Reimagining Inequalities: Improbable Dialogues in Colombia
Colombia
IHouse NYC
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https://www.reimaginemos.co/

Summary

We launched the pilot of the Inequality Territorial Dialogues, a series of 32 improbable dialogues to challenge inequality and build an equity and peacebuilding agenda in Colombia.

Project Description

How did you decide what issue(s) you wanted to address and what approach(es) or strategies you chose to implement in your project?

As the founding director of *Reimaginemos*, I applied to the Davis Peace Project seeking to launch the second phase of improbable dialogues of my grassroots think tank in Colombia. The approach I proposed was to frame the dialogues around territorial expressions of inequality, rather than thematic expressions. This is a novel approach that has been seldom used in the analysis of inequality and its relation to peacebuilding in Latin America.

Why did you choose your host site? In what ways did local relationships support you or contribute to the project?

I was born and raised in Colombia, and this has deeply inspired my professional work. My organization has been operating in Colombia for three years, and during that time I have established key relations with people and organizations from different sectors. I am now building more multi-actor collaborations and dialogue processes across the Colombian ecosystem around peace and equity building.

What changes or adjustments did you make to your original plans, and why?

I originally planned to carry out two local events (local dialogues). Due to security reasons in the department of La Guajira in Colombia, where social leaders are being threatened, I had to restructure the project to carry out one large event, rather than two small events. This new emphasis led me to seek alliances to be able to carry out a larger event, aiming to host over 120 people and 6 panelists, and to livestream the event across the whole country through the channel of the most influential news paper in Colombia. I was successful in accomplishing this, by stablishing an alliance with Universidad Javeriana de Cali and *El Espectador* newspaper. The event will take place on September 22nd, in Cali, Valle del Cauca. I made a strategic decision of taking the team who is filming my organization´s documentary and institutional video to this event in Cali, to capture live scenes of the dialogue process. This will strengthen the video, communicating the real feel of the improbable dialogues that we are enabling. The video will be published in October. Another change to the original plans was redesigning and updating my organization´s website as a key part of the new communications strategy.

Did other fundraising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?

After having structured the pilot of the Inequality Territorial Dialogues for the Davis Peace Project, I submitted a proposal to implement the complete project: seven regional events and 32 online dialogues, on in each department in Colombia. I received a grant from Columbia University, and I am now on my way to carryout the complete project, from September 2023 to September 2024.

Are there opportunities for continuing your work on this issue?

The pilot of the Inequality Territorial Dialogues has allowed me to structure a complete and ambitious project, which will be the first national conversation about inequality in Colombia. I have now signed 4 alliances with well known universities, research centers and newspapers to implement this project. I expect this to be the first among a series of cross-sectoral collaborations to challenge inequality and build peace in Colombia, a country which is now at a crossroads after the signing of the peace agreement and

the election of its first ever left-wing president. My organization, *Reimaginemos* is now being recognized as a legitimate and innovative voice that can contribute to create and communicate knowledge to spark social change.

Reflection

> *How do you define peace?*

Peace is the absence of violence, together with the presence of opportunities to become what you choose to become.

> *In what ways might your project contribute to peace? What changes occurred? Short-term? Long-term?*

A key message that my project is communicating in Colombia, is that there cannot be peacebuilding without equity building. Our country desperately needs both, and all Colombians must embrace this as a collective objective that brings us together, rather than tears us apart.

> *Identify a significant conflict you observed or encountered in your work (it could be any level of relationship: intra- or inter-personal, community/group based, and/or societal/global). How did you navigate the conflict and what would you like to learn more about as a result.*

As the project grew, the amount of work (conceptual, relational, logistical, communications) became overwhelming, and this led me to feel anxious and insecure. As a result, I decided to hire a person to support me, and I also developed a plan to forge strategic alliances that have now enabled me to achieve more. I learned that you need teams and emotional support to carry out projects that have the potential of growing.

> *Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has the project changed, challenged, or inspired you?*

The project has showed me the value of working to enable improbable dialogues to bring people and ideas together, transforming them into something bigger and capable of transforming perceptions around one issue (inequality) as well as inspiring organizations to work in new ways (collaborating for a larger goal).

Personal Statement

"Thanks to the support of the Davis Peace Project I am on the way of implementing the first national conversation about inequality and peace building in Colombia. The project has grown exponentially, and with more funds and allies, my organization is becoming a recognized actor contributing to social change."

Allison Benson-Hernández