

<b>Section A</b>		
The fields in this section are mandatory.		
<b>Institution: Liverpool Hope University</b>		
<b>Unit of Assessment: 19 Politics and International Studies</b>		
<b>Title of case study: Raising awareness of how discourse shapes political debates: transitional justice and the peace process in Colombia</b>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014-2017</b>		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Dr Catalina Montoya-Londoño	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Senior Lecturer in International Relations	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 2014-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred: March 2015 – November 2017</b>		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N</b>		
<b>Section B</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>Dr Montoya-Londoño's research on the Colombian peace process has informed political and media debates on transitional justice, how they are framed, and the way they are understood by policy-makers, professionals and the public.</p> <p>The research achieved the following impacts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributed to the understanding of key Colombian officials about the role of land restitution and media and political narratives in the peace process.</li> <li>• Increased awareness and understanding among non-specialist audiences (in the UK, France, and Colombia) about the challenges of the Colombian peace process and the importance of political and media discourse to its viability and sustainability (reach of 289,000; audience of up to 550,000).</li> <li>• Influenced the thinking of journalists, key communicators and leading professionals in Colombia and Latin America about the contribution of media to a post-conflict environment.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The research, undertaken between 2014 and 2017 by Dr Catalina Montoya-Londoño and Professor Maryluz Vallejo Mejía (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Colombia), concerns how media framing in response to the <i>Law 1448 of Victims and Land Restitution</i> in Colombia had a negative impact on the attempt to establish a sustainable peace in the country. This law came into force in 2012, as the Colombian Government began peace negotiations with the left-wing guerrillas of FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). It sought to end decades of armed conflict by applying a transitional justice framework to compensate victims. It also aimed at tackling rural development to ensure the sustainability of the initiative in line with international economic and food security goals.</p> <p>An agreement reached in May 2013 included provisions for integral rural reform (the first point of the negotiation agenda), including greater access to land, support for smallholders and cooperatives, infrastructure, credit subsidies, technical assistance, training, food security, and socio-economic development. However, media coverage suggests that key economic and political sectors did not support it.</p>		

The research examines how news media framed the debate on the application of this Law, and how media discourse on land restitution undermined the possibility of a sustained and enduring peace process.

The research made the following key findings

1. Organisations advocating democratization of land and protection of smallholdings (supported by influential international NGOs) opposed a global policy consensus which prioritised commercialisation of rural land (linked to the international market) as the path to development and food security. As such, they ran counter to the interests of powerful groups within Colombia who stand to benefit from policies centred on commercialisation. **(R1, R2, R3, R4)**
2. National and regional Colombian media carried a clear bias in favour of dominant economic interests which were opposed to the reforms promoted by grass-roots social organisations. The priorities of the former were more prominent and relatively unchallenged. **(R3, R4)**
3. Mainstream Colombian newspapers tended to favour the government's strategy of encouraging market-oriented rural development via the Law of Victims and Land Restitution, whilst reproducing conservative elite concerns about preserving existing socioeconomic structures. **(R3, R4)**
4. Alternative approaches that may have addressed structural inequalities in land ownership or emphasised justice in response to land-grabs during armed conflict were not a significant part of public debate because they were excluded from important mainstream sources of information used by the general public. **(R3, R4)**
5. It identified clear links between opposition to the restitution of land and opposition to the peace agreement. The negative political and media framing of the law was co-opted by the 'No' campaign in the 2016 referendum to ratify the peace agreement. This was led by the main right-wing political party, challengers in the forthcoming Presidential elections in 2018. **(R1, R4)**
6. On this basis, the research concludes that the way in which reporting and debate was framed was counterproductive to a sustainable and enduring peace process in Colombia. **(R1, R2, R3, R4)**
7. Articles linking the Law with the wider peace process in Colombia received less favourable or prominent coverage at a time when agrarian reform was being negotiated as part of it (a key demand of FARC, with whom the government was negotiating was the democratization of land tenure) **(R3, R4)**. Such coverage was arguably detrimental to the peace process.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

**R1** Vallejo Mejia, Maryluz and Montoya Londono, Catalina (2015) Encuadres retórico-políticos en la ley de víctimas y restitución de tierras en Colombia. *Análisis Político*, 28 (84). pp. 23-38. ISSN 0121-4705 (peer reviewed journal) Available at: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15446/anpol.v28n84.54637>

**R2** Montoya Londoño, Catalina and Vallejo Mejia, Maryluz (2016) The law of victims and land restitution in Colombia: Public debates and global agendas, *Latin American Policy*, 7(1), June 2016, pp.80-105. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1111/lamp.12093>

**R3** Montoya Londoño, Catalina and Vallejo Mejía, Maryluz (2017) Development vs Peace? The Role of Media in the Law of Victims and Land Restitution in Colombia, *Media, War & Conflict*. Volume 11, Issue 3, pp. 336 - 357 Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750635217710677>

**R4** Vallejo Mejía, Maryluz and Montoya Londoño, Catalina (2017) Los cercos del debate sobre restitución de tierras. *Encuadres retóricos del la Ley 1448 de 2011 en la prensa colombiana nacional y regional* (Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Bogota). ISBN 978-958-781-072-1 (academic publication with University Press in Bogota, Colombia)

#### **4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words).

The research achieved impact by contributing to public debates and influencing the ideas and practices of those engaged in relevant activities. It has contributed to challenging and changing attitudes towards transitional justice as a key element in the Colombian peace process and improving public understanding of the conflict. It has also engaged with practitioners on issues of conflict resolution and peace-building more generally.

The findings outlined above formed the basis of a programme of outreach, including events, activities and media engagement that have increased the awareness of the role of media narratives and discourses in framing debates about and influencing the trajectory of the peace process in Colombia. As well as reaching those who have a direct interest in the specific issue – that is, communications specialists, journalists and political actors in Colombia itself – it also speaks to the role of media and other actors in framing in conflicts more generally, and their importance in the sustainability of peace and vital structural reform. Therefore, impact has reached wider audiences in Latin America, the UK and Europe too.

Key beneficiaries and impact can be summarised in overview as follows:

**(I1) Embassy of Colombia in the UK:** played a key role in contributing to understanding of key embassy staff about the role of land restitution and how public debate in Colombia is shaped by media and political narratives.

**(I2) General audiences** (activists, members of the public): providing insight into the complexities of the peace process, what the stumbling blocks are and what role individuals can play in addressing those problems

**(I3) Journalists and communicators:** influencing the thinking of journalists, key communicators and leading professionals in Colombia and Latin America about the contribution of media to a post-conflict environment.

#### **The Impacts**

##### **(I1) Embassy of Colombia in the UK**

Jose R. Puyana, Minister Counsellor at the Colombian embassy in the UK 2017-2019, stated that “a very important part” of the government’s approach to the peace process was to engage with members of the public and academics in different parts of the world “to discuss ... the nature of the peace process” (1).

Dr Montoya-Londoño arranged with Mr Puyana to bring to Liverpool the Colombian Ambassador to the UK (and former permanent representative of Colombia to the United Nations), Néstor Osorio Londoño, in order to establish a dialogue with Colombian government officials about the main research findings of her book (R4) and therefore help feed them into the process (9).

In particular, Dr Montoya's contribution "provided a great context on the issue of land restitution which played a significant role in the process" (1). Findings about the sustainability of the peace process in the light of political opposition and terms of public debate in Colombia were shared with the ambassador.

Feeding back on the event, Mr Puyana commended Dr Montoya-Londoño's research, saying that her "efforts and research initiatives ... have contributed significantly to understanding Colombia's armed conflict and the path to peace" and to understanding "the Colombian peace process and the progress made by Colombia in implementing the peace accords" (1).

## **(I2) General Audiences**

Impact was achieved through public events, increasing awareness / understanding amongst non-specialist audiences (in the UK, France, Germany and Colombia) about challenges in transitioning to peace and the importance of political and media discourse to the process's viability and sustainability. Activity also supported greater understanding of the links between Colombia's experience and other conflicts. This was particularly pertinent in Merseyside, an area with significant Irish connections.

An event organised in Liverpool open to a general audience, "*Negotiating Peace in Colombia*", outlined two different perspectives on the process. It was, according to feedback from the audience of researchers, activists and members of the public, 'very informative', and provided 'a vivid picture of the prevailing situation'. It brought 'a detailed insight on [sic] the reality, complexity and consequences of the peace process' and highlighted 'the similarities that exist (with) ... Northern Ireland', as well as 'other situations around the world where peacebuilding can benefit'. Crucially, it also brought insight into 'the stumbling blocks to the peace process' and 'the individual role we all can play in order to achieve peace' (3). Following this event, a key contributor to it, Colombian activist and researcher, Martha Caceres, said she was 'even more motivated to keep working on peace and take my learning to other places' (4).

Dr Montoya-Londoño used a radio interview on the lunchtime show on BBC Radio Merseyside (which had 289,000 listeners during this period) to demonstrate the links between the Colombian Peace Process and the UK's experience, particularly with relation to Northern Ireland and more recent challenges related to terrorism in the UK.(5).

She also contributed to 'The Peace Campus' (Campus pour la paix) a key initiative of *Faites La Paix*, a French programme which promotes understanding of the causes of war and conflict and supports building and maintaining peace by encouraging 'actors of different nationalities, of all ages and of various faiths, to pool their efforts as peacemakers' (10). It does so through arts and public education events, including 'The Peace Campus' (11), an international gathering of more than 630 activists, academics, students and members of the general public held in Lille on 20 April 2018 (12), coinciding with the centenary of the ending of the First World War. Dr Montoya-Londoño conducted a workshop on the key theme of the role of civilians in war and peace, and specifically generating awareness of how the political and media debates were hampering sustainability of the peace process in Colombia.

Finally, Dr Montoya-Londoño's book with Dr Vellejo Melija, *The Boundaries of Land Restitution*, was launched at the 30<sup>th</sup> Bogota International Book Fair (FILBo) in May 2017. This is 'one of the most important literary events of Latin America' (6) and 'the continent's biggest celebration of

reading' (8). In 2017 it was celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. There were 550,000 visitors (7). The book "was the second most sold" by the Javeriana University Press at the event and "readers gained awareness" of the "narratives of different sectors" concerning the Law of Victims and Land Restitution (2).

### **(I3) Journalists and Communications Professionals**

Dr Montoya-Londoño's co-researcher, Dr Vallejo Mejia presented the fruits of their research, which thus contributed to the understanding of journalists, key communicators and leading professionals in Colombia and Latin America about how media language and discourses contribute to the post-conflict environment. The presentation was at *VIII Encuentro de Periodismo Investigativo* ("VIII Meeting of Investigative Journalism" in Colombia (20-21 March, 2015), an annual event attended by hundreds of journalists, communication professionals and NGOs engaged with media and conflict, as well as academics and students from Colombia and all over the world. The theme of the event was "The challenges of journalism in post-conflict". It was organised by Consejo de Redacción, an NGO dedicated to promote investigative journalism (13).

### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of ten references)

- (1) Jose R Puyana, Minister Counsellor at the Colombian embassy in the UK 2017-2019, e-mail to Catalina Montoya-Londoño 20 November 2020
- (2) Rafael Alejandro Nieto Roca, Head of Javeriana University Press e-mail to Catalina Montoya-Londoño 24 November 2020
- (3) Feedback from "*Negotiating Peace in Colombia: A place on the table or the party is over!*" *Two Perspectives on the Colombian Peace Process* (Liverpool Hope University, November 22, 2016). Event organised by the Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies.
- (4) Letter from Martha Cáceres to Dr Catalina Montoya-Londoño, December 2016.
- (5) BBC Radio Merseyside Listening Figures (See: <https://media.info/radio/stations/bbc-radio-merseyside/listening-figures>).
- (6) Acción Cultural Española  
[https://www.accioncultural.es/en/filbo\\_2017\\_30th\\_international\\_book\\_fair\\_of\\_bogota](https://www.accioncultural.es/en/filbo_2017_30th_international_book_fair_of_bogota)
- (7) Instituto Distrital de Turismo (2017) Resultados Encuesta Feria Internacional Del Libro De Bogotá 2017  
[http://www.bogotaturismo.gov.co/sites/default/files/resultados\\_filbo\\_2017\\_2.pdf](http://www.bogotaturismo.gov.co/sites/default/files/resultados_filbo_2017_2.pdf)
- (8) Outlaw, C. (2017) FILBo 2017 in *The Bogota Post* 17 April 2017  
<https://thebogotapost.com/filbo-2017/20981/>
- (9) Video coverage of *The Boundaries of the debate on Land Restitution* book launch, held at Liverpool Hope University (7<sup>th</sup> November, 2017):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AC2kBcbZ1Y>
- (10) Faites La Paix website <https://faiteslapaix.org/>
- (11) 'Campus de Paix' details on the Faites La Paix website <https://faiteslapaix.org/campus-de-paix/>
- (12) Jean Hueclin e-mail to Michael Holmes / Catalina Montoya-Londoño 5 March 2021
- (13) *VIII Encuentro de Periodismo Investigativo*  
<https://digital58.wixsite.com/retosdelperiodismo>