

# ARTICLES

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## POTENTIALITIES OF THE CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES TO UNDERSTAND THE PEACE AGREEMENT AND POST-AGREEMENT IN COLOMBIA

*Potencialidades de las perspectivas críticas de los Estudios Organizacionales para la comprensión del acuerdo y pos-acuerdo de paz en Colombia*

*Potencialidades das perspectivas críticas dos Estudos Organizacionais para a compreensão do acordo e pós-acordo de paz na Colômbia*

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### ABSTRACT

The peacebuilding process in Colombia involves a host of socio-political phenomena that can be approached by the organizational field. This article analyzes the peace process in Colombia, its agreement, and the social management of its post-agreement using the critical theories of organizational studies, taking some of the taxonomies suggested by Alvesson and Deetz. The methodological approach was qualitative with an analytical and interpretative methodology based on categories of analysis on the links of the peace process with the naturalization of the social order, the universalization of managerial interests, instrumental rationality, and the production of consent. In this process, the theoretical-conceptual positions, the narratives of the peace process, and its organizational manifestations were related. The relational discussion shows that there are various implicit domination structures in peacebuilding, with decisions that follow the logic of managerial efficiency and ideologies typical of the organizational fabric. The article calls for a profound transformation of the organizational structure of peace, generating discourses, strategies, and collective actions that are more committed to equity and social justice within the framework of what has been legally agreed.

**Keywords:** organizational studies, peace process, peace agreement and post-agreement, critical theory.

### RESUMEN

*El proceso de construcción de paz en Colombia implica un cúmulo de fenómenos sociopolíticos que son posibles de abordar desde el campo organizacional. El objetivo de este artículo fue analizar el proceso de paz en Colombia, su acuerdo y la gestión social de su pos-acuerdo desde las teorías críticas de los estudios organizacionales, tomando algunas de las taxonomías planteadas por Alvesson y Deetz. El enfoque metodológico fue cualitativo, con un método analítico y una metodología interpretativa a partir de categorías de análisis sobre los vínculos del proceso de paz con la naturalización del orden social, la universalización de los intereses gerenciales, la razón instrumental y la producción de consentimiento; en ese proceso se relacionaron las posiciones teórico-conceptuales, las narrativas del proceso de paz y sus manifestaciones organizacionales. La discusión relacional muestra que hay diversas estructuras de dominación implícitas en la construcción de paz, con decisiones que atienden a lógica de la eficiencia gerencial y a ideologías propias del entramado organizacional. El artículo invita a la transformación profunda de la estructura organizacional de la paz, buscando generar discursos, estrategias y acciones colectivas más comprometidas con la equidad y la justicia social en el marco de lo jurídicamente acordado.*

**Palabras clave:** estudios organizacionales, proceso de paz, acuerdo y pos-acuerdo de paz, teoría crítica.

### RESUMO

*O processo de construção da paz na Colômbia envolve uma série de fenômenos sociopolíticos que podem ser abordados no campo organizacional. O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar o processo de paz na Colômbia, seu acordo e a gestão social de seu pós-acordo a partir das teorias críticas dos Estudos Organizacionais, tomando algumas das taxonomias levantadas por Alvesson e Deetz. A abordagem metodológica foi qualitativa, com um método analítico e uma metodologia interpretativa baseada em categorias de análise sobre os vínculos do processo de paz com a naturalização da ordem social, a universalização dos interesses gerenciais, a razão instrumental e a produção de consentimento. Nesse processo, foram relacionadas as posições teórico-conceituais, as narrativas do processo de paz e suas manifestações organizacionais. A discussão relacional mostra que existem várias estruturas de dominação implícitas na construção da paz, com decisões que seguem a lógica da eficiência gerencial e ideologias do arcabouço organizacional. O artigo convida à transformação profunda da estrutura organizacional da paz, gerando discursos, estratégias e ações coletivas mais comprometidas com a equidade e a justiça social no marco do que é legalmente pactuado.*

**Palavras-chave:** estudos Organizacionais, processo de paz, acordo de paz e pós-acordo, teoria crítica.

## INTRODUCTION

The abject social conditions resulting from the current political-economical system require cognition processes linked to social reality, i.e., awareness of the biospheric crisis, inequality, and inequity deriving from the transnational financial capital, human complexity, and the role of organizations in the political, economic, and sociohistorical grid. An alternative approach to this issue deals with emerging thoughts and actions of the managerial mainstream, which implies deconstructing, reflecting, and trying to build new reflections about organizational reasoning. This means transforming organizational realities beyond aspects of mere denunciation or emancipation (Ocampo, Anzola, & Gonzales-Miranda, 2020). The intention is to address the organizational field, resorting to holistic, transdisciplinary, and thinking-feeling aspects since contemporary problems and phenomena in which organizations are inscribed require plural approaches to amplify the socio-contextual dialogue.

Thus, critical perspectives of organizational studies (OS) emerge as an alternative to understanding the social phenomena inscribed in organizations, whose modern approach must contribute to understanding social phenomena, organizations, and their by-products. The execution of this process must include critical perspectives on paradigmatic and institutionalized knowledge, such as the theory of management (Deetz, 2003; Misoczky, 2017). Thus, the progression of organizational thinking cannot be a doctrinal discourse enclosed in the cages of knowledge but a plural space of thinking and action.

This article addresses the Peace Agreement (PA) entered into by the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People’s Army (FARC-EP), and its implementation in the country’s social and legal life, understood as the post-agreement (P-A), given that peacebuilding in Colombia is a continuous task. In this regard, analyzing the peace process in Colombia (2012-2016), the signed PA, and the social construction of the P-A denotes a potentiality as to how a social phenomenon can be analyzed using the organization’s epistemic referents. This research uses the notion of ‘post-agreement,’ stepping back from the idea of post-conflict, which implies different symbolic, cultural, and sociological representations beyond the scope of this document. Multiple subjects, mostly Colombian citizens, are involved in the phenomenon of peace and the conclusion of the armed conflict, emphasizing the human dimension of the issue. Their management in praxis implies a magnitude of organizational decisions and attributions that allow linking and tackling this social phenomenon/process with the organizational grid. Despite the incommensurable nature of the perspectives coexisting in the study of organizations (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), this article has opted for OS as the theoretical referent to support the proposed analysis, turning to its plurality and diversity in the search for a critical dialogue that contributes to understanding social phenomena.

Why did we choose to address the peace process in Colombia using the OS critical theories? Peace is a supreme value and an inductor of the scheme of society’s functioning. Its management, discourse, and action, seen from a critical perspective, allows addressing emerging developments of OS to manage peace within the framework of a political PA and P-A with legal, economic,

and social effects in a country. Essentially, peace is not just the absence of war (Torres, Cano, Gomez, & Arias, 2019). Its 'success' requires management and steering, and, in that precise aspect, OS has a lot to contribute.

Limitations persist in administrative orthodoxy in terms of understanding the organizational processes of the peace process, reducing them to the managerial pragmatics of results of institution's leaders and associated entities, when the national construction of a new identity, procedural and legal guarantees for the country of agents involved in the conflict and social awareness of valuing the PA and the P-A beyond their economic reasoning are at the core of these processes. Thus, interdisciplinary conversations produced in OS allow using analytical pluri-rational and social characteristics of a socio-political phenomenon such as peace in Colombia. Considered from the critical perspectives of OS leads the reflection toward structural social transformations beyond what is nominal and methodological in organizations' administration. The study adopts OS because the epistemic corpus of these studies help to envision the organizational grids within social phenomena – such as PA and P-A – as processes, beyond the notion of organization as an entity.. Also, OS have a critical essence that allows analyzing the phenomenon of peace beyond the governance of figures and institutional reports. Consequently, this article analyzes the peace process in Colombia, its agreement, and the social management of its post-agreement from multiple academic referents of OS critical constructs, emphasizing the categories and taxonomies of critical theories addressed by professors Alvesson and Deetz (1999, 2000, 2006, 2017), considered pertinent to undertake a coherent academic relationship with the dynamics and stages of the peace process. The studied categories are inscribed in the perspectives of criticism of ideology, specifically the *naturalization of the social order*, *universalization of managerial interests*, *the domination of processes of instrumental rationality*, and *production of consent*, which can contribute to the understanding of the studied phenomena evincing the euphemisms of directive considerations when the peace management seeks results.

Professors Alvesson and Deetz adhere to critical management studies (CMS) and this article uses and interprets categories of the approach. However this research applies an analysis more aligned with OS because critical positioning to address the peace process goes beyond a methodological problem since such process is located in the need for structural transformation. There is no special deliberateness in being critical of the administration's dominant theory but in contributing to the construction of organizational knowledge from criticism, interpreting the social phenomenon of peace in Colombia, its PA, and P-A. Hence, the disciplinary relevance of addressing research problems that differ from recurrent organizational topics is underlined. This is not a *sui generis* investigation case but an approach absent from the literature that contributes to the understanding and transformation of social and contextual relationships inscribed in the organizational field.

This article is divided into seven sections, including the introduction: the methodological aspects are presented in the second section, followed by the epistemic bases of OS in section three, locating social problems within their academic spectrum. The fourth section includes an identification of the development of critical theories of OS and some categories addressed by

Alvesson and Deetz (2017); the fifth section describes the peace process in Colombia, its political-legal agreement, and the social construction of the P-A. The sixth section presents the approach to the problem referred to from the critical theories. The seventh and final section holds the conclusions where we reveal the contributions of OS to the peace P-A in Colombia, seeking continuity in this emerging critical line of research.

## METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach since it addresses the universe from subjective and intersubjective realities established by individuals' interactions with their surroundings. It "sets out to understand the rationale that guides social actions. It studies the internal and subjective dimension of social reality as a source of knowledge" (Galeano, 2016, p. 18). The study uses an analytical method, the most commonly adopted in social sciences (Aktouf, 2011). According to Strauss and Corbin (2016, p. 14), this method is essentially the interaction between researcher and information, breaking down the studied facts or phenomena from the most complex to the simplest. The core of the analysis leads to a relational perspective of the academic community's concepts, arguments, and postulates on the topic. Hence, we attempt to come close to what Alvesson and Sandberg (2014) have named 'problematization,' producing questions that allow a more open critical research. A thematic literature review was conducted (Oliver, 2012) to substantiate the addressed socio-political issue without applying restrictive and explicit delimitations as those performed in systematic literature reviews. The analysis is the core of the study, which offers a broad perspective on how the issue has been addressed. Therefore, the results are not intended to be generalized or replicated but to contribute to increase understanding. The review took place in specialized databases such as Web of Science, Scopus, Redalyc, Scielo, and Publindex, and in organizational or interdisciplinary journals that have traditionally open spaces to OS and critical perspectives of socio-organizational phenomena such as: a) *Brazilian Administration Review*; b) *Revista de Administração de Empresas*; c) *Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios*; d) *Innovar*; e) *Revista Venezolana de Gerencia*; f) *Academia. Revista Latinoamericana de Administración*; g) *Cuadernos de Administración*; h) *Journal of Technology Management & Innovation*. Texts related to 'organizational studies' were selected from these journals or texts that addressed discussions and contributions of OS to understanding social phenomena inscribed in organizations; specific thematic filters were not applied because no documents were identified in the published literature on management sciences that addressed a phenomenon such as peace. The process of analysis was organized based on four problem cores that allowed to relate the issue in the field of study, namely: 1) OS as an emerging field capable of addressing social problems; 2) Incidence of the critical theories on OS; 3) The peace process as social and organizational phenomena, and; 4) Reflections and interpretations of critical theories of OS in the PA and P-A. These problematic relationships are developed throughout the article, elucidating the argumentative narratives and contributions currently produced and aim at developing the four stages differentiated by Becker (1958, as cited in Aktouf, 2011) in a valid form of the analysis.

### Exhibit 1. Scheme of the Methodical Analysis Process

Stages of Analysis	Approach to the Problem
Identification and selection of the problems, concepts, and evidence	Prior to a systemic inquiry process, critical perspectives of OS were selected as a theoretical framework for a greater understanding of the phenomenon of peace.
Verification of the frequency and distribution of phenomena	The identified problem is focused on the management of the PA and the P-A, selecting the events that expose the structures of domination and instrumental rationality as the problem's most significant dimensions.
Construction of the social system in the form of models	A relational analysis of the identified categories is produced, elements are allocated in sets depending on the researcher's conceptualization.
Final analysis and presentation of the results	The findings of the analysis process are systematized and discussed in terms of the contributions of the OS to the understanding of the problem.

Source: compiled by the authors based on [Aktouf \(2011, pp. 180-181\)](#).

The methodology was interpretative and was addressed based on concepts presented by [Galeano \(2015, 2016, p. 51\)](#) on processes of theorization and inserted in the article in the arguments in which theoretical findings converge with the researchers' stances, linking the social problem tackled with the taxonomies of [Alvesson and Deetz's critical theories \(1999, 2000, 2006, 2017\)](#). These taxonomies are the center of the work, in which "four recurring topics on texts about organizations rising from the perspective of criticism of ideology" ([Alvesson & Deetz, 2017, p. 519](#)) were taken: 1) *the naturalization of the social order*; 2) *the universalization of managerial interests*; 3) *the domination of processes of instrumental rationality*, and; 4) *the production of consent*. Thus, the article uses these taxonomies [Exhibit 2] as a strategy to analyze the PA and P-A. The methodological aspect is focused on the interpretative perspective. It generates a symbiosis of arguments that may contribute to the understanding of the addressed problem to comprehend meanings, associations, discourses, shortages, and potentialities, which in the specific case of peace management also imply acknowledging the discursive and narrative strategies applied throughout the different historic moments on the peace process, understanding them as the trends, situational alterations, and/or intentional modifications used by agents that led the peace process, where the domination structure and overall managerial orthodoxy practices can be evinced.

## EPISTEMIC BASE OF THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE APPROACH TO THE PHENOMENON OF PEACE

The core of the academic proposal of OS is based on administrative and organizational theory, studying the organizations through a wider academic interdisciplinary lens and being aware of the complexities of social reality. Nevertheless, it is not a segmented approach to organizations because it also studies an organization's dynamic and social phenomena, its interactions, and the different scales of understanding and depth of theoretical and empirical matters of the organization. Topics pertaining to leadership ([Saavedra-Mayorga, Sanabria, & Smida, 2013](#)), power and organizational domination ([Contreras & Castro, 2013; Deetz, 2003](#)), organizational denunciations

and crimes (Oliveira, Valadão, & Miranda, 2013), instrumental rationality (Cruz-Kronfly & Rojas, 2008), the divide between work and corporate culture (Parker, 2000), and managerial practices and discourses on management (Grant, Hardy, Oswick, & Putnam, 2003), are topics that have remained constant in OS.

Gonzales-Miranda (2014b) presented an approach to the historical context and emergence of OS as a disciplinary aspect since disciplinary distributions based on the illustrated project and the fragmentation of knowledge as typical elements of the analytical-Cartesian rationale of modern science- the disciplines and its taxonomies have been representative to support an epistemological and gnoseological status. In the same regard, from the perspective of Bourdieu (2007), OS rises as an autonomous field of study, taking epistemic bases of social sciences, from sociology, political science, anthropology, philosophy, and psychology in particular. However, it is an autonomous field from the formal scientific point of view. Many of its promoters assimilate and are aware that disciplinary clustering “has led to the establishment of thousands of fragments, fiefs and sub-fiefs of knowledge, which are more knowledgeable each day, but which understand less” (Quijano, Corredor, & Tobar, 2014, p. 227). In this regard, OS is an alternative and critical response to the classic functionalist and positive administrative and organizational theory. Sanabria, Saavedra-Mayorga, and Smida (2014, 2015) presented the current status of the academic field; Gonzales-Miranda, Ocampo-Salazar, and Gentilin (2018) show that academic production on administration and organizations has significantly expanded in Latin América in recent years, with Mexico, Brazil, and Colombia leading the way. It is not necessarily anti-management, but it distances itself from the administrative orthodoxy by identifying organizations as socially-constructed processes in which social, economic, and political phenomena converge. Cooper and Burrell (1988) understood organizations as social machines that produce discourses. From the functional perspective, organizations are conceptualized as companies or institutions created by human interaction to attain particular goals, frequently associated with efficient economic and financial decision-making. In opposition, “the origin of organizational studies attempts to know, understand and explain organizations, in which efficiency is analyzed as one of the multiple issues of organizations” (Barba, 2013, p. 144). With this perspective, organizations are “relatively complex structures of human integration that articulate people, and although they fail to exhaust social relationships, they include one of the key dimensions of sociability: face-to-face interactions, thoroughly studied inside organizations” (Varela, 2018, p. 89). At the same time, “organization” is a complex social formation or an “interweaving of diverse situations which, far from searching a common denominator leading to a form of universalization, it presents particular traits of each organization [entity], circumscribed by a specific history and time frame” (Gonzales-Miranda, 2014a).

This view places organizations at the core of OS, elucidating that they are far from static, objectified, or solidified structures. They interact in complex and uncertain social environments that call for inter and transdisciplinary approaches, but also for critical cognitive approaches that make room for the field’s epistemic and praxeological bases to mature. Organizations are macrostructures and their micro-relationships identify or disguise different social practices that generate exclusion and inequity, equity and inclusion. From a critical outlook, the visualization of

the underlying social sense in the organizational environment delivers to the social construction of reality, avoiding inhumane processes (Rojas, 2007), managerial totalitarianism protected by instrumental rationality (Cruz-Kronfly & Rojas, 2008), labor oppression, and rationalization of the hegemonic power in the Foucauldian sense (Knights, 2002). The perspective of management as a positive field of organizations lacks a socio-humanistic sense and argumentative soundness to address social phenomena, such as peace. In this sense, it is clear that including the epistemic bases of OS in concrete fields requires studying social phenomena in organizations, beyond approaching OS as an epistemic field and understanding that OS does not include modern administrative practices, technical direction strategies, or efficient management models. Approaching administration sciences, organizations, and management, in the perspective of OS, implies acknowledging the kindness of direction and revealing the euphemisms, discipline, and abuse of the management's stratagems. Tackling a socio-political phenomenon such as peace from the functional organizational orthodoxy can lead to a canonical view of management over "managerial efficiency" and to a legitimization of the entities that govern the peace process; from then on, networks of actors and subjects involved in the different stages of peacebuilding will have to be efficient and restrictively fulfill what was agreed, following verifiable metrics and indicators, affixed to control devices of any utilitarian organization. However, the PA and P-A, as linking axes of construction of peace and reconciliation scenarios in Colombia, have greater complexities than the economic and financial rationale, aside from trying to identify vertical typologies, such as Mintzberg's (1979) 'strategic apex,' or hierarchical structures, imply linking decisions with private equity's way to operate.

In the case of the peace process in Colombia, administrative orthodoxy is short-sighted due to the high sense of what is public, of incidence of the media, and of participation of subjects with socio-political perspectives that are radically opposed and entailed in the administration of peace; in an attempt to converge and manage the process and achieve some means. In this sense, the social construction of a reality resulting from the analysis of meanings, senses, and experiences by different actors in the peace process as a phenomenon that is an object of study, underscores the pertinence of the interpretative approach as a methodological option (Martins & Barrera, 2012) to have a more humane approach to organizational reality. Therefore, an interdisciplinary and pluri-rational perspective such as that of OS rise as an epistemic basis to provide better understanding.

## CRITICAL THEORIES OF OS AND THE CATEGORIES OF ALVESSON AND DEETZ

From a critical standpoint, CMS and OS are not exactly the same, but they deal with a heterodox perspective of the positive-functional view or mainstream that has been predominant in administration schools. That is why its current academic development brings about alternative projects and alternatives to classical critical thinking (postmodernism), such as: decoloniality, decolonization, postcolonialism, Latin Americanism, eco-socialism, feminism, among others.

Still, the epistemic bases holding these theoretical frameworks are fundamentally combined with the Frankfurt School (Duberley & Johnson, 2009), but also with other approaches and theories that feed a holistic and deep perspective of organizations and management/administration sciences.

Critical ideas and theories of OS in Latin America have been presented by multiple authors (De la Rosa Alburquerque, 2017; Barba, 2013; Camara, 2017; Cruz-Kronfly & Rojas, 2008; Durango, 2005; Faria, 2009; Gonzales-Miranda, 2014a; Ibarra-Colorado, 2006; Misoczky, 2017; Montaña, 2020; Motta, 2001; Ramos, 1989; Rodrigues & Carrieri, 2001; Sanabria et al., 2014; Szlechter et al., 2020; Tragtenberg, 1947; Vergara, 2001). These ideas and theories can be considered propositional, relational, and somewhat ethereal, although they have begun implementing connection and networking.

Critical thinking tackles broad problems (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996), such as peace. In this context and as a result of CMS, Misoczky (2017) questions the lack of philosophical attitude and the absence of values and principles, which are not associated with the sense of altering the governing structures. This is a reminder of the essence of criticism for the classical aspects of functional, Marxist, and comprehensive sociology. Criticism implies *transformation*, *emancipation*, and steering the *revolution* of ideas that come with praxis, idealizations, and theoretical utopias aside; to a greater extent, criticism is aligned with a righteous attitude (Gonzales-Miranda & Rojas, 2020). Thus, criticism of OS must “contrast the ‘positive’ version of criticism coming from internal management without questioning its essence and function to reproduce social structures that constantly generate victims, an ethical and ontological criticism” (Misoczky, 2017, p. 147). Criticism of OS invites emancipation of thinking and denaturalization of the social and organizational reality studied from all academic references, social, and epistemes origins. Authors such as Montaña (2020) lean toward thinking that greater reflections from sociological and organizational institutionalism nurture the critical perspectives of OS. Quantitative methods are not the only source of legitimacy to address organizations, and the idea of ‘management’ cannot unambiguously be interwoven in capitalist companies. Moreover, critical theories require consolidating the new epistemic frameworks and showing praxeological evidence of its postulates, without neglecting methodological routes that are key to understand organizations: “It is necessary to analyze from the outside, not from what is already organized, [analyzing] the organization’s production instead of the organization of production” (Cooper & Burrell, 1988, p. 106).

Critical theories in OS have to be connected with praxis (Misoczky & Andrade, 2005), committed to the creation of other possible worlds (Sole, 2003), and surrounded by emancipation and transformation (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992). In the words of Aktouf (2011), following Perrow, it is not about talking of organizations that have never exist but about the real world. Stressing the heap of concrete situations and social facts that emanate from the PA and the peace P-A due to its rooted origins at the core of least favored people’s societal and day-to-day lives.

Understanding the managerial and neo-managerial (Varela, 2018) genealogy’s power unveils relevant aspects of critical theories in OS aimed at social transformation. Consequently, Alvesson and Deetz (2006) provide enhanced concepts to analyze organizations and highlight conflicts, since, from the 1970s and 1980s, OS shaped attacks on modern tradition and cultivated a theory aimed at researching all types of imbalances, alienations, and social dominations (power

asymmetries, human injustice, repressions, discrimination based on race, gender and xenophobia in organizations, among others). In this sense, the suggestions by Alvesson and Deetz (2006, 2017) and developments by Saavedra-Mayorga, Gonzales-Miranda, and Marin-Idarraga (2017) are pillars to contextualize these ideas in Latin America, which have been taken as academic bases to address the topic of peace, the PA and the P-A in Colombia.

Alvesson and Deetz (2006, 2017) delimit the approaches of critical theories and postmodernism because there are different ways to deal with organizations' problems. These authors' theories criticize the ideology and four associated perspectives (See Exhibit 2), combined with the theory of communicative action and with a comprehensive postmodernist view. Misoczky (2017) deems it unacceptable to juxtapose critical theories with postmodernism, as done by Alvesson and Deetz (1999) since they are not complementary. This connection would constitute an ontological mistake despite its meeting points. This research goes deeper and emphasizes the taxonomies of critical thinking without meddling with the debate of homogeneity and/or heterogeneity between critical theory and postmodern postulates.

Based on Misoczky (2017), it can be said that undertaking analyses with origin theories differing from the local context of origin is a mistaken extrapolation due to its disconnection. This research does not mimic a foreign theory, nor does it idealize Eurocentric or Anglo-Saxon thinking. Instead, it uses some premises as epistemic bases to undertake a particular analysis that enables studying the referred phenomenon.

Criticism of the ideology challenges the *status quo* and entails defying coercion, duress, exploitation, alienation, subjugation, and ideological control driven by the organizational direction toward its workers. On its part, ideology is understood as a set of values and representations (Larrain, 2010, 2017) that legitimize the actions of subjects, mobilizing their thoughts and giving sense to their reasoning. Alvesson and Deetz (2006, 2017) question and criticize dominant ideologies because these generate the mechanisms of a corpus, artifacts, and devices of control that capitalize organizational subjugation. Thus, the development of that criticism of the ideology is developed in four fields:

**Exhibit 2.** Themes that Rise from the Perspective of the Criticism of the Ideology

Naturalization of the social order	Socio-historical formations in conflict must not be treated as objectified or neutral entities to generate efficiency. There is criticism of the orthodoxy of the institutionalization of labor and division of labor with the aim to instill maximum control. It proposes that workers should communicate and participate in organizational aspects (Scherer, 2009) unveiling arbitrariness and making room for discussion.
Universalization of managerial interests	Individual perspectives that are shaped to look like collective interests in which managerial will is sold judiciously. The 'organizational mission' turns into an unquestionable collective value to perpetuate univocal ways of managing organizations.
Domination of instrumental rationality processes	In this perspective, technical and instrumental reason is often assumed in organizations as a rational and legitimate way of attaining corporate goals and efficiencies.
Production of consent	Subjects within a structure of organizational domination agree to participate in the rules of the organization, looking for added returns resulting from greater subjugation to the rules.

Source: compiled by the authors based on Alvesson and Deetz (2006, 2017).

The categories presented by [Alvesson and Deetz \(2017\)](#) contribute to the study of the PA and the P-A. They allow identifying manifestations and relationships of the institutions and organizations that manage peace in Colombia with specific points that determine the organizational actions and expose the main points of analysis.

## SHORT APPROACH TO THE PEACE PROCESS IN COLOMBIA, ITS POLITICAL AND LEGAL AGREEMENT, AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE P-A

Humanity's socio-historical development may be narrated through wars, confrontations, social divisions, or collective identities among nations. However, contemporary battles take place in the field of ideas, epistemic and intellectual positions of knowledge, and its capacity to influence social lives based on knowledge. Although the remains of the distorted idea of the 'state-nation' in a world with cosmopolitan pretensions include forging social democracy with inclusion, equity, justice, and reparation, it is key to understand and learn from the political teachings of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ([Judt, 2012](#)). However, the construction of a society in peace, equitable, inclusive, and free from domination implies convergences and capacities for collective management and action. Although revolutionary projects and insurgent guerrillas used to be plentiful in Latin America, the conflict in Colombia was the only one in the region that had historical momentum and got stronger. This fact had a direct effect on the country's development. The state's administrative management focused on warlike repression and denial of political otherness and distinctiveness ([De Zubiria-Samper, 2015](#)) instead of having dialogic management and agreeing on peaceful solutions for the conflict other than silencing the rifles, opting for the construction of more equitable social scenarios. In turn, the number of casualties, victims, displaced people, and migrants resulting from this conflict amounts to 8 million ([The Economist, 2016](#)). *De facto* peace implies having the social conditions for a dignified living, eradicating hunger, injustice, unemployment, inequality, inequity, and ecosystem and atmospheric degradation. According to the [World Bank \(2018\)](#), Colombia's Gini coefficient is 50.4, one of the highest in the world.

In 2016, the government of Colombia signed a PA with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia - People's Army (FARC-EP), after more than four years of negotiation (2012-2016). This process entailed a national and interinstitutional process supported by the international community (essentially by Norway, Venezuela, Chile, and Cuba) to end one of the last armed conflicts on the American continent. The PA is a historical, epic, and laudable agreement that acts as the turning point for new social scenarios in Colombia, despite all of the differences, voids, and criticism to the points agreed upon and its implementation. Based on the material and significant decrease in acts of violence and war, the benefits of this PA are plentiful. Nevertheless, the ethos of the process has been affected by political tensions, international support and lack thereof, civil resistance, and strong institutional restrictions to apply the processes and generate actions for the post-agreement and post-conflict, thus

driving institutional dilemmas and challenges pertaining to territorial peacebuilding (Restrepo & Peña, 2019). In essence, peacebuilding in Colombia has been a dialectical process involving the entire citizenship, which has left invaluable testimonies and revelations of what it means for the war to come to an end (De la Calle, 2019).

Some of the keys from the managerial point of view have been understanding that an ‘agreement’ is the manifestation in itself of a political will of two or more actors, a convergence. In the case of peace, it implies acknowledging political adversaries as the consequence of a dialogue table (Olave, 2012). This acknowledgment involves democratic inclusions in decisions, the inclusion of differences, and co-direction, as in organizations. Exhibit 3 presents the different moments of execution to contextualize the development of this social phenomenon

**Exhibit 3.** Stages of the Peace Process in Colombia

Stages		Description	Main Parties Involved
Exploration		It constitutes an approach between representatives of the government of Colombia and the FARC-EP, materialized in a table of dialogue, which resulted in the General Agreement to end the conflict and build stable and lasting peace.	Government of Colombia FARC-EP
Negotiation Agenda (Development of the dialogue)	Toward a new Colombian countryside: comprehensive rural reform	Agreements were reached in terms of the negotiation agenda.	Delegates of the government
	Political participation: democratic openness for peacebuilding		Delegates of the FARC-EP
	End of the conflict		Political representatives
	Solution to the problem of illicit drugs		Leaders of commissions
	Agreement on the victims of the conflict		Specialized advisors
	Implementation, verification, and endorsement		
Construction of peace / Post-agreement		Implementation stage of the obligations entered into by the parties.	Colombian State Former combatants of FARC-EP JEP Civil society

Source: compiled by the authors based on Torres et al. (2019).

The first stage of the process was the exploratory stage, consisting of secret written conversations (2010-2012) to reach a framework agreement before beginning the process in public (2012-2016). To that end, preparatory meetings and exploratory encounters took place to foster dialogue between the parties and allow entering into the “General Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace,” signed on August 26, 2012 (Presidencia de la Republica – Alto Comisionado para la Paz, 2016, 2018). This first agreement led to the development of the negotiation agenda, with specific points that had a direct impact on the economic, political, and social life of the country, attempting to generate guarantees for both parties. Signing the PA as a political acceptance of the negotiation intended to endorse the document with the citizens’ support through a democratic method of direct participation: voting in a referendum, for whose adverse result in the ballot boxes the government “had no plan B” (De la Calle, 2019). This unexpected political crossroad was solved by including reforms by opposing the agreement and through a legislative endorsement. From then on, it was called the P-A, which corresponds to the practical execution of the accords. Even though there are temporary ranges to attain the proposed goals, challenges currently prevail to manage the peace to be ‘stable and lasting’ and calls for new focuses of work, underlining the ceaseless fight to contain warlike initiatives of those who believe war cannot be solved through dialogue and only by eliminating the opposition, going back to the confrontation. In this context, the P-A meant the creation of a Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition, which gave birth to multiple institutions and organizations that are the current bases of the peace and stability infrastructure in Colombia (Uribe, 2018). These totaled eleven entities, including the Commission for the Clarification of Truth, which has set out to reconstruct the conflict’s narrative from the victims’ approach; the Unit for the Search of Disappeared Persons, which is responsible for finding and identifying persons who disappeared in the years of the conflict; and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP, in Spanish), a transitional justice model.

## ADDRESSING THE PA AND PEACE P-A AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL STUDY FROM CRITICAL THEORIES

The PA and the peace P-A cannot be understood separately or as independent phenomena, its correspondence in the praxis is implicit and necessary. Therefore, with peace identified as the macro-organizational context in which multiple social subjects and phenomena converge, interact, and come together in interests, the critical theories of OS (as epistemic references) are used as support to focus the analysis and particularly the actions and manifestations of the main parties of specific management throughout each peacebuilding moment introduced in Exhibit 3. This analytical association is a conclusive relational qualitative exercise to understand unexplored dimensions of the PA and the P-A. In this interpretation process, multiple positions, stances, and thoughts are evident in terms of the “epic poem” of peace in Colombia, which becomes polemic but arguable in the light of social theories. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon, we considered the most representative concrete cases and situations that identified

direct relationships of the phenomenon of peace with organizational aspects from critical perspectives since the process' development is overfilled with particularities.

## Epicenters of Criticism of the Ideology

As previously mentioned, the origin of the Colombian conflict is rooted precisely in criticism processes of the dominant ideology of the Colombian state ruled by political conservatism (Vega-Cantor, 2015). Nonetheless, the PA evinces collective thinking aimed at mitigating the duress between the combating actors (Military Forces – FARC-EP). Contrary to what happens in traditional organizations in terms of relationships between owners, administrators, and workers, Colombian citizenship is the actor that defies the coercion and exploitation generated by a longstanding political conflict, which deteriorates people's quality of life by allocating a large share of the national budget to the war and military empowerment, setting aside rights such as education, health care, housing, and access to culture. The search for a peace culture (Melguizo, 2017) steers the proposals toward respect for life, the beginning of the end of violence, sovereignty, human rights, and freedom.

Thus, it can be said that Colombian governments, prior to the peace talks, legitimized their decisions of state, institutional plans, and control mechanisms on the phenomenon of the war. It was the pillar of their thinking and made sense of their actions. Therefore, criticism of the ideology surfaces when citizens, government, and the FARC-EP understand that they must let go of the doctrine of warlike confrontation as a state policy and that the meaning of life lies in other scenarios. Consequently, the development of that criticism of the ideology is evinced in four fields:

**Exhibit 4.** Tensions of the PA and the Peace P-A in Colombia from the Critical Theories of OS

Categories of critical theory	Space with Greater Incidence	Tensions with the Signed PA and the Social Construction of the P-A
Naturalization of the social order	PA	Reasons for and ways to begin the peace process. Disruption between participation and incidence on decisions. Metaphorical strategies to begin the peace process.
Universalization of managerial interests	PA	Internal struggles to master the process. Organizational isomorphism as strategy. Referendum provides a glimpse of the shortcomings of the process.
Domination of instrumental rationality processes	P-A	Metrics and indicators as legitimation instruments. Control over execution is quantitative. The implementation of the PA evinces financial and budgetary deficiencies.
Production of consent	P-A	Discourse and metadiscourse as elements of persuasion. The judicial system in place evinces consent or rejection to the PA. Tensions coexist between the process' control, its efficiency, legitimacy, and dissidences.

## Naturalization of the social order in the peace process

Pertaining to the peace process and fundamentally to the establishment of the signed agreement, it could be said that it was initially processed following the managerial perspective of a company, in which an elite holds private sessions, generating mysticism about its decisions and with thorough and calculated rationality, moves forward step-by-step in its strategic plan. This perspective might have been driven by: 1) The background on previously failed peace processes that demanded all types of precautions, or 2) the hegemony of dealing with social problems through processes' control. Nevertheless, both cases underline the process' objectification to address it with subtlety.

In turn, when the peace process began, it had clear intentions to reach a good outcome. The process had defined goals, with limitations (or barriers) about what could and could not be negotiated with the involved actors. Placing the victims of the war at the core of the process was a correct decision from the point of view of social inclusion; so was the generation of a broad dialogue, but it can also be regarded as a way to involve the society in the decisions (albeit controlled) and to add actors that legitimized the process, as indicated by Scherer (2009) in terms of participation, whose voice existed but did not have participation (votes/incidence) in the decisions.

However, in the naturalization of the PA in the installation of the peace talks, the FARC-EP also applied discursive strategies such as similes and metaphors to institutionalize the new order: “We need to build coexistence on rock-hard bases as the immovable fiords of this lands to make peace stable and lasting.” (FARC-EP, 2012, paragraph 3).

## Universalization of managerial interests and risk for peace

During the negotiation process with the FARC-EP, the dominant position in the negotiation (by the government of Colombia, due to its institutional and financial capacities to materialize the agreements, and to its socio-historical responsibility with the conflict) wanted to impose its interest above the other parties. It is considered a normal consequence of any negotiation process. However, the Colombian state constantly and strongly universalized its interests in the negotiation and did not necessarily eradicate factors originating violence: control over the land and the state (Molano, 2015); Colombia's former president who led the process, dubbed it ‘the battle for peace’ (Santos, 2019), but in many aspects, this process was brewed through secrecy and international associations to do what was politically correct, encourage the process, and foresee each tension scenario, a typical behavior in orthodox organizational management: leaving no room for contingencies, despite contingencies.

Additionally, in the quest to universalize their interests, government representatives found “arguments to persuade with diplomacy and subtlety, without refuting nor assigning guilt, just to exhort and achieve adhesion and acceptability” (Alvarez & Suarez, 2016, p. 87). Moreover, organizational isomorphism strategies were used in the PA's management to support decisions,

basing the arguments on other peace processes (South Africa, Northern Ireland, El Salvador, Sierra Leone, Guatemala, Nepal, Angola), using them as examples of similar practices to implement and justifying topics that needed to be linked to the process or not, such as the economic model. The FARC-EP were not passive actors, a principle of the dialogue was the acknowledgment of the conflict and the shared responsibility between the state and the guerrilla groups, yet the need for ‘robust knowledge and arguments’ for the negotiation Exhibit granted more leadership to the state’s representatives. Although collective interest (represented in the imminent need for peace) implied sacrifices, the referendum’s management to popularly endorse the agreements evinced shortfalls in citizens’ understanding of the agreements; additionally, media coverage, permeated by political opposition to the process, led to the majority of the ‘no’ vote. Still, the interest in the agreement’s management persisted, and, via the legislative branch, the final agreement was endorsed after having had some adjustments by the opposition.

## **Domination of processes of instrumental rationality in the organizational structure**

The execution of the PA generated a quantitative twist in order to show progress to the international community and legitimize the process. One of the main forms of legitimation used was quantitative indicators showing numerical management and progress. Although the data and quantified information are significant, its use as the main instrument of legitimation is complex. The P-A implies the management of new organizations and institutions (JEP, Victims’ Unit, Commission for the Clarification of Truth, National Court for Electoral Guarantees, General System of Cadaster Information, Unit for the Search of Disappeared Persons, Special Investigation Unit to dismantle criminal organizations, Agency for Territory Renovation, National Council for Reincorporation, among others), whose tasks call for constant measurement. In fact, each organization’s formality has generated multiple schemes of accountability. The JEP, for instance, systematizes each action in figures, typifying each process in detail (JEP, 2020) and, in turn, keeping management indicators explicitly based on a quantitative version of the facts, such as the number of people helped; also, instrumental rationality allows performing general control of the agreement’s progress. A particular case is the economic compensation allocated to more than eight million registered victims. By the end of 2019, the number of compensated citizens was nearing one million. The law granted ten years to reach the goal, which will probably not be met (Unidad de Víctimas, 2019). Moreover, a large part of the P-A implies the generation of organized spaces or of spaces that are seemingly a ‘correct’ transit of former combatants to civilian life, which frequently occurs through the implementation of entrepreneurial projects that rise as ideological functions intended to steer the production and reproduction of life in rural communities toward the realization of economic activities aimed at the market (Torres, 2020), encoded through instrumental rationality of capital maximization.

Avila and Londoño (2017) invite us to delve into the urban and rural local security and its justice administrations, putting the idea of ‘institutional deficiency’ on the Exhibit. This means

that the instrumental rationality processes, elimination of illegal actors, illicit crops, criminal groups, territorial balance, and local poverty require political will to build financial budgets to resound in safety and social justice.

## Production of consent by the leaders of the peace process

This field of the criticism of the ideology presents legitimation strategies built based on persuasive linguistic and accusation-justification processes (Alvarez & Suarez, 2016). The symbolic capital materialized with the possibility that peacebuilding was not camouflaged. On the contrary, the discourse exaggerated it to get followers and supporters in terms of the decisions. With the PA signed and in operation, the state's military, former combatants of the FARC-EP, victims, and criminals were 'subject' to the institutions deriving from the negotiations between each side of the conflict. Forcibly or willingly, they presented themselves trying to get the best return possible (economic, legal, and discursive). With the defined rules, each person involved had the power to decide to consent.

However, skeptical perspectives of the PA have resulted in dissidents, essentially by some members of the FARC-EP who were against what had been agreed. In a way, the larger the number of people that subject themselves to the institutions, fill their records, and strengthen the indicators, the greater the legitimacy of the process. Meanwhile, the government disseminates its control of the process and goals reached and engages in rhetoric about its efficiency. In this sense, peacebuilding as a political and social project needs and generates multiple forms of organization as means to contribute to peace materialization, in which OS can act as a critical platform of understanding to help build a peace P-A with more public and private management being more aware and engaged with organizational transience that fights for servicing and including each and every social collective.

The fields of criticism of the ideology related to the PA and the P-A contribute to understanding the phenomenon of peace using taxonomies identified in critical theories. "It is very unlikely that organizations may service the complete spectrum of the aspirations of human beings who work in them and that have no connection with performance." (Cruz-Kronfly, 2016, p. 41) Thus, tensions underlying the peace process from the organizational view do not indicate a proper recipe or route to manage a social problem because, given its socio-contextual and political nature, it is mediated by intersubjectivity. However, this analysis surfaces and argues diverse implicit domination structures in the peace process, decisions that follow instrumental reasoning, and multiple examples of underlying ideologies, isomorphisms, and interests. Attune to the PA and the P-A, to which so many people have been involved and due to the many expectations of the process -with the victims in mind-. Is the performance of the process as an organization quantifiable? Is the process delivering for and satisfying social demands? Did managerial knowledge, by action or omission, applied in the peace process take collective construction forward or backward? These questions at the core of the tensions of the PA and the P-A, illustrate the importance of established relationships and enable a horizon of future explorations about the transforming and introductory role of management practices.

## Contribution of communicative action to the management of the PA and the P-A

A vital complement for criticism of the ideology is the identification of the processes of communication, argumentative soundness, its understanding, and veracity to ‘manage’ the peace process per the interests suggested by its executors. Although each stage had different forms of communication, the communication tools used granted enough credibility to execute the process, still, and rescuing the favorability of the process, the discursive changes and “managerial” rhetoric were evident in its execution.

**Exhibit 5.** Approach to the Managerial Rhetoric of the Peace Process

Stage	Communication Tools	Managerial Rhetoric
Secret negotiation between the government and the FARC-EP	Letters Calls	Political acknowledgment of the conflict. Discourse of collective construction of the country. Legal protection as shields to negotiate.
Peace Talks in Havana	Written public announcements Press conferences State propaganda Partial communication of what had been agreed	Search for legitimacy and social acceptance. Strengthening the discourse with international allies. The covenants sought rigorous and coherent communication. Delimiting the information that would be made public.
Execution of the PA	Public debate on the unquestionable application of what had been agreed	Statistic control of the process. Metric indicators as execution references.

It is important to emphasize the discursive uses, changes, and strategies in each stage of the peace process. Contributions to this topic can be found in studies that conducted critical analysis of discourse of addresses related to the PA, which evince approaches to the idea of ‘national identity’ (Aguirre-Pinilla, 2019), analysis of discursive strategies and meaning construction by the opposition to the peace accords (Caicedo-Atehortua, 2016), discourse in the press and communication media (Castañeda, 2014; Rincon, 2016), discourse to discredit the government by the FARC-EP including metalinguistic and meta-rhetoric strategies (Olave, 2016), discursive differences between promoters and detractors of the peace agreement (Pico & Clavijo, 2018), discursive uses of public praise by the government (Olave, 2015), among other discursive devices used by leaders of the process. Therefore, the review of the discursive form, means, sequence, frequency, and strategy used as media communication tools, oral, written, and audiovisual sources, and actors, allowed to participate at any time, show the constant twists and turns of the peace process, which with the help of metaphors, allegories, allusions, ironies, euphemisms, reticence, hyperboles, and repetition, configure an archetype of actions and decisions with which the managerial rhetoric of the peace process has been operated.

Another significant issue of the reproduction of discursive schemes is that they are part of the performance of the organizational context and rise as rhetoric appropriations of the leaders of the peace process, adding sense to the theoretical approaches that defend the social construction of organizations instead of the objectivity of an independent organizational structure. In this sense, the contribution of OS to the PA in Colombia is very important because it opens the door to hindsight in terms of the state's actions and the development of social domination processes based on discourse.

## CONCLUSIONS

This research puts forward innovative and situational analyses of the peace process in Colombia, its agreement, and the social management of its post-agreement based on OS theories. “Between the war that is gone and the peace that fails to come” (García-Duarte, 2018), the potentialities of the critical perspectives of OS for a nominal, situational, and structural understanding of the agreement and post-agreement in Colombia is stressed; nurturing an organizational approach that lacked in the literature, acknowledging the broad organizational practices and contributing to OS boosted in a disciplinary field that is close to the social reality.

The results of this study account for the structure of domination in managing the political and armed conflict that underlies the PA and the P-A and the instrumental reasoning implied in its achievement, in which rhetorical ideologies and strategies develop multifaceted euphemisms in the pursuit of efficient results.

The article also contributes to reflecting the possibilities and potentialities of the field of OS in tackling a complex socio-political phenomenon with historical incidence from the organizations' grid; the epistemic framework of OS is key to arguing reasonings and practices that underlie institutionalized political phenomena. Nevertheless, this contribution is not limited to the field of OS, and it invites transdisciplinary qualifications. The study of the perspectives of criticism of the ideology (naturalization of the social order; universalization of the managerial interest; domination of processes of instrumental reasoning; and production of consent) allowed to identify concrete examples and cases in which political institutionality, materialized in the organizations that lead the PA and the P-A, used traditional management strategies to reach objectives, highlighting the process' absences, disconnections, and particularities. Thus, the studied categories contribute to the literature since these phenomena are traditionally studied in the political and sociological dimensions, disregarding the organizational factors.

Thus, future research may lean toward widening the spectrum of the relationship between OS and the peace process by applying the technique of content analysis, critical analysis of discourse, and generating taxonomies of specific rhetoric and discourses of the transitional organizations created by the PA. A contributing inquiry would be in assessing if the conceptual and technical elements typical of the organizational field that were applied in the peace process played against or in favor of the process' organizational stability.

The most pressing challenges faced by Colombia are the design or (re)structuring of organizational frameworks and public policies effective for the construction of peace in the P-A, which entails generating ideological discourses and devices that are more responsible and aware of the social imbalance of structural nature, to provide social equity and justice in the framework of what has been legally agreed. The dream of peace does not only rest with the victims, but it can also transform the core of the organizations.

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## AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

Juan David Arias Suarez and Vanessa Cano Mejia worked on the theoretical and methodological conceptualization and approach. The theoretical review was conducted by Juan David Arias Suarez and Vanessa Cano Mejia. Data compilation was coordinated by Juan David Arias Suarez and Vanessa Cano Mejia. Data analysis included Juan David Arias Suarez and Vanessa Cano Mejia. The authors worked jointly in writing and reviewing the manuscript.