The Participation of Women in Peace Processes.
The Other Tables

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that women's absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in dialogue and negotiation, but by a serious lack of will to include them in such important initiatives of change. Women have wide ranging experience in dialogue processes including many war and post-war contexts, but there has been a deliberate lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes. After introducing the research framework, the paper addresses women's involvement in peace, and analyzes the role played by women in peace processes, through the cases of Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. The paper concludes that peace processes are as gendered as wars, and for that reason gender has to be a guiding line for including women in peace processes.

Keywords: peace processes, gender, feminist studies, resolution 1325, women's participation.

RESUM

Aquest text manté que l'absència de les dones en els processos de pau no pot ser justificada al·ludint a la seva suposada manca d'experiència en el diàleg i la negociació, sinó que obeeix a la manca de voluntat per a incloure-les-hi. Les dones tenen una àmplia experiència en processos de diàleg. Han estat capaces de liderar experiències de diàleg en molts contextos de conflicte armat i postbèl·lics, però hi ha hagut una manca d'esforços deliberada per a integrar-les en els processos de pau formals. Després de presentar el marc de la investigació, el text aborda la implicació de les dones en la construcció de la pau i analitza el paper jugat per elles en els processos de pau, especialment en els casos de Sri Lanka i Irlanda del Nord. El text conclou afirmant que com que els processos de pau estan tan imbuïts pel gènere com els conflictes armats, les dones hi han de ser incloses i la perspectiva de gènere ha de guiar-les.

Paraules clau: processos de pau, gènere, estudis feministes, resolució 1325, participació de dones.

RESUMEN

Este texto sostiene que la ausencia de las mujeres en los procesos de paz no puede ser justificada aludiendo a su supuesta falta de experiencia en el diálogo y la negociación, sino que obedece a la falta de voluntad para incluirlas en ellos. Las mujeres tienen una amplia experiencia en procesos de diálogo. Han sido capaces de liderar experiencias de diálogo en muchos contextos de conflicto armado, así como posbélicos, pero ha habido una falta de esfuerzos deliberada para integrarlas en los procesos de paz formales. Tras exponer el marco de la investigación, el texto aborda la implicación de las mujeres en la construcción de paz y analiza el papel jugado por las mujeres en los procesos de paz, tomando los casos de Sri Lanka e Irlanda del Norte. El texto concluye afirmando que como los procesos de paz están tan imbuidos por el género como los conflictos armados, las mujeres deben ser incluidas en ellos y la perspectiva de género debe guiarlos.

Palabras clave: procesos de paz, género, estudios feministas, resolución 1325, participación de mujeres.

CONTENTS

<mark>ACRONYMS</mark>

ECP   Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace)
LTTE   Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
NIWC   Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
UCDP   Uppsala Conflict Data Program
UN   United Nations
UNSC   United Nations Security Council

"All the idea-makers who are in a positionto make ideas effective are men. That is a thought that damps thinking, and encourages irresponsibility. Why not bury the head in the pillow, plug the ears, and cease this futile activity of idea-making? Because there are other tables besides officer tables and conference tables. Are we not leaving the young Englishman without a weapon that might be of value to him if we give up private thinking, tea-table thinking, because it seems useless?"

Virginia Woolf

1. INTRODUCTION[1]

This research stems from two crucial questions for approaching the analysis of peace processes from a gender perspective: first, why is it that in spite of women having taken part in several peace talks and of gender language being present to an extent in a few peace agreements a feeling persists that these processes are incomplete? Second, why do the mainstream arguments about guaranteeing women's presence in peace talks appear to fail to reach substantive transformation in those societies broken by war and violence? The seed for these questions was sowed within the framework of my job as a researcher at the Escola de Cultura de Pau (School for a Culture of Peace, ECP). There I have had and continue to have the possibility of studying several peace processes in different countries ravaged by war and violence, especially those of Sri Lanka and Nepal. The questions continued to grow and take form when I considered feminist theories. Both paths seemed to converge in one, and the opportunity arose to reflect on the issues that had worried me for a long time. I believe it is important

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to explain the origin of this research, being that of analysing peace processes under the light of peace studies and feminism. These two areas share a willingness to approach reality from a transformative and critical perspective and intention, and not just for the sake of academic research.

This research tackles various research questions: What has been women's involvement in peace movements and peacebuilding processes? What has been their participation in peace processes? What implications can this have for improving peace processes?

Peace processes represent exceptional occasions for the societies that have been affected by armed conflicts to end direct violence, but also, to act as the starting point for more profound transformative processes. In this sense, peace processes can be incomparable scenarios for the alteration of the structural causes that led to the armed conflict and for the design of policies aimed at addressing issues such as exclusion, poverty or democratisation.

Nevertheless, both women and a consideration of gender exclusion have been largely absent from these processes. First, the presence of women in negotiating teams that have taken part in peace talks has been, at best, anecdotal. Second, the integration of gender issues in the agenda remains under-addressed not only in current peace processes but also at the academic level. In spite of the growing literature on gender and peace and women and peace processes, this specific issue has not been studied enough yet. The possibility of imagining new agendas for peace processes is challenging bearing in mind that bringing certain issues to the peace table can have considerable effects on people's –and certainly on women's– lives.

This paper argues that women's absence in peace processes cannot be explained by their alleged lack of experience in dialogue and negotiation. Women have wide ranging experience in dialogue processes including many war and post-war contexts, but there has been a deliberate lack of effort to integrate them in formal peace processes.

The fact that violence has been one of the pillars that has sustained patriarchy throughout history reinforces the need to integrate a gender perspective in the peace process. As Cynthia Cockburn defends,

"gender relations are indeed a significant part of the big picture of militarism and war" (2007: 231) and "not only is patriarchy strengthened by militarism, *militarism needs patriarchy*. Giving visibility to those links is a "must" for any feminist analysis of war and peace" (2007: 244).

This research can be framed within two disciplines that are clearly different but, at the same time, have many distinct connections. These disciplines are peace studies or peace research[2] and feminist studies. Taking into account the enormous development that feminist studies has undergone in the last decades, and that the proposals and critiques developed by feminist theorists embrace all scientific disciplines, I will refer more specifically to the contributions made by those authors that have made a feminist critique of the discipline of international relations, a critique that has been shared to a great extent with peace studies. I will also make references to those authors that have explicitly linked feminist theories to peace studies.

The structure of this paper is as follows. I will first expose the research framework. Second, the paper addresses women's involvement in peace. The third section aims to analyze the role played by women in peace processes, through the cases of Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland. Finally, I will present some conclusions and reflections that have come up from the debates and questions posed throughout the paper.

None of the debates that arise in this paper have definitive answers.. Instead, they are subject to constant reflection and evolution and new paths will continue to emerge. I will only try to suggest some issues that have to be taken into account in order to enrich this debate. If these subjects are left aside, patriarchy and exclusion will continue to dominate the task of peacebuilding. But surely, there are many other important questions that can contribute to broad peace agendas in order to integrate gender and feminist views. The strength of feminism lies in its plurality and its capacity to open new paths to social transformation.

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2.   These terms will be used interchangeably for the purpose of this research.

2. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES

This section will offer a review of the literature that has inspired this paper. First, I will explore definitions and approaches developed within the frame of peace research, a discipline guided by the ambition of understanding the causes of violence and finding ways to reduce or remove it (Wallensteen 2007: 5). Secondly, I will revise the conceptualizations and critiques raised by feminist theorists on peace studies and international relations, by drawing on work that has critically approached these disciplines with the aim of integrating the gender perspective from a feminist point of view.

This paper uses peace studies as a framework rather than mainstream international relations theories for one important reason: peace studies have a political commitment with a social transformation-oriented research, an aim which is shared by feminism (John 2006: 138). In contrast, and according to Cockburn, the most important school of thought within international relations is realism, a perspective on the world "based on assumptions about human nature that are partial, more descriptive of men than women, and [it] privileges qualities commonly stereotyped as masculine" (2007: 232, 233). As Cockburn states, "the accident of war's academic location in international relations has had a negative effect from women's point of view" (2007: 232).

2.1 PEACE AND CONFLICT

The end of the Cold War and the beginning of the twenty-first century has witnessed a growing interest in the study of conflict resolution in general and peace processes in particular. It has been especially during the 1990's and the 2000's that this area of research has been developed systematically (Wallensteen 2007; Darby and Mac Ginty, 2000). Peace processes seem to be the most frequent way to end armed conflicts (Fisas 2008). The existence of armed conflicts appears to be a

distinctive feature of the international scenario of the twentieth century and this trend seems to be continuing in the beginning of the twenty-first century. According to the data provided by different research institutions that follow-up and analyze on-going armed conflicts, no less than 31 conflicts were active in the last two years.[3]

The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), considered to be one of the most important peace research centres worldwide, has defined armed conflicts as "a contested incompatibility that concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths".[4] The ECP provides a broader and more comprehensive definition of armed conflict that takes into account the human security perspective and some gender issues such as sexual violence:

> "any confrontation between regular or irregular armed groups with objectives that are perceived as incompatible and where the continuous and organized use of violence: *a*) causes a minimum of 100 battle-related deaths in a year and/or has a serious impact on the territory (e.g. destruction of infrastructures or natural resources) and the human security (e.g. injury or displacement of civilians, sexual violence, food insecurity, effect on mental health and the social fabric or interruption of basic services); *b*) pursues goals that can be differentiated from common crime and are normally linked to: demands for self-determination and self government, or identity issues; opposition to the political, economic, social or ideological system of a State or the internal or international policies of a government, which in both cases produces a struggle to take or erode power; or control over the resources or the territory." (2009: 21)

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3. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program gives the figure of 36 conflicts (2008). The Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research accounts 39 conflicts (wars and severe crisis) in its *Conflict Barometer 2008*. The School for a Culture of Peace considers that during 2008, 31 armed conflicts were active.
4. This definition can be consulted at http://www.pcr.uu.se/research/UCDP/data_and_publications/definitions_all.htm. [Accessed on 27/01/09].

From a feminist perspective, Cockburn gives a definition of war, including issues that were not taken into account in the previous ones, stating that to be considered as such "a conflict has to be a collectively organized enterprise; involve weapons and be potentially deadly; be fought for a purpose or with an interest; and most importantly be socially sanctioned, such that the killing is not considered murder." (2007: 232)

One of the main contributions of peace studies has been the consideration of conflicts as something inherent to every society, and that can be viewed as an opportunity for the transformation of the conditions that made it possible. Conflicts can be seen as dynamic processes in which different actors claim and pursue interests and objectives that are perceived as incompatible. Conflicts are closely linked to human existence. On the contrary, their violent dimension is perceived as a social expression, and consequently, open to social intervention, regulation and transformation. This particular perspective on conflicts serves to explain the growing interest of peace studies on peace processes, as an adequate path to transform armed conflicts into peaceful scenarios. Distinguishing conflicts from violence and considering them processes rather than static and unchangeable events opens a window for an approach that sees conflict as an opportunity for social change if adequately addressed and managed. This implies moving away from those views that consider conflict and violence inextricably tied, and therefore that every conflict is the first step towards armed conflict.

Peace studies have developed very important contributions in relation to the idea of conflicts as opportunities which are not necessarily linked to violence. As John Paul Lederach points out, "conflict is never a static phenomenon. It is expressive, dynamic and dialectic [...]; it is based on relations. It is born in the world of human intentions and perceptions. It changes because of constant human interaction." (1998: 91). It is through confrontation that conflicts emerge as a visible reality, allowing different outcomes that range between violent and non-violent mechanisms or a combination of both. Following these arguments, Lederach goes on to defend the idea that peace

building and, therefore, mediation tasks, have also to be considered as a process in which roles and functions interact (1998: 93, 95).

Research on peace processes has been mainly developed by the discipline of peace research. As Peter Wallensteen states "peace research arose as a field devoted to understanding the causes of war by means of systematic analyses of the historical experiences of war" (2007:5). This author recognises that the study of war and peace does not belong exclusively to this discipline, and is shared with international relations, sociology, and psychology, among others. What specifically distinguishes peace research from other academic fields is the willingness of social transformation and especially to search for *peace by peaceful means* (Galtung 1996).

Peace research has been developed as an academic discipline since the beginning of the twentieth century, in different stages each of them addressing diverse issues, according to the historical moment and in a very clear connection with the social and political context. Peace research, as so many other disciplines, has enlarged its research agenda through practical grounding in real situations, and has been influenced by historical changes and events (Wallensteen 2007:5). From the 1990's onwards, the study of conflict resolution through peace processes has been one of the first issues on the agenda of this discipline, as the end of the Cold War brought about fresh attempts to resolve conflicts that had taken place during this period (Darby and Mac Ginty 2000:3).

Christine Bell points to the fact that, parallel to the end of the Cold War and the increase of armed conflicts taking place within State borders, "a common approach to conflict resolution emerged that involved direct negotiations between governments and their armed opponents. [...] This method resulted in a common approach to settlement design that linked cease-fires to agreement on new political and legal arrangements for holding and exercising power." (2006: 373)

But what exactly are peace processes? As John Darby and Roger Mac Ginty state, "there is no agreed definition of a peace process" (2000: 7). Nevertheless, Darby and Ginty argue that five essential features characterize peace processes need to be considered *a*) the protagonists are willing to negotiate in good faith, *b*) the key actors are included in the

process, *c*) the negotiations address the central issues in dispute, *d*) the negotiators do not use force to achieve their objectives and e) the negotiators are committed to a sustained process (2000: 7, 8). Other authors, such as Vicenç Fisas, use definitions that differentiate the terms "negotiation" and "peace process" (2008: 9, 10).

The United Nations have played a crucial role in many peace processes in the last years. In its UN Peacemaker website, dedicated exclusively to the issue of peace processes and mediation, the organization provides several definitions by different authors. The first one, offered by Harold Saunders, considers a peace process "a political process in which conflicts are resolved by peaceful means" and a "mixture of politics, diplomacy, changing relationships, negotiation, mediation, and dialogue in both official and unofficial arenas" (Saunders in Burgess 2004). A second definition is provided by Tim Sisk, who considers a peace processes:

> "step-by-step reciprocal moves to build confidence, resolve gnarly issues such as disarmament, and carefully define the future through the design of new political institutions. In other terms, a peace process is an intricate dance of steps –choreographed by third party mediators– among parties in conflict that help to gradually exchange war for peace" (Sisk in Burgess 2004).

The main aim of a peace process therefore is to end armed conflict with the use of negotiation rather than militarily means. All these definitions are linked with the organized efforts to put an end to armed conflicts through dialogue, involving the parties in the conflict, and often with some external assistance. In spite of the differences between the existing definitions, all authors seem to converge on this point. Nevertheless, and as it will be further elaborated in this paper, this is insufficient from a feminist perspective, because as many authors have highlighted, and as reality have shown, the end of armed conflicts does not automatically mean the end of violence for many women as "the absence of war does not necessarily mean the absence of violence in a society, and it certainly does not mean an end to conflict" (Pearce 2004: 252).

2.2 FEMINIST APPROACHES TO PEACE AND CONFLICT

The issues of violence and peace have always been central to feminism.[5] A feminist account of the world can hardly be imagined without considering the impact that violence has had in women's lives throughout history. As Ann Tickner states, "the key concern for feminist theory is to explain women's subordination" (2001: 11) and it is easy to see the role that violence has played in this subjugation. Maria Jesús Izquierdo remarks that "the foundation of patriarchy and sexism is violence, whose most visible expression are battered women" (Izquierdo 1998: 23). Other authors stress the extremely gendered nature of war. Joshua Goldstein among others maintains that "war is among the most consistently gendered of human activities" (2001). The subject of violence against women has been analyzed from many different perspectives (Shepherd 2008: 36) in line with the many bodies of literature and theory that conform to feminism. However the idea that "violence is deeply implicated in the construction and reproduction of gender relations" (Confortini 2006: 336) has always been a unifying line among all perspectives.

Feminists, whether from an academic or activist position, have criticised traditional approaches to the issue of conflict and peace that have ignored the importance of gender in this issue (Mendia 2009: 21). As Cockburn puts it "the accident of war's academic location in international relations has had a negative effect from women's point of view" (2007: 323).[6] A central point in these criticisms has been the

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5. Rather than talking about feminism it would be more correct to talk about feminisms in plural, taking into account the heterogeneity of this movement and its theoretical approaches. Authors such as Encarna Bodelón point to three main theoretical perspectives: liberal feminist theory, Marxist and socialist feminist theory and radical feminist theory, adding to this last one the difference feminism, which has acquired sufficient importance to be considered as a distinct approach from the other three (Bodelón 1998).

6. Cockburn considers that the main school of thought in this field, realism, has developed an approach based on a positive conception of the social relations, having as central concepts those of "power" and "interests". Realism has based its theories on partial and descriptive hypotheses of men's lives rather than women's, and presented the male perspective as universal.

fact that armed conflicts have a quite differentiated impact on women and men that can only be explained from a gender perspective, taking into account gender structures.

Gender as a term was coined to point to the fact that inequalities between women and men are a social product rather than a result of nature. Gender explains the socially –and culturally– constructed differences between men and women, distinguishing them from the biological differences of the sexes. Gender refers to the social construction of the sexual differences and the sexual division of labour and power (Yuval-Davis 1997: 8). Adopting the gender perspective involves making clear that the differences between men and women are a social construct resulting from the unequal power relationships that have historically been established. Gender as a category of analysis is intended to demonstrate the historical and situated nature of sexual differences. One of the most important aspects of this concept is its relational dimension (Izquierdo 1998: 10), as it allows the understanding of women's position in relation to that of men. Relational dimension deals with power issues, as the position of men cannot be understood without taking into account how men exercise power. Referring to the origins of the contemporary sex-gender social system, Mary Nash traces the nineteenth-century discourses that served to legitimise this particular social order and remarks that

> "biological essentialism functioned, in the gender discourse, to consolidate a message of feminine inferiority. It established in the sexual natural difference between men and women, the starting point of an unavoidable biological and social destiny for women: maternity." (2004:34)

Analysing armed conflicts without taking the gender dimension into account means carrying out partial, incomplete analyses, leaving causes and consequences to one side, and taking the experience of only part of the population –men– and universalising it. The gender perspective seeks to expose this partiality. It also makes it possible to highlight the importance of not leaving other discrimination, which has also been central in configuring the social and power structure in

the country, outside the analysis. Many feminist theorists, particularly those from the area of post-colonial studies, have highlighted the need to analyse gender discrimination alongside other types of exclusion, such as those related to ethnic group or social class (hooks 1989, 1999, 2000; Spivak 1988; Jayawardena 1986; Cockburn 2007: 101). Afroamerican feminists, such as bell hooks, express this in a different way:

> "when a child of two black parents is coming out of the womb the factor that is considered first is skin color, then gender, because race and gender will determine that child's fate. Looking at the interlocking nature of gender, race, and class was the perspective that changed the direction of feminist thought." (hooks 2000: xii)

Cynthia Enloe, one of the first authors to approach international relations and militarization from a feminist perspective, gives a lucid interpretation when she asserts that gender "makes the world go round" (1990):

> "As one learns to look at this world through feminist eyes, one learns to ask whether anything that passes for inevitable, inherent, 'traditional' or biological has in fact been *made*. One begins to ask how all sort of things have been made –a treeless landscape, a rifle-wielding police force, the 'Irishman joke', an all-women typing pool. Asking how something has been made implies that it has been made by someone. Suddenly there are clues to trace; there is also blame, credit and responsibility to apportion, not just at the start by at each point along the way". (1990: 3)

Nevertheless, the absence of gender as an analytical category relevant to the analysis of armed conflict and peace issues has been consistent until quite recently (Byrne 1996: 29; Mendia 2009: 7). As Irantxu Mendia states, "this absence has been a deliberate slant in the research on war, in which traditionally things that in reality have been the result of masculine experience and narrative have been considered as universal" (2009: 7).

Before a systematic academic approach to gender and armed conflicts was developed from the nineties onwards, many women had

tried to explain and understand wars from a feminist point of view. Feminists in academia are the inheritors of many women who tried to show the links between violence and patriarchy by starting from their own experiences during the world wars. Virginia Woolf has been considered one of the founders of feminist pacifist thinking, with her influential work *Three Guineas* in which she laid the foundations of this particular commitment against war. As Elena Grau argues, "in her desire –and need– of writing this book was the willingness to intervene, with a public voice, in a situation in which war had an unavoidable presence" (2000: 41). Other women such as Jane Addams, Berta Von Suttner, Käthe Kollowitz, Petra Kelly or even Eleanor Roosevelt, were also precursors, although not in an academic sense, as their approaches had more to do with political and cultural commitment against war rather than a scholarly one. Nevertheless, academic feminism has always recognised these women's legacy, as practice and reflection have always gone hand in hand in the feminist movement.

Gender, as an analytical tool, serves to explain many aspects of conflict and peace that have remained unnoticed in traditional approaches. But it is important to "highlight the interconnections between the structures of female oppression, violence against women and the origins of conflict" (Byrne 1996: 31). Other authors point to the fact that using a gender lens is quite a useful means to identify at an early stage trends leading to the outbreak of an armed conflict, as "deterioration or changes in the status of men or women can be the earliest signs of conflict trends that might lead to violence" (Anderlini 2007: 30). In sum, giving visibility to the absence of gender analysis when approaching the issues of war and peace and highlighting its importance in order has been one of the main contributions of academic feminism. The inclusion of the gender perspective is needed to avoid biased research.

2.3 FEMINIST DEBATES AROUND WOMEN AND PEACE

The linkages between women and peace have been widely addressed by many authors. In this section I will briefly explain the three main approaches that have been developed to tackle this issue. These cate-

gories should not be considered fixed, but they are useful for grouping similar points of view and reflections. First, one can find the analysis that links women and peace from an essentialist point of view. Second, there are those authors that have developed the idea of motherhood in order to explain why so many women have become involved in the cause of peace. And finally, a third approach has been developed by the authors that want to highlight the political dimensions of this particular tie.

As mentioned above, some authors have adopted an essentialist point of view, signalling an allegedly natural women's attachment to peace. From this vision, women are seen as naturally peaceful, incapable of exercising violence, and at the same time, men are contemplated as "violent beings" (Puleo 2004). This approach has been criticised with many arguments, pointing to the risks that naturalising women's behaviour has, as it serves to depoliticise women's positions in relation to war and peace. Furthermore, it serves to perpetuate a discriminatory order in which women remain subjugated: "the essentialist construction of men as aggressive and violent fits the nationalist-militaristic myth in which we fight for the sake of the "womenandchildren" (Yuval-Davis 1997: 111). This kind of association of women with peace has been reinforced with gender stereotypes that have served to categorize women as passive, victims and emotional (Tickner 1999: 4). Furthermore, "the association of women with peace and moral superiority has a long history of keeping women out of power" (Tickner 1999: 4).

A second approach has been one that has linked women's involvement in the cause of peace to their role as mothers, often explained by the notion of "motherhood", rather than the personal and particular experience of being a mother. The socialization experienced by women historically, reinforcing their role as care-givers and nurturers (Shiva 1988:42) would explain many women's involvement in pacifism. As Sara Ruddick states, "the contradiction between violence and maternal work is evident" (1989: 220). Others have pointed to the fact that women have committed themselves to the cause of peace, not only in the search for better conditions for women, but mainly for their fami-

lies and children (Mirón 2004: 33). Many women reject the idea that linking women's peace activism to motherhood necessarily implies an essentialist position as "it reflects an important aspect of most women's lived experience, it can unify women, can be a source of authority and a powerful tool for resistance" (Cockburn 2007: 210). Some authors, from a constructivist point of view, stress the fact that women have been socialised in roles that appear to be antithetical to violence and destruction, what mobilizes them against war (Coomaraswamy and Fonseka 2004: 6). The notion of motherhood has inspired the discourses and practices of many women's peace movement worldwide.[7] This approach has received criticisms for two main reasons. First, it excludes those women that are not mothers and are not willing to be. Second, it can contribute to reinforce patriarchal roles and to reduce women's autonomy (Cockburn 2007: 209).

Taking into account these two approaches, many feminists have developed a third point of view that emphasizes the fact that women's agency for peace is connected to their exclusion from the public sphere (and from war), rather than their biological nature or their experiences as mother or care-givers (Coomaraswamy and Fonseka 2004: 6; Magallón 2006: 208). Not only their exclusion from formal politics, but also the fact that "women are virtually nowhere drafted and forced to fight in wars which they don't approve of" (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 112). The continuation of "politics by other means" would therefore be alien to many women and would serve to explain women's peace activism. Virginia Woolf can be considered to be one of the first women to have expressed this feeling of being an outsider in the world where wars take place (Woolf, 1938; Grau 2000: 45). Her beautiful words serve to illustrate this idea when talking about where peace ideas could come from amid the war.

"All the idea-makers who are in a position to make ideas effective are men. That is a thought that damps thinking, and encourages irrespon-

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7. Some of these groups are Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, Committee of Soldiers' Mothers of Russia, COMADRES in El Salvador, Naga Mothers Association in India, Mothers for Peace in the Philippines' Mindanao region, and many others.

sibility. Why not bury the head in the pillow, plug the ears, and cease this futile activity of idea-making? Because there are other tables besides officer tables and conference tables. Are we not leaving the young Englishman without a weapon that might be of value to him if we give up private thinking, tea-table thinking, because it seems useless?" (1940)

Although taking into account all approaches, this text can be framed within the third approach that links women's exclusion from power and public life with their agency in peacebuilding.

2.4 LINKS BETWEEN FEMINIST AND PEACE THEORIES

As mentioned in the introduction, feminist and peace research have many commonalties, some of them related to the core issues of both fields. In this section I will analyse some of the links that can be found in these two fields. Catia Confortini observes that "both feminism and peace studies, unlike much of the rest of social science, have an explicitly value-laden, normative agenda: their ultimate goals are peace (for peace studies) and gender equality (for feminism)" (2006: 334). Feminism has made very important contributions to the development and broadening of peace studies. Most importantly, the very concept of peace has been reshaped in order to include the gender variable (John 2006:139). The term "positive peace" coined by Johan Galtung was a first important contribution that served to expand the notion of peace from a mere "absence of direct violence" to filling it with notions of social justice, and democracy, among others. Nevertheless, Galtung did not give gender issues the relevance that feminists have attributed to it in the study of violence.

One of the first authors in approaching peace research from a feminist point of view was Birgit Brot-Uckne. She addressed peace researchers and their research by posing them a very specific and preliminary question: "what would this piece of research look like when viewed from a feminist perspective?" (1989: 68). Brot Uckne developed the positive peace category remarking to its importance from a feminist point of view, and pointing to different subcategories that

conform to it. For some authors the central question lies in the fact that positive peace cannot exist without gender-based structural violence being eliminated (Mirón 2004: 29), a fact that was insufficiently acknowledged by Galtung when he coined this term.

Nevertheless, peace studies have made important contributions to feminist research providing it with a framework in which violence against women can be seen in the larger context of societal violence (Confortini 2006: 356). Furthermore, the study of war from a feminist point of view needs to be completed with an approach that points to other factors also present in the origins of violence, such as economic, social or cultural ones. Gender relations are a pivotal aspect that needs to be highlighted when an analysis of armed conflicts is done, although they cannot explain the "whole story" by themselves and need to be taken into account alongside other factors. Gender intersects with many other issues such as economics, resources, politics, ethno-national identities and religious beliefs, among others, and therefore must be integrated in the analysis in conjunction with all these aspects. In this sense, "gender is an analytical lens through which wider social relations can be understood" (El-Bushra 2004: 169).

3. WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN PEACE

In this section I would like to analyze the main features of women's involvement in the peace cause, taking those experiences of dialogue promotion led by women in countries ravaged by war and violence. Although peace activism has gathered both women and men, it is not less true that the peace movement has been one of the most "feminized" social movements, with many women taking part in it (Cockburn 2007; Magallón 2006; Mendia 2009). It is not the objective of this chapter to make an exhaustive history of the women's peace movement, but rather to point to the features of this movement. It is not my intention to make an exhaustive list of women's peace move-

ments worldwide, but instead I will only reflect on those movements considered to be more relevant for the theme of this research.[8] First, I will revise women's peace activism from a general perspective, and secondly, I will go over different informal dialogue experiences led by women.

3.1 WOMEN'S PEACE ACTIVISM

Women have been traditionally considered as passive victims of war. It was not until the 90's that some attention was brought into the fact that women played different roles within armed conflicts, challenging traditional views that portrayed men as active agents of violence and women as its passive victims. Furthermore, taking into account the reality on the ground of the armed conflicts that are taking place since the end of the Cold War, "the idea that (feminized) civilian and (masculinized) military spaces are distinct and separate no longer holds" (Giles and Hyndman 2004: 5).Women are victims of the consequences of wars, but as Carmen Magallón states,

> "the image of women as victims is paralyzing, and it does not do justice to the diversity, richness and drive of women's groups that oppose war and lean on mutual solidarity to offer alternative visions of reality. Listening to the victims is not equivalent to reduce them to that role." (2006: 41)

Women in many countries around the world have decided to organise themselves to demonstrate against war, reclaim the whereabouts of their beloved ones, report human rights violations committed during armed conflicts and demand that the parties to a conflict conduct peace talks and work toward the end of violence. Many women have

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8. For comprehensive accounts of women's peace movement worldwide the works of Cynthia Cockburn *From where we stand. War, women's activism and feminist Analysis* and of Carmen Magallón *Mujeres en pie de paz. Pensamiento y prácticas* can be consulted. Also, *Mujeres en el mundo. Historia, retos y movimentos* by Mary Nash portrays a complete overview of feminist movements worldwide.

decided to organise in women-only groups, one of the most relevant and well-known being the Women in Black network. Many women choose to participate in these kinds of groups because "the autonomy of women's thought and their freedom to choose methods and means of action could be guaranteed. [...] It's a political choice to be a women's organization, it's not an exclusion" (Cockburn 2007:216).

Armed conflicts leave behind them a legacy of destruction and violence that lasts for many years after the end of the confrontations and the signature of peace agreements. For many women, war implies impoverishment, the loss of relatives, the breaking of the social fabric, sexual violence or forced displacement. Nevertheless, armed conflicts are not the same reality for all women. For some of them, conflicts have also provided an opportunity for empowerment and for gaining access to social realms denied until then (Murguialday 2001; Giles and Hyndman 2004). Recognising that although armed conflicts are basically a source of destruction and violence, it is also important to acknowledge that for some women they have meant an opportunity for deeper involvement and participation within their communities. This idea serves to back the view that women are not merely passive victims of war and violence.

For many women, armed conflicts represent the first opportunity to have an active social and political participation. There are many women's movements against the war that are raised as a result of the impact that violence has on civilians, and consequently on women. Demands made on the parties to a conflict asking for an end to the violence, reports of human rights violations and support to deserters are some of the issues around which women have changed from being passive victims into been active agents in social transformations. In fact, "more often than not, women are among the first to speak out collectively against war and try to prevent escalation." (Anderlini 2007: 34). In some contexts, characterised by oppression and fundamentalism, such as Afghanistan, since the beginning of the Taliban regime, women have developed resistance strategies against patriarchal practices such as criminalizing access to health and education (Moghadam: 2002; Reigado: 2005).

Nevertheless, the image of women in relation to armed conflict that prevails is that of passivity rather than agency in front of violence. Women are perceived or considered as objects and not subjects that can act for themselves and make their decisions to confront violence and conflicts. Analyzing armed conflicts and their consequences on women's lives and bodies from a gender perspective, implies leaving behind the simplistic discourse that condemns women's vital experience to that of victims.

3.2 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN DIALOGUE

As it will be analyzed in the following section, the absence of women in formal peace talks is notorious (Anderlini 2007; Pankhurst 2004; Bell 2004; Bouta et. Al. 2005; Chinkin 2002-2003). However, women have been involved in the cause of peace all over the world, and women's movements have been critical in promoting a negotiated solution for many armed conflicts. Women in Sierra Leone, Colombia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Serbia, Northern Ireland, Uganda, Somalia, Cyprus and many other places have been advocating for the end of the conflicts that affected their countries and made contributions that were significant and valuable in those contexts that began the transition from war to peace (Cockburn 2007; Bouta et. Al. 2005; Anderlini 2007). Women frequently recognize unofficial peace processes as an occasion to become involved in the public and political arenas and to organize themselves, particularly in the nongovernmental sector (Bouta et. Al. 2005: 66).

Acknowledging these contributions and experiences in the field of peacebuilding provides a different perspective when approaching the issue of peace processes, especially at the community and grassroots level. How to transfer those contributions onto the negotiating table so that women directly impact peace agreements remains critical because the cross community dialogue at the grassroots level, women's peace initiatives and their first hand knowledge of the war impact and post-war social needs will provide crucial social intelligence necessary for resolving conflicts peacefully.

It is often argued that the absence of women in peace talks is due to their lack of experience in the conflict-resolution field. The reality seems to be quite different in that women all over the world are practicing dialogue on an everyday basis, perhaps not in a formal manner, but in a way that is closer to people's conditions on the ground. Nevertheless, this role must not be taken for granted or naturalized, because when women's peace work is naturalized then the risk to perpetuate inequality increases. As Bouta et. Al state, "when this work is taken for granted, it goes unrecognized, is stripped of its political meaning, and is rendered invisible" (2006: 68).

Women have been capable of building bridges of dialogue and empathy in polarized societies that go beyond the reasons for the armed confrontation and the deep rooted hatred and division. They have seeked positions in common from which to initiate a rapprochement and search for new ways of living together. These coalitions can be found in contexts such as the Balkans, Israel and Palestine, Cyprus or Northern Ireland (Cockburn 1998, 2007).

These alliances established between women have empowered them to transcended core political, ethnic, or religious divisions (Giles and Hyndman 2004: 16). This constitutes a palpable demonstration that coexistence, reconciliation and dialogue are possible from recognizing the other as a legitimate interlocutor with whom common ground can be found. At times, however, women that have dared to cross the border and have dialogue with other women have been labeled as traitors to their community, homeland or identity. The most clear example of this can be perhaps found in the case of Serbian women that refused to take part in what Cockburn calls the 'othering' (2007: 79): "the project of the women living in Yugoslav space has been to *hold together* in the face of a violent late-twentieth-century movement differentiating 'Serbs', 'Croats' and 'Muslims'."

Women have demonstrated that the building of emotional bonds and identification with women on the other side of the battle line is possible. Armed conflict contexts, especially those that have developed around social polarization and division, have been paradoxically particularly fertile scenarios for the upsurge of women groups that

have worked and develop cross-community initiatives. It is well known that contemporary armed conflicts have an overwhelming impact in the lives of women and that some strategies such as the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war are specially focused on harming women (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002). It is therefore understandable that those that have suffered in a similar way the impact of violence are capable of identifying more easily with the suffering of other victims without taking into account their community, ethnic, religious or political affiliations. These issues can become a secondary issue in these cases. Moreover, paradoxically, the invisibility that often characterises women movements has been quite useful as it has allowed rapprochements that would not have been that easy for their male colleagues.

This is the case of women in the Basque country, where 200 women from all the political parties (except for the PP) came together to create a movement named Ahotsak (Voices, in Basque language), an expression of the willingness of all those involved to seek a negotiated way out of the conflict. Inspired by similar initiatives in other parts of the world that have endured conflict, this forum of women from different and even opposed political spaces and national identities broadened to include women from the trade unions and feminist movements that brought together as many as 2,000 women in public meetings. They specifically argue for dialogue without pre-conditions or exclusions, supporting a search for points of common agreement between the different political and social positions found in the Basque Country, and recognition of all sides. These are key points if a peace process is to move forward and avoid becoming stalled in the differences that inevitably emerge in any negotiating process. Since its creation in April 2006, many women from both Basque Country and other parts of Spain adhered to this initiative, the origins of which can be traced back over a number of years.[9]

Israeli and Palestinian women provide another example of women who have formed alliances, and in particular, have worked together

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9. Information on Ahotsak movement can be found at their webpage http://ahotsak.blogspot.com. [Accessed on 27/01/2009].

closely since the 80's (Cockburn 1988; Farhat-Naser 2006). At that time, some Israeli women began public demonstrations with the aim of reporting the occupation of the Palestinian territories by its own government. Palestinian women living in Israel joined these protests. During late 80's and early 90's, women peace activism gained its momentum in Israel, with some collective actions in which Jewish and Arab women demonstrated together (Cockburn 1998:126). This movement resulted in some important achievements that have remained as a legacy in spite of the difficulties that have been faced later on and that have weakened the collective work. In the first place, those years of joint activism allowed Jewish women to approach Palestinians daily life, and more specifically the situation of Palestinian prisoners. In the second place, as Cockburn notes, this work provided women from both communities a new insight: "men's sexual violence against women and the military violence of the state were inextricably linked" (1998:128). Moving from the grassroots to the leadership level, the experience of the International Women's Commission is also worth mentioning, as it brought together Israeli and Palestinian women, along with women from European Union countries, considering this kind of partnership both possible and necessary in order to find a solution to the conflict in the Middle East region (Anderlini 2007: 72).

In Northern Ireland, Catholic and Protestant women created a political party, Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), integrated only by women, that allowed them to participate in the peace talks (Bell 2004:110; Anderlini 2007:69). While the negotiations took place, the coalition worked hard to guarantee that at the table both republican and unionist women were always present (Fearon 2002). They also promoted a final peace agreement that was the most inclusive possible and brought to the table the issue of human rights, considering that they should be seen as part of the solution to the conflict (Bell 2004). Some of the main achievements of this party in the final agreement were the inclusion of victim's rights and reconciliation; the importance that women's participation in politics obtained in the electoral map; and the recognition of the importance of civil society participation in peace processes (Fearon 2002).

In Sri Lanka, Tamil and Sinhalese women that participated in the gender subcommittee established during the peace talks in 2003 were capable of elaborating a common agenda that served as a base for the dialogue. This agenda had as a starting point the recognition of the devastating effects that the armed conflict had had on women's lives from both sides. Their participation in the peace talks was the result of previous activist work done by feminists during the conflict years (Samuel; International Women's Mission to the North East of Sri Lanka: 2002).

Other cases include the Somali women that created a clan integrated by women that belonged to the different clans that exist in the country. The aim was to take part in the peace talks that were taking place with the participation of only male leaders of those confronted clans. This mobilization led to the creation of the "sixth clan" and encouraged many women to affirm that they, caught between their fathers' and husbands' clans, only belonged to the women's clan (Anderson, 2005; Anderlini 2007:69). These women tried to unite all Somali women as bridges for peace in spite of the attempts by the warlords to destroy their movement, but they succeeded in participating in the Somali National Reconciliaton Conference in 2004 and taking part in the signature of the peace agreement (Anderlini 2007:69).

And in Kosovo and Serbia, as another example, Serbian women peace activists from Women in Black and the Kosova Women Network (a women network comprising 80 organizations throughout Kosovo) created the Women Peace Coalition. It is a civic movement founded on women's solidarity across ethnic and religious lines, and worked to promote the participation of women in Kosovo's peace process, including the status negotiations (Villellas and Redondo, 2008). As they state, this coalition was founded "as an independent citizen's initiative founded on women's solidarity that crosses the divisions of ethnicity and religion, as well as state borders and barriers".[10] One of their main demands has been that UN Security

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10. http://www.zeneucrnom.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=199&Itemid=54. [Accessed on 16/05/09].

Council resolution 1325 should be taken into account throughout the process of defining Kosovo's final status. In their study of the Kosovo post-war rehabilitation process, Ana Villellas and Gema Redondo acknowledge that the alliances forged by women in the informal sphere have served as a platform for the advocacy of women's inclusion in the negotiating process of the final status for the former Serbian province,

> "Of special importance with regards to this peacebuilding dimension is the constitution of the Women's Peace Coalition, as a joint platform established in march 2006 by Kosovar and Serbian women peace activists to monitor the status negotiations, to promote the participation of women in them and, more generally, to promote the mainstreaming of gender in the negotiations. It is a partnership promoted by Kosova Women's Network and the Women in Black. [...] Its strategy has been to lobby national and international actors to push for the presence of women in the Kosovar negotiation team." (2008: 18)

Transversal political[11] practices developed by many women organizations in contexts of serious social polarization imply often coming into confrontation with the mainstream discourses promoted in many cases by the governing institutions. Armed violence inevitably accentuates social divisions and increases the rigidity of the parties' positions in relation to the conflict. These difficulties are not alien to women's movements that arise in these kinds of contexts. The impossibility of creating a sustainable project by the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC), or the enormous obstacles faced by the Cypriot women

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11. As Cera Murtagh states, the term transversal politics was "first coined by Nira Yuval-Davis, and used synonymously with coalition and alliance politics, this term refers to the formation of alliances between women of diverse identities and distinct national communities. Cockburn identifies such alliances as based upon common principles and objectives rather than common identity [...] The boundaries of these coalitions are therefore established, as Yuval-Davis articulates, "not in terms of 'who' are we but in terms of what we want to achieve." It thus allows women of distinct national communities or contrary political beliefs to wok together for a shared purpose." (Murtagh, 2007:5)

that integrate Hands Across the Divide[12] to have an impact in the formal political circles of Cyprus are two examples of this reality (Hadjipavlou: 2006). Nevertheless, the mere existence of these groups raises questions about polarization as the unique possible scenario in these contexts and delegitimizes the patriarchal order that sustains these social divisions.

Women from many societies affected by the conflict have taken advantage of the particular opportunity that peace processes provide. This is happening regardless of the existence of formal peace talks, and their main aim is the creation of spaces where cross-community dialogue is possible and in which the work is done based on the recognition of common starting points acceptable for everyone without giving up her own identity. Through relationships based on empathy walls can be trespassed, and empathy is a value with which many women feel quite familiar. Recognizing oneself in other women, in spite of the fact that they are meant to be the "enemies", becomes then an easier task when a common struggle is shared, the struggle against patriarchy and discrimination. This struggle provides a common ground in which other differences can be softened.

Women that have decided to work transcending the divisions have succeeded in creating spaces to work on issues that affect every woman without regarding their community background and at the same time have accepted disagreement about other issues (McWilliams, 1995: 32). Perhaps, assuming the possibility of disagreements is the most important starting point for ending violence and achieving more inclusive peace agreements. One important question raised by Christine Bell is how to achieve a common agenda by those groups integrated by women coming from different and opposed communi-

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12. Hands Across the Divide is an organization whose main aim is to incorporate the gender perspective to the analysis of the Cypriot conflict and to the peace process. The organization is integrated by women both from the Greek and the Turkish communities, and defines itself as feminist, what inspires their cross-community work. From this perspective they demand the inclusion of gender in the peace talks, in a very patriarchal society that excludes women from the public realm (Hadjipavlou: 2006; Hands Across the Divide, 2004; Zenon: 2006).

ties without this agenda "becoming the lowest common denominator between them, irrelevant to women's lives and to the talks process" (2004: 111).

4. THE PRESENCE AND PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN PEACE PROCESSES

In this section the main aim is to analyze what space and position have women occupied within formal peace processes, what have been their roles and some of the contributions made in this field. It has to be said that the point of departure is not very encouraging, as most of the peace processes that are currently taking place are being undertaken solely by men (Anderlini 2007; Chinkin 2003a; Bouta et Al. 2005). In the first place, I will analyze some of the major obstacles women have to face in order to participate in formal peace processes. Secondly, I will present two case studies relevant for this topic: Sri Lanka and Northern Ireland.

In order to carry out a feminist analysis of peace processes, it is important to point to the sexist bias of these processes. The main stakeholders that participate in them are almost exclusively men, both negotiators and mediators (Potter 2005), and women are quite often underrepresented at all levels "including in international agencies supporting peace negotiations, in negotiation teams representing the warring parties, and in other institutions invited to the negotiation table" (Bouta et. Al. 2005: 51). Christine Bell argues that even the very term "peace process" is gendered as:

"The label 'peace process' tends to be used only at the point when the main military protagonists come together and focus on ending violence. The 'male nature' holds true of both internationally driven and domestically driven peace processes. [...] Assuming that the primary aim of a

peace process is usually to bring about a military ceasefire, it is inevitable that the process itself will focus on men." (2004: 98)

Taking into account this reality, the object of study could therefore be women's absence, rather than women's presence. Nevertheless, in spite of this reduced presence, important contributions have been made and need to be acknowledged, as well as revised from a critical standpoint.

4.1 WOMEN'S LONG ROAD TO THE PEACE TABLE

United Nations Security Council resolution 1325[13] approved in October 2000 mandates women's inclusion in all stages of peacebuilding processes, including peace negotiations. Nevertheless, the reality seems to be quite distant from this benchmark. A quick review to some of the most significant peace processes that have taken place in the last years attests to this statement. Although an exhaustive calculation of how many women have participated in peace negotiations in the last decades does not exist for the moment, some available data estimate this participation to be 4%.[14]

Why is it that in spite of the important commitment of the cause of peace of many women's organizations, when the time comes to negotiate the end of armed conflicts women are strikingly absent? Some reasons have been referred to in order to explain the scarcity of women in this process.

In the first place it should be emphasized that among the factors usually alluded to, it can be highlighted the fact that women's access

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13. The complete text of this resolution can be accessed in http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/ UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement

14. A study made by the School for a Culture of Peace in 2008 on 33 negotiations that affect armed groups present in 20 countries shows that of the 280 people who have intervened in them, only 11 were women, meaning 4% of the total. This percentage was somewhat higher on governmental negotiation teams (7%), especially due to the high percentage of women on the Philippine government's negotiation teams. The presence of women in armed groups (0.3%) and on the facilitating teams (1.7%) is virtually non-existent. (Fisas 2008: 21).

to decision making positions continues to be restricted. The UN Secretary General stated this in its report on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action agreements,[15] a document written with the purpose of revising the Platform ten years after its passing (Annan 2004). Since most of the people that participate in peace negotiations come from backgrounds where they have the ability to exercise power and make decisions, the result is the exclusion of women. Sanam Anderlini argues that the main reason that explains women's absence at the peace table is "the paucity of women in leadership positions in political parties, the state, or nonstate groups" (2007:58). Nevertheless, Anderlini points out that even in the cases where women have been able to reach these positions, they remain largely excluded from decision making. Other authors refer to the scarcity of women in the field of diplomacy and also among the leadership of irregular armed groups (Fisas 2008).

This exclusion refers not only to the parties directly involved in the conflict but also to the third vertex of the triangle, occupied by people or institutions in their capacity as mediators or facilitators in these processes. The masculinization of this field of work has also been discussed. Antonia Potter (2005) in her analysis of the profiles of *Track One* or Official Diplomacy mediators, as well as the characteristics required of these practitioners aimed to find out why these positions are hardly ever occupied by women. She remarks that there are two basic obstacles[16] that are impeding equitable participation of men and women in the role of mediation: on the one hand, the lack of political will, and

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15. The Beijing Platform for Action passed during the IV World Women's Conference and brings to fruition the international agreement to reach the goals of women's equality, growth, and peace from all over the World. It was the consolidation of the commitments gained during the United Nation's Decade of the Woman, 1976-1985. The Platform constitutes the international agenda for the empowerment of women.

16. The study *We the women. Why conflict mediation is not just a job for men* shows that despite the difficulties confronting women in achieving positions of responsibility usually occupied by men as mediators in current conflicts, those that manage to do so are able to thanks to their more sophisticated training and technical capabilities. In addition, arguments such as the difficulty in reconciling family life with this type of work would not be valid in this case since the average age of these individuals (from 55 to 75) implies they are not caring for small children (Potter 2005).

on the other hand, arguments such as the perception on the part of some mediators that the participation of women occupying this position disproportionately diverts the agenda of the negotiations towards so-called "women's issues". Sanam Anderlini argues that a common statement by policymakers is that gender equality or women's issues are not suitable to be discussed at the peace table (2007: 61).

In addition, there are factors such as the difficulty to take part in the establishment of informal relationships (of enormous importance in the peace process), where participants in the negotiation establish bonds of a personal nature and thus are open to greater trust. It is not easy for women to join these "all-male" informal spaces and therefore they miss an important part of the process. All this being in addition to the usual reticence of the warring parties to accept outside intervention and compounded by the fact that the intervention is led by a woman, as according to International Alert (2004), "in male-dominated societies where women have not been involved in political affairs, often those who do not enter the space are viewed with scepticism and distrust by other women and men".

Finally, it should be also noted that the leadership of some of the armed groups as well as the governments are distrustful of considering women's participation or including gender issues on the agenda as something relevant or important for the course of the negotiations. Questions relative to the emancipation of women have been considered as secondary by many armed groups and always contingent on the attainment of other objectives such as national liberation. Rarely are these issues perceived as a path that can be covered at the same time. In fact, this is a position shared by some women who also give, or have given, preference to goals different from gender equality. Edita Tahiri,[17] the only women involved in the failed negotiations with Serbia that preceded the NATO bombardments, has stated that her role in the Albanian delegation at that time was driven by her Albanian nationalist agenda, and that only later her position became deeply

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17. Edita Tahiri, was the Foreign Minister of the alternative Kosovan political institutions between 1991 and 2000, and the special representative of the Kosovan leader Ibrahim Rugova between 1998 and 2000.

gender-aware. She has also said that her position in a negotiation table would be different now in that regard (ECP 2008: 140-141). On the side of those that have the decision on who participates and who does not, it is often stated that the peace table is not a venue for discussions of gender equality or women's issues, as the priority should be the end of armed hostilities (Anderlini 2007: 6; International Alert and Women Waging Peace 2004).

In this sense, the peace table is seldom considered to be the place to address 'cultural norms' and it is also argued that promoting the participation of women can alienate some leaders and put the peace process at risk (International Alert and Women Waging Peace 2004). Nevertheless, as the agreements that result from peace talks are the basis for the future post-war societies, "gender issues" are as important as the alleged gender-neutral territorial and economic issues that are usually tackled, if the aim is to build a society that intends to face the underlying causes of armed conflicts.

Women who participate in the negotiations confront a double challenge. The first being the one of participating in the previously established structures whose organization responds to the needs, interests, and way of doing things of those who initiated the peace process. And secondly, the one of transforming these negotiating structures that in all probability were constructed from patriarchal schemes that have not taken into account how difficult it is for many women to participate in the negotiations. These can come from various sources. The lack of participation can be due to the direct exclusion of women, but also it can result from other causes, such as the lack of available economic resources or other issues such as the difficulty of reconciling family life and the responsibilities of private and domestic life with active participation in the political sphere. As Christine Bell points out, "to impact on the negotiation process, and on the resulting peace agreement and its implementation, women must simultaneously find ways of accessing the process as conceived of without them, while reframing the issues that are at the heart of the process" (Bell 2004: 99). It has to be said also that sometimes women decide to remain in the informal sphere in spite

of their success in raising public awareness and support, and therefore they do not focus their efforts on attaining representation at peace talks (Anderlini 2007).

In her study of gender practices within institutions of hegemonic masculinity –as peace processes could be labelled–, Annika Kronsell defends the idea that these "institutions largely governed by men have produced and recreated norms and practices associated with masculinity and heterosexuality" (2005: 281), and this "normativity" has the effect of making the way of doing within them to look natural and unquestionable (2005: 282). Therefore, masculine power and men's presence within these spaces would appear as beyond discussion. As Kronsell further elaborates

> "Because such norms are dominant in the institution, they do not require any explicit politics. Masculinity does not need to be thematized. Instead, masculine norms continue to be reproduced simply through routine maintenance of the institutions." (2005: 283).

Since the 90's, gender issues have become more important within the international agenda, especially after the 1995 Beijing Fourth World Conference on Women. The Beijing Platform for Action that emerged as a result of the conference established as one of its strategic objectives the necessity to "increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels".[18] Five years after this benchmark, the UN Security Council unanimously passed resolution 1325 on women, peace and security that makes a call on all actors to adopt a gender perspective when negotiating and implementing peace agreements. Nevertheless, peace processes that have taken place after these two important normative achievements continue to lack women's presence. The Dayton Peace Accords, signed in 1995 to end the war in Bosnia, "the first major peace agreement to be signed after the Beijing conference" (Lithander 2000: 9) did not take into account the recommendations contained at the Beijing

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18. This need was recognised in the Strategic Objective E.1

Platform for Action, and furthermore, were signed solely by men, without any Serb, Croat or Bosnian women taking part in the negotiations (Lithander 2000).

An analysis of some of the most relevant agreements signed in the years that followed UNSC resolution 1325 presents similar results.[19] The agreements signed in Bouganville (2001), Angola (2002), Eritrea and Ethiopia (2000), Aceh (2005), Côte d'Ivoire (2007), hardly mention gender issues if they do it at all. Other examples such as the Bonn Agreements signed in 2001 with the aim of establishing an interim authority in Afghanistan or the Accra Agreement (2003) that ended the armed conflict in Liberia do explicitly mention gender issues. Nevertheless, in the case of Afghanistan the inclusion of gender issues within the text of the agreement obeyed more to external pressures rather than to an indigenous will to improve women's conditions of life.[20]

4.2 SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka suffers an ethnopolitical armed conflict since 1983. The Tamil LTTE armed group has confronted the Government for more than three decades demanding the independence of the north-east areas of the island and the creation of a sovereign state for Tamil population. In 1983 the LTTE began the armed conflict as a consequence of the marginalization process of the Tamil people by the Sri Lanka government, basically conformed by the Sinhalese elites. After the decolonization of the island in 1948 this exclusion led the armed group

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19. The complete list of all the peace agreements signed after 2000 can be found at the Transitional Justice Peace Agreements Database by the Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster. http://www.peaceagreements.ulster.ac.uk/index.html. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study only some of the most relevant agreements have been selected, specially those that had the aim of being comprehensive accords, rather that partial or operative ones.

20. The invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 by the US Armed Forces was legitimated with a gender discourse that defended the need for a military intervention to take place in order to improve women's situation in the country and to defend their human rights, constantly violated during the Taliban's regime. However, eight years after the invasion, the women's rights in Afghanistan continue to be systematically violated.

to demand an independent and sovereign state through arms. Since 1983 there has not been any single successful attempt to end the armed conflict through a peace process.

In 2002, after the signature of a ceasefire agreement, peace talks began with the Norwegian mediation. Nevertheless the failure of these talks ended in the virulent resumption of the armed conflict in 2006. The legacy of more than 30 years of conflict is a death toll of 86.000 people and more than one million of internally displace persons. The impact on women has been very serious, causing forced displacement and increasing considerably the number of women headed households, but especially because of sexual violence, that has had as its main victims Tamil women. This kind of violence has been mainly perpetrated by security forces against women that were accused of being part of the LTTE (Bastick, Grimm and Kunz 2007: 109).

As it was aforementioned, in 2002 a peace process began with the aim of achieving a negotiated solution to the armed conflict. Women's absence in the negotiation structures was notorious in spite of the fact that Sri Lanka women groups had an important background forged by many decades of peace activism in the country. On several occasions, being the first in 1979, and repeatedly in the following decades, women had reclaimed a political solution to the armed conflict (Samuel 2001). With the beginning of peace talks they had also demonstrated publicly expressing their support to the cessation of hostilities agreement reached by the government and the LTTE. Therefore, the beginning of the peace talks in 2002 took place in a context in which the women's movement had both sufficient experience and mobilization capacities for their demands for an increased participation of women in the process to arrive to the government, the LTTE and the international community, that was giving its support to the peace process.

As in other contexts of armed conflict and peace talks, the capacity to build relations and alliances between local and international women and other relevant actors was certainly pivotal to strengthen these demands. UN Security Council resolution passed two year before gave the normative framework that sustained women's demands, as

it calls for the commitment both of governments and the international community with women's participation in all peace and post-war rehabilitation processes stages.

Women's movement organized an international mission together with international feminists and peace activists that made some recommendations aimed at favouring women's participation in the peace process as well as integrating the gender perspective in the different peace accords that could be reached as a result of this process.[21] Norway's government, that facilitated the peace process at the demand of both parties, echoed these demands, and in February 2003 an agreement was reached for the establishment of a Gender Subcommittee in the negotiations.

Astrid N. Heiberg was designated as the subcommitte's advisor, with the task of facilitating its work and the understanding among women that integrated it, both Tamil –LTTE combatants– and Sinhalese –representatives of the Government, but with activist and academic background–. Her experience as a Norwegian politician and as the president of the Red Cross International Federation, and her knowledge of Sri Lanka's situation, made her a woman with the necessary capacity and experience to facilitate the integration of gender in the peace process. The creation of the subcommittee allowed redressing, at least partially, women's exclusion in peace building in the country.

Before the process collapsed, the women that took part in the subcommittee gathered twice achieving a seven point common agenda that included the issues that were considered to be pivotal to the negotiation: sustaining the peace process, resettlement, personal security and safety, infrastructure and services, livelihood and employment, political representation and decision-making and reconciliation.[22]

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21. The complete text with the recommendations made by the International Women's Mission to the North East of Sri Lanka can be found at http://issues.lines-magazine.org/ Art_Feb03/WomenMission.htm. [Accessed on 17/05/09].

22. Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Press Release "First Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Gender Issues (Sgi) held in Kilinochchi 5-6 March 2003". http://www.peaceinsrilanka.lk/insidepages/Pressrelease/RNG/RNG06March.asp. [Accessed on 17/05/09].

The end of the peace process made impossible the continuation of the subcommittee's work, in spite of the fact that the women that integrated kept in touch though informally. In Kumari Jayawardena's[23] own words "the linking of the Sub-Committee on Gender Issues to the Peace Talks was its strength and also its weakness" (Chhachhi 2006). The lack of autonomy that was meant to engender the whole peace process in the end hampered the continuation of the process.

The role played by Astrid N. Heiberg as a facilitator of the process acknowledges a brief comment, as it serves to illustrate that if mediation tasks continue to be developed overwhelmingly by men (Potter 2005) it is not because of the lack of women with sufficient experience, capacities and qualities to develop this task, but rather because of male resistance to women's incorporation to some political and public spheres.

4.3 NORTHERN IRELAND

The case of Northern Ireland is somehow different, as women did participate in the official process by way of creating a political party that contested elections in order to get enough representation to gain a seat at the table. This section will analyse the role played by the women that took part in the peace negotiations, and more specifically, the NIWC. When the peace process began, one of the conditions established to take part in the peace table was that of being elected representatives (Magallón 2006). Therefore, in a context where women had very little experience in formal political participation, the possibilities of taking part in the process were extremely scarce. Nevertheless, in April 2006 the NIWC was created with the aim of contesting the elections aimed at designating the integrants of the multi-party peace talks. NIWC was integrated by women with different national and religious identities, as well as diverse political and activist backgrounds

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23. She was one of the women that took part on the side of the government. The women that represented the government were Kumari Jayawardena, Deepika Udagama, Fazeela M. Riyaz, Kumudini Samuel and Faizun Zackariya. The LTTE representatives were Thamalini Subramaniam, Kaaya Somasundram, Premila Somasundram, Suthamathy Sanmugarajah, and Yalisa Balasingham.

(Murtagh 2007). It was a political party integrated by women with the main objective of bringing women's demands to the peace talks and to negotiate from women's perspective.

They tried to come over the difficulties inherent to the internal diversity of the party by making the coalition a substantive one, instead of being a mere gesture of rapprochement between women coming from warring communities, but it turned out to be meaningless. The NIWC considered a central aspect the issue of political inclusion, which was one of the fundamental pillars of the party, and in the second place, the defence of human rights was also a pivotal issue (Bell 2004).

Women's presence implied the broadening of the negotiations agenda to issues only tangentially present, such as human rights or social welfare and, of course, gender equality. NIWC served as an impulse to women's participation within the rest of the political forces taking part in the process (Fearon 2002). Nevertheless, some authors have pointed to the failure that NIWC did not survive in the formal politics arena in the long run (Murtagh 2007). This failure can be partially attributed to structural and cultural factors, as gender inequality was not alien to the dominant nationalist discourses. Even so, the cross community work developed by this party was anticipatory to the political reality nowadays in Northern Ireland, as ten years after the signature of the agreement the Northern Ireland government is integrated both by nationalists and unionists.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to provide a preliminary analysis on peace processes from a gender perspective. I have tried to situate this analysis within the framework of peace studies and feminism as well as the debates that have resulted from the integration of both perspectives, drawing from their main theoretical and practical contributions. The aim of this piece of work has been to defend the idea that in order to build sustainable and transformative peace processes both women's inclusion

and gender perspective are pivotal. Women's experiences in peacebuilding and more specifically, in peace processes –though scarce–, have provided the framework for these thoughts. I would like to end reflecting around three ideas that can sum up the main arguments provided in this paper, as well as the policy implications of this study.

5.1 PEACE PROCESSES ARE AS GENDERED AS WARS

When we talk about gender we are talking about power and the relationship that is established between men and women in all social spheres, either public or private. Armed conflicts and peace processes reproduce these gender dynamics and every feminist approach to this issue has to question them. Men and women play different roles in conflict situations, some of them strictly defined by social stereotypes of what is right for a woman or for a man, but others do not obey to these socially sanctioned gender rules. All of them have to be acknowledged if the final aim of peace processes is to transform the social conditions that made war possible. In spite of the highly extended ideas on women's close relation to peace, there is a need to make visible that peace processes are designed and take place along these gender norms also. Women are excluded, their proposals and needs are viewed as incidental rather than essential, and successes are measured without taking into account that some outcomes may not serve to improve women's lives as much as men's.

Methodologies are important and in order to lay the foundation for an inclusive peace and gender perspective has to permeate the whole process from its beginning. The motto 'everything for the women, nothing by the women' is no longer valid, as androcentric models have proved to be nothing but partial. Defining women's agendas is an extremely hard task that only makes sense when including local perspectives that take into account indigenous needs, instead of universally defined ones, that can have very little to do with women's daily lives in conflict contexts. Therefore, if peace agreements are written, accorded and implemented solely by men, the gender dynamics that were present throughout the armed conflict remain unquestioned and intact.

As it was argued before, the inclusion of women in peace processes not only obeys to justice requirements. It is not only that women have their own right to be at the peace table, which they surely have. The importance of their presence relies also –and I would say that to a great extent– because they bring gender and equality issues to the discussions and agendas. Therefore, women's participation is a requirement for the construction of a democratic society based on equality and justice principles. Furthermore, their presence is also an important asset in order to engender peace processes.

Women's inclusion has not been taken seriously for the moment. Most peace talks take place without a single woman having the opportunity to raise her voice in political and decision-making circles. But women provide lived experiences and personal commitment to the peace table. I do not want to imply with this statement that women are more committed than men, or that men do not bring their own experiences. Both are needed. But it has to be both, not only men's. It is not by simply adding women that justice, equality and inclusion will impregnate peace processes. But without them justice, equality and inclusion remain absent and peacebuilding approached only through one perspective.

Women's inclusion implies bringing to the table the views of many society segments, as gender identity intersects with other layers such as ethnicity, religion or class. Women have to be considered not a as minority but as a significant group in itself, a group that embody experiences and ideas of many others (Karam 2001: 22). Some times, women won't have specific demands different from the demands of other social groups. But they can contribute to improve methodologies, communication among the parties and can help building trust among them. Having a specific agenda does not to have to be a requirement to take part in the process.

5.3 GENDER MATTERS AND HAS TO BE A GUIDING LINE FOR PEACE PROCESSES

Moving forward from the thesis that I have tried to defend throughout this paper, it can be stated that in order to achieve gender-sensitive peace processes, women's presence at peace talks is a necessary condition, but also that the participation of women per se does not guarantee that gender issues will be addressed throughout discussions, nor that decisions will be taken from this perspective. Peace processes require women's presence, but also negotiation agendas that integrate gender, if substantive debates and transformations are to take place.

It is crucial to remind the importance of the correct use of the term "gender". The generalisation in the use has had as consequence a certain 'depolitization' of this concept. Rather than reflecting the centrality of issues such as power, the term gender has derived into the idea of just adding women. A feminist reappropriation of gender is needed in order to move away from politically correct notions that exclude the power inequalities and women's oppression by patriarchy. Only by questioning both of them will gender be genuinely included in peace processes. It is in its entire political sense that gender has to guide peace processes, and not through partial perspectives that reduce gender to the idea of bringing women to the public sphere without questioning it.

If we do not want to bring "low intensity" peace and democracy to those countries ravaged by wars, peace has to be understood in a broad sense. And in order to overcome the legacy of war and the culture of violence that armed conflicts leave behind them peace agendas have to integrate a gender perspective. Defining what subjects have to be included in the agendas to certify that gender has been incorporated can be a very difficult task. There won't be an agreement among all women in conflict situations on what issues have to be a priority. Nevertheless, gender issues exist, and can be integrated in the peace processes by taking into account frameworks and principles. And of course, by including in the discussions certain specific questions that

cannot be avoided. Violence against women, impoverishment, women's exclusion in decision making, are all pivotal aspects.

Amani El Jack argues that "the social upheaval caused by conflict creates the potential to redefine gender relations" (2003: 41). Gender can be included in peace processes agendas and transformations can actually take place. But there has to be the will to do so.

This paper has attempted to analyse women's involvement in peace movements as well as their participation in peace processes. Further research on the issue of gender and peacebuilding could tackle some questions that remain unanswered such as why is the presence of women not enough to engender peace processes or what issues should be addressed in order to bring the gender perspective to the agendas of peace processes. Furthermore, what implications has developing a gendered agenda during peace negotiations. Peace processes require women's presence, but also negotiations agendas that integrate gender, if substantive debates and transformations are to take place.

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