ACDI/VOCA framework there are no categories for health or development- related issues like the construction of roads or hospitals or access to healthcare, like are seen in EPI.

Conclusion

In summary, our research shows that for localization to evolve into locally led aid, data informing conflict response and peacebuilding must be collected at the subnational level, and the measurement tools to collect that data should be tailored to the diverse conflict experiences of different regions and subregions. Universal measurements, such as top-down barometers and global GPIs, create barriers to effective localization, particularly in complex fields like peacebuilding. Our findings also demonstrate that for international aid to be truly localized in conflict settings, it should involve a diverse array of institutions and actors guided by local standards

and metrics, rather than being confined to specific professional sectors using universal tools.

Different approaches to measurement serve different purposes. Top-down, universal measurement can provide policymakers with comparability, scalability, efficiency, and consistency, all of which are important for the scientific study of peace and reconciliation. At the same time, our comparison of various measurement systems confirms that measurements serve purposes beyond tracking change, such as setting agendas for peacebuilding, organizational survival, credibility, legitimacy, and power. No single purpose is inherently superior, but it is crucial to be clear about the measurement tool's true goals from the outset. This is particularly important when claiming to measure "peace" or "reconciliation" in conflict-affected countries, as results may be taken at face value. Both top-down and bottom-up measurement strategies offer significant flexibility in applying and combining different metrics based on the tool's purpose or policy and research goals. Ultimately, it is vital that these measurement endeavors, whether top-down, bottom-up, or a combination, are transparent about their approaches and motivations. An open and honest dialogue about measurement in international aid will help move beyond debates on local versus national or "top-down" versus "bottom-up," allowing for different combinations of measurement strategies tailored to specific contexts and needs.

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Appendix: Colombia Indicator Codebook, December 2023

Code	Type	Definition
1. **Armed actors**	Dimension	
1.1 Social Control by Armed Actors	Category	Indicators that refer to the impact of the presence of armed actors on the daily life of communities, as they become administrators of justice, imposing norms of coexistence and behavior.
1.2 Armed Actors/Civilian Relationship	Category	Indicators that address the relations between the different actors of the armed conflict and the civilian population in the context of the war. These indicators account for the differences in the communities' perceptions of each type of actor as well as the differences in their practices. Armed actors include legal and illegal organizations.
1.2.1 Army	Subcategory	
1.2.2 Police	Subcategory	
1.2.3 Guerrilla	Subcategory	
1.2..4 Paramilitary	Subcategory	
2. Security	Dimension	
2.1 Victimizing Acts	Category	Indicators that refer to actions against the civilian population in the context of the armed conflict by the armed actors involved.
2.1.1 Forced Disappearance	Subcategory	
2.1.2 Forced Displacement	Subcategory	
2.1.3 Food Blockade	Subcategory	
2.1.4 Sexual Violence	Subcategory	
2.1.5 Threats	Subcategory	
2.1.6 Anti-Personnel Mines	Subcategory	
2.1.7 Property Loss	Subcategory	
2.1.8 Extrajudicial Executions	Subcategory	
2.1.9 Judicial Assemblies	Subcategory	
2.1.10 Forced Recruitment	Subcategory	
2.1.11 Assassinations	Subcategory	
2.2 Tranquility/Security	Category	Indicators that refer to sensations and practices derived from a context perceived as positive, calm or safe. They reflect situations with absence of fear, such as walking at night, sleeping peacefully, or moving freely.
2.2.1 Sense of Tranquility	Subcategory	The explicit sensation of absence of anxiety or distress associated with events related to the conflict. It refers to direct feelings. For example, "There is no fear that daughters and sons will go to war," "there is no fear of attending mass," and "there is no fear of leaving the door open."
2.2.2 Security	Subcategory	Security indicators refer to more concrete facts of the war. For example, "there are no more murders," "we are no longer stopped on the road," "outsiders can come to our town."
2.2.3 Freedom of Movement	Subcategory	
2.2.4 Confidence	Subcategory	This refers to recovery after the war. It can be with any actor, but mainly it is with the community, the foreigners, and the armed groups. The idea that they are not going to hurt you. For example, "I can say hello to everybody."

Continued

Code	Type	Definition
3. Dealing with the Past	Dimension	
3.1 Land	Category	Indicators that deal with the agrarian issue and its different historical problems such as land tenure, property formalization or land concentration, core conflicts of the armed conflict.
3.1.1 Restitution	Subcategory	
3.1.2 Entitlement	Subcategory	
3.1.3 Distribution	Subcategory	
3.1.4 "Resguardo"/Collective Territory	Subcategory	
3.2 Return (of Displaced People)	Category	Indicators that refer to the process of return to the territories of people and families expelled by the war who feel the opportunity, due to some change in the context, to return to the places where they used to live.
3.3 Reincorporation	Category	Indicators that are related to the process of transition to civilian life of FARC ex-combatants in multiple dimensions and the challenges they face.
3.3.1 Economic	Subcategory	
3.3.2 Social	Subcategory	
3.3.3 Family	Subcategory	
3.3.4 Political	Subcategory	
3.3.5 Historical Memory	Category	Indicators that discuss the construction of a historical account of the armed conflict in Colombia, its development and dynamics in the territories, as well as the socialization of this truth in the communities to give meaning to their past and present experience.
3.3.6 Pedagogy/Dissemination	Subcategory	Dynamics of socialization of memory, facts and truths of the conflict
3.3.7 Memory	Subcategory	Conflict facts, explanations and truths
3.3.8 Clarification	Subcategory	Demands related to victimizing events that affect someone personally
3.4 Punishment for Victimizers	Category	Indicators that talk about the communities' perceptions of the perpetrators, their punishments, responsibilities and mechanisms for making amends for their actions in the context of the war.
3.4.1 Punitive Justice	Subcategory	
3.4.2 Restorative Justice	Subcategory	
3.4.3 Common Justice (Ethnic Groups)	Subcategory	
3.4.4 Community Justice (General)	Subcategory	
3.5 Forgiveness	Category	
3.6 Vengeance	Category	
3.7 State-Society Relations (Conflict)	Category	
3.7.1 State Effectiveness (Peace Accord)	Subcategory	Peace Agreement and the Integral System (JEP, CEV, UBPD)
3.7.2 State Effectiveness (Reparations & Law 1448)	Subcategory	UARIV/reparation

Continued

Code	Type	Definition
4. Rights and dignity	Dimension	
4.1 Use of Local Power	Category	Indicators that talk about practices and institutions for the development of political activities and the exercise of power (social organization/political participation, etc.) at the local level.
4.1.1 JAC	Subcategory	
4.1.2 Mayor	Subcategory	
4.1.3 Indigenous/Community Councils	Subcategory	
4.1.4 Political Participation	Subcategory	
4.1.5 Social Leaders	Subcategory	Indicators highlighting the role of social leaders in different dimensions of community life
4.1.6 Local Protection	Subcategory	
4.2 Autonomy	Category	Indicators that talk about decisions that individuals and communities can make without coercion, according to their own interests. For example, the free decision to become a mother or to have an abortion. Farming for food, etc.
4.3 Recognition & Dignity	Category	Indicators that talk about feelings and/or experiences of being treated with dignity by the state, armed groups and society in general.
4.4 State–Society Relations (General)	Category	A set of indicators that express the communities' imaginary vis-à-vis the Colombian State's action and also account for its dynamics at the territorial level. These indicators include historical demands of society regarding the State, and its presence-absence, the distribution and effectiveness of its policies, and the fulfillment of different types of agreements with communities and armed actors.
4.4.1 Distribution (Equality/Prioritization)	Subcategory	
4.4.1 Territorial Approach	Subcategory	Indicators that express the conflicts associated with the territorial distribution of resources and the presence of the State. Reflects the centralization-decentralization tension in Colombia and is related to the territorial approach.
4.4.1 State Effectiveness (Social Programs)	Subcategory	
4.4.1 Corruption/Clientilism	Subcategory	
5. Culture and society	Dimension	
5.1 Stigmatization	Category	Indicators that talk about imaginaries and representations that communities have about individuals, places and processes in a negative way. For example, communities are not stigmatized as guerrillas because they live in a conflict zone.
5.1.1 Post-Agreement Biases	Subcategory	
5.1.2 Prejudices Associated with the Conflict	Subcategory	
5.1.3 Prejudices in Everyday Relations	Subcategory	

Continued

Code	Type	Definition
5.2 Daily Conflicts	Category	Indicators that talk about conflicts and problems at the smallest scales of interaction such as school, family or neighborhood, these indicators are not always linked to armed conflict or at least not directly. They include dimensions and feelings such as gossip, jealousy, envy, individualism, family problems, among others.
5.2.1 Family Conflicts	Subcategory	
5.2.2 Neighborhood	Subcategory	
5.2.3 Gossip	Subcategory	
5.2.4 School	Subcategory	
5.3 Collective Sentiment	Category	Indicators that refer to actions and feelings of solidarity, unity, and sense of belonging to the territory and the community, including the use of common places by the community (church, field, etc.). They include practices of caring for others for the common benefit and the construction of social fabric, such as mingas, gatherings, collections, care of the sick, among others.
5.3.1 Social Cohesion	Subcategory	Shared feelings about belonging to and continuity of a community
5.3.2 Collective Practices	Subcategory	Recurring activities or actions carried out collectively for the common good
5.3.3 Culture & Sports	Subcategory	Indicators that focus on culture, recreation and sports activities
5.3.4 Cosmovision, Identity & Ethnic Practices	Subcategory	Indicators that address ethnic worldview, including ethnic belief system and practices and sense of ethnic identity.
5.4 External Relationships	Category	Indicators that refer to dynamics and representations of the relationships of the communities with their external environment (other than the state); whether with other communities, outsiders, institutions, villages, among others.
5.5 Youth	Category	Indicators dealing with the population between 16 and 25 years of age, which allow for generational analysis when explicit.
5.5.1 Girls & Boys	Subcategory	Indicators dealing with the population under 16 years of age.
5.6 Intergenerational Relations	Category	Indicators that address the relationships, conflicts and imaginaries between different generations and account for age ruptures or continuities.
5.7 Gender Roles	Category	Indicators that talk about conflicts generated by socially assigned places according to gender.
5.7.1 Gender Norms	Subcategory	
5.7.2 Gender Equality	Subcategory	
5.7.3 Sexual & Gender-Based Violence	Subcategory	Indicators that include explicit or implicit forms of violence, including the control exercised by one gender over the other.
5.7.4 Protitution	Subcategory	
5.8 Relations with Other Actors	Category	Indicators that refer to the presence and actions developed by national non-state organizations, international cooperation, the UN, UNDP, etc.
5.8.1 Relations With Ngos	Subcategory	

Continued

Code	Type	Definition
5.8.2 Relations with Ios	Subcategory	
5.8.3 Reltations with Private Actors	Subcategory	
5.8.4 Ethnic & Racial Relations	Category	
5.8.5 Interethnic Conflicts	Subcategory	
5.8.6 Interethnic Integration	Subcategory	
5.8.7 Exclusion/Discrimination	Subcategory	
6. Economic activities	Dimension	
6.1 Living Conditions	Category	Indicators that refer to access to decent living conditions, which include services and goods necessary for a good life, such as health, transportation, public services, housing conditions, among others.
6.1.1 Infrastructure	Subcategory	Indicators that refer to the set of material works for collective use such as highways, roads, parks, sewage, and public services.
6.1.2 Livelihoods	Subcategory	Indicators that talk about activities, goods and dynamics necessary for good living and the reproduction of social life. For example, food cultivation, market access, work, among others.
6.1.3 Employment	Subcategory	Indicators that refer to access to work in order to build a future in their territories.
6.1.4 Mental Health	Subcategory	Indicators that refer to the psychological effects and their consequences on the well-being of people and their environment, derived from the armed conflict.
6.1.5 Consumption of Drugs & Alcohol	Subcategory	
6.1.6 Health	Subcategory	
6.1.7 Education	Subcategory	Indicators that address access, opportunities, conditions, and other characteristics of public and private education systems as well as other forms of learning knowledge and vocational, technical, and professional training.
6.2 Illicit Crops	Category	Indicators that address the issue of illicit crops such as coca, marijuana and poppy and the conflicts arising from this illegal market and the policies against it.
6.3 Environment	Category	
6.3.1 Water	Subcategory	
6.3.2 Trash	Subcategory	

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