Women, Violence, and Social Change in Northern Ireland and Chiapas: Societies Between Tradition and Transition

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Violence against women occurs in peacetime, intensifies during wartime, and continues in the aftermath of armed conflict. Women sometimes make gains during conflict and their efforts to break the pattern of violence have led to a greater awareness of gender-based violence. However, a lack of acknowledgement of transformations in gender identity at the macro-level during peace processes may create conflict in intimate partnerships. This study brings to light the complexity of changes occurring during peace processes in a multi-level analysis of women's perceptions and positioning towards the state, their community, and their intimate partnership. This comparative analysis of fifty-seven female activists' narratives from Chiapas and Northern Ireland demonstrates how a one-dimensional peace process (Northern Ireland) can limit the space for addressing women's concerns, while peace processes that transcend the ethno-national dimension of conflict (Chiapas) can open a dialogue on issues of contention in male-female relationships.

My husband was in prison and he is an alcoholic now. And after [he came out of prison] his life has changed quite a lot. Being a woman, an activist and a mother, my life is taking on other roles now. I'm actually a bit of a buffer, you know between the kids and that alcoholism, you know. And it's not even just me; you know that has happened in so many other families too.

Maire, Republican community activist, Northern Ireland[1]

By learning and organizing we are moving forwards. It will never be the same again once you learned new things, once you experienced that you are of great value for the community. Men do not understand all that we have in our heart at once, but bit by bit they also learn and understand.

Odelia, indigenous women's rights activist
from Chol community, Chiapas[2]

Feminist literature on ethno-national conflict often highlights an increase in domestic violence in the aftermath of wars as proof for unequal gender structures in post-conflict developments (Turshen 2001, Alison 2007). Although it is

of great importance to highlight failures of peace processes, it is also important to recognize shifts in beliefs which have occurred during the conflict. Many ethno-national conflicts have included women's voices and brought women's concerns from the private into the public realm (Kampwirth 2004), leading to changes in traditional gender roles and perceptions (Hoewer 2011). This article asks how changes in gender identity occurring during conflict are translated into peace processes and in what way more or less successful translations impact on contention in intimate partnerships. It does so by looking in a comparative fashion at the way in which changes in gender and ethnic identity feature in women's perceptions of the state, the community, and the micro-level (intimate partnerships) of society. The analysis shows that while ethno-national resistance communities have been central spaces for gender and ethnic identity change during conflict, these spaces can become limited depending on the way in which the resis-

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1 Interview, 8 March 2010, Belfast, page 15, line 3ff. In order to comply with research ethics and protect the identity of the participants, all participants' names have been altered.

2 Focus group/workshop organised in collaboration with the peace organisation SERAPAZ and the human rights organisation Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Pedro de la Nada, 13 and 14 July 2010, Ocosingo, Chiapas (Mexico), page 31.

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tance movement reengages with the state in conflict settlement processes. The failure to acknowledge the intersection of changes in ethnic and gender identity precludes a comprehensive understanding of the contentious dynamics in the private sphere after episodes of armed conflict.

The male-female power imbalance is inarguably fundamental to gender-based violence in situations of peace and conflict, though the motivation and meaning of gender-based violence are different in war and peacetime (Pillay 2001, 35ff.). Violence against women during armed conflict is usually reflective of existing pre-conflict patterns of violence (Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf 2002) that are often overlooked in overall studies on ethno-national mobilizations. The neglect of gendered perspectives and experiences of conflict in both academic research and policy-making prevents intimate partner violence and violence prevention from being addressed adequately in peace treaties and in conceptualizations of security in the aftermath of armed conflict.

Historically, gender-based violence has not been addressed adequately in the legal framework of war. The 1949 Geneva Convention and the 1977 Additional Protocol acknowledge sexual violence against women in times of war not as a "grave breach" but only as a "lesser abuse." Only in the 1990s was violence against women acknowledged as a distinct war crime by the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (1993) and for Rwanda (1994). Additionally, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (2002) recognizes sexual violence as a war crime and a crime against humanity. Global grassroots and transnational initiatives on women's rights and gender equality have been instrumental in addressing violence against women and in bringing the issue into policy agendas in the 1990s, particularly evident at the Fourth World Conference of Women in Beijing (1995) and in the 1994 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. An important shift in the international agenda acknowledging the different experiences men and women have during conflict occurred in 2000, when the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security was passed, followed by Resolutions 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960. This new international framework on women, peace, and security highlights the need to protect women from violence. Moreover, it calls for the inclusion of women and their different gendered experiences and perspectives in political decision-making (United Nations Security Council 2013). By doing so, the framework acknowledges women's agency and emphasizes the importance of women's participation in connection with ending gender-based violence as central elements of peace-building.

However, despite the advancing international discourse on addressing gender-based violence against women, both in general and in situations of armed conflict, many questions remain regarding how women's perspectives are addressed in the aftermath of armed conflict. In particular, it is important to understand which processes and structures contribute to an increase in intimate partner violence post-conflict and when conflict empowers women to refuse to accept violence from partners.

Studies of domestic and sexual violence in the transition from conflict to peace (UNHCR 2007; Oosterfeld 1996) fulfil the important purpose of bringing women and women's issues onto the agenda. However, they conflate women and children into a single category (Freedman 2012, 124) and portray women as silent victims or survivors of abuse. The focus on sexual violence has a disempowering function as it fails to take into consideration women's agency and changes in gender and ethnic identity developed during conflict.

Academic literature often highlights the way ethno-national movements fail to value women's contribution to the struggle in the aftermath of armed conflict, which sees the return of conventional conceptions of femininity, masculinity, and gender relations (Yuval-Davis 1997; Yuval Davis and Anthias 1989), a backlash against women's "newfound freedoms" (Meintjes, Pillay, and Turshen 2001, 12), and the intensification of violence against women. Post-conflict strategizing about gender based violence is left to non-governmental women's agencies, and the training of new police forces, the development of a new judiciary and of a new criminal code typically ignore women's perspectives and perpetuate the presumption that masculinized violence is natural (Enloe 2002). To address violent gender patterns in a holistic way, we need to understand

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the way in which the construction of nationhood involves specific notions of both "manhood" and "womanhood" (Yuval Davis 1997, 1). However, we also need to acknowledge that ethno-national conflict often also leads to changes in social norms and ethno-national identity that encourage violence against women through the inclusion of women and demands for women's rights into ethno-national protest agendas (Kampwirth 2004; Hoewer 2011).

Collective identity narratives from Northern Ireland and Chiapas reveal that ethno-national conflicts, in the sense of social mobilization processes based on the triggering of ethno-national solidarity and demands for group rights,[3] provide a space for breaking patterns of gender-based violence by constructing new gender images though the active participation of women in those processes. However, those same changes collide with the masculinized legacy of war that often determines peace processes at the macro-level of society.

This article sets out to bring to light the complexity of changes in both perceptions and positioning of women in peace and conflict processes, and in particular to contribute a deeper understanding of the connection between the peace process in the public sphere (state and community) and its impact on intimate partnerships. It examines the way in which changes in women's perceptions and positioning during armed conflict have been translated into peace processes, by analyzing female activists' stories of peace in Northern Ireland and in Chiapas. These reveal the extent to which a failure to acknowledge changes in gender perceptions in policy-making creates conflict in intimate relationships in the aftermath of armed conflict.

1. Methodology

This article presents findings from a research project on gendered perspectives of identity change during episodes of ethno-national conflict and in conflict settlement processes in Chiapas and Northern Ireland (Hoewer 2011),

which received ethical approval of the Human Research Ethics Committee at University College Dublin.

I position myself as a female academic activist from a white western background and a strong advocate of social justice and human rights, in particular women's rights. Based on my awareness of my own background, I acknowledge my otherness regards my ethno-national identity, my class, my age, my sexual orientation, my experiences et cetera in comparison to the female activists from Chiapas and Northern Ireland. I met many of the female activists who took part in this research while working on peace, human rights, and social justice projects in Chiapas (July 2002 to December 2002 and October 2004 to June 2005) and in Ireland (Republic and Northern Ireland; ongoing since 2005). The snowball method was used in order to enlarge the sample. I contacted all participants personally; before the interview, I informed them about the study and its aims and obtained their written informed consent. I was the only person who extracted themes from the data.

The qualitative approach of this project facilitates an "in-depth understanding of historical processes and individual motivation" (della Porta 2008, 202) through the analysis of semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions on the ways in which women became involved in social movements and on the meaning of this involvement for them provided for the inclusion of maximum variety. The length of the interviews and focus groups, all of which I conducted, transcribed, and translated, varies from one hour to a focus group discussion organized as a two day workshop.

The different circumstances in Chiapas and Northern Ireland required different field research approaches; while the field research in Northern Ireland focused on field observation and the organization of individual interviews, the data gathering process in Chiapas additionally included two focus groups organized as active participative workshops

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3   For a more detailed definition of ethno-national conflict see for instance: *John Coakley, Nationalism, Ethnicity and the State: Making and Breaking Nations* (London: Sage, 2012); Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage, 1997).

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with and for female indigenous human rights, peace, and women's rights activists. The first workshop was rather informal and lasted five hours, the second was organized as a two day-event in collaboration with the peace organisation SERAPAZ and the Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada human rights centre, and with the support of the women's rights centre Centro de los Derechos de la Mujer de Chiapas. It enabled women from Zapatista communities to participate in the research without jeopardizing their own safety and the safety of their communities. Challenges in organizing the focus groups included high illiteracy levels among indigenous female participants, most of whom have not learned to read or write, and the practical and methodological problem of choosing a common language for the workshop.[4] We addressed the "language problem" by using indigenous interpreters and ensured that both languages, Tseltal and Spanish, were given the same space. In order to avoid the written word within the workshop, we focused on visual and oral methods such as art work and the theatre of the oppressed (Boal 1979). Both the art work (a mapping exercise) and the development of theatre plays were based on facilitated story-telling sessions; they were followed by discussions of both process and outcome (visual maps and theatre plays).

Both interviews and focus groups enabled female activists to share their story as member of a social movement, to connect their experiences of womanhood and of being part of a socioeconomic and culturally marginalized community. Their collective identity narratives (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004) reveal the ways in which ethnic and gender identity change in conflict situations, and the impact these changes have on women's everyday lives during conflict settlement processes in Northern Ireland and Chiapas.

1.1. Case Study Approach

A two-case comparative historical study, examining the intersection of formation and change in gender and ethnic identity during different episodes of mobilisation and demobilization processes in Chiapas and Northern Ireland, allows maximum variance along relevant dimensions (gender and ethnic identity) and exploration of the different ways in which those dimensions intersect in episodes of peace and conflict.. Comparing Chiapas and Northern Ireland provides cases with different contexts but which follow similar mechanisms of mobilisation and demobilization (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), but lead to different outcomes.

The Northern Ireland conflict has witnessed a longer duration of violent confrontation and a greater number of casualties, over 3,500 deaths since the start of the Troubles in 1969.[5] By comparison, the Chiapas conflict began on 1 January 1994 with twelve days of intense violence, which led to between 145 (official government figure) and 1,000 deaths[6] (according to the Zapatistas) and continuing tension between the Zapatista movement and the Mexican Government, often described as "low intensity war", after the failed settlement between Zapatistas and government post-1997. Although armed resistance organizations developed in both cases, the size, tactic, and aims of the organizations during the mobilisation phase differed. In both cases, armed ethno-national resistance arose out of previous episodes of contention with a social justice focus (the Zapatista movement out of the land rights struggle in Chiapas and the post-1969 Republican mobilisation in Northern Ireland out of the civil rights movement), and in parallel to different women's activisms. The implementation of a negotiated agreement has been successful in Northern Ireland, while in Chiapas the peace agreement was only partially implemented and central issues remain unsolved. Although mediation and negotiation processes took place in both cases, the terms of the agreements differ: while the peace process in Northern Ireland centres on the establishment of a power-sharing government, recognition of indigenous autonomy and the reversal of neoliberal socio-economic processes are at the centre of the peace

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negotiations in Chiapas. Furthermore, the different geographical location of the two cases leads to a distinct impact of the regional and international sphere. However, both cases share a history of colonization and the development of a settler society, although Northern Ireland and Chiapas vary significantly with regard to ethno-national cleavages, levels of marginalization, and culture.

This research does not attempt to present a representative sample of contemporary peace and conflict processes, but aims to expand theories to reach an analytical, rather than a statistical generalization (Yin 1984, 21). Even though Chiapas and Northern Ireland are only two specific cases, we can draw interesting lessons from the way women engage in, and are affected by, similar mechanisms in different contexts.

1.2. Participants' Characteristics

Interviews with seventeen female activists from Northern Ireland were conducted in Belfast and Derry in February and March 2010. In Chiapas, I conducted interviews with twenty-two female activists and organised two focus group discussions (one with fifteen and one with five) in San Cristobal de las Casas, in Ocosingo in the Altos (mountain) region, and in a small village in the Selva (rain forest) region from June to August 2010. Due to access constraints, all participants from Northern Ireland came from an urban background, while in Chiapas the sample includes fifteen mestiza ("mixed race") women from a mainly urban background and twenty-seven female indigenous activists from rural communities. The length of the interviews varied from one hour to focus-group discussions organized as two-day workshop sessions. I conducted all interviews in English and Spanish and translated them. In the focus groups, indigenous translators were used to interpret from Tzeltal (indigenous language) into Spanish.

In Northern Ireland, the sample included members of the civil rights movement (1967/68), the Republican movement (from 1969), and various women's rights initiatives

(post-1968/69). My research in Chiapas is informed by female activists from various peasants' organizations,[7] women's organizations,[8] and peace and human rights organizations.[9] Although it was not possible to conduct interviews in autonomous Zapatista communities due to the political tensions at the time, twenty female activists who participated in this research identified as "Zapatistas".

In order to facilitate comparison, the research includes only narratives of women who have been actively involved in social mobilisation processes against unequal power structures. However, women's experiences of conflict and peace cannot be seen in isolation from men's experiences and, indeed of other women not actively involved in mobilisation processes. The choice was informed by time and resource constraints and guided by the research question, which asked about changes in social positioning and perceptions of women during social mobilization processes and in the post-conflict period.

1.3. Data Analysis

Description, analysis, and interpretation (Wolcott 1994) were at the core of the analysis of the qualitative research data gathered during the field research. The descriptive approach allows the women's voices to speak for themselves and the women to actively engage in producing meaning for the roles and positions they occupy (Skeggs 1994, 2). In the second stage, the data analysis, common themes in the narratives were identified and systematized. This research inductively ascertains the principles of classification and identification that inform the different ways in which the research participants make sense of themselves and their environment. In other words, it examines how the research participants ascribe value and meaning to the different social identity categories, how they draw the boundaries between "us" and "other" through the analysis of both the content of ethnic, gender, and other boundaries and the interrelation of those different boundary processes.

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7   including CIOAC (Central Independiente de Obreros Agrícolas y Campesinos), UNORCA (Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas), and the ARIC-independiente (Asociación Rural de Interés Colectivo)

8   including Centro de los Derechos de la Mujer de Chiapas and the Diocesan Commission for Woman (CODIMUJ) in San Cristobal de las Casas

9   including SERAPAZ and the Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Pedro Lorenzo de la Nada, both located in Ocosingo

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2. Findings from the Interviews

All participants were asked to talk about themselves, the way they got involved in different social movements, and what this involvement meant to them. The following section provides a short introduction to the different contexts followed by a presentation of the content of the collective identity narratives from Northern Ireland and Chiapas. It concludes with an analysis of central similarities and differences evolving from the narratives in a comparative fashion.

2.1. Post-conflict Contention in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland's latest episode of armed conflict began in 1969, after the civil rights mobilizations, and officially ended with the Good Friday Agreement (Belfast Agreement), signed in Belfast on 10 April 1998 (Good Friday) by the British and Irish governments and endorsed by most Northern Ireland political parties. However, the region has a long history of ethno-national conflict, which reaches back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is based on contentious "systems of relationships" that produced "a set of differences, a structure of dominance, dependence and inequality and a tendency towards communal division" (Ruane and Todd 1996, 144–45). Both symbolic differences and unequal power structures are at the same time of ethno-national, class and gendered nature. The position of women in Northern Ireland is entangled with both religious and national identity (Ryan and Ward 2004), central lines of division run between Catholics (Irish – Nationalist – Republican) and Protestants (British – Unionist – Loyalist).

2.1.1. Transformed Gender Images and Resistance to Change in Intimate Partnerships

As former IRA volunteers, both Aoibhin, a former IRA activist and community activist, and her husband have served time in prison, but this experience has shaped their lives differently. Aoibhin believes that while women moved on after leaving the prison environment, men who have been interned for many years face challenges in settling back into society. Men expect to return to the normality they knew before the conflict, which requires women to fall back into their traditional pre-conflict role: to stay home, raise the children, and make the tea. But Aoibhin does not want to go back to her traditional role; her normality has changed during the conflict. Balancing her time between a full-time job, her community activism, and her family is difficult for Aoibhin. However, her role in the community has strengthened her self-confidence and independence and changed her self-perception as a woman.

Like Aoibhin, all respondents who became actively involved in social movements during the conflict in Northern Ireland cherish the independence and empowerment they gained through their involvement. However, many of them (9 of 17), in particular women who are actively involved in their community, reveal in their narratives that many men perceive those changes in gender perceptions and gender roles as threatening. Female activists (7 of 17) report that their active involvement in the community had required adjustments in the home; the different experiences, perceptions, and expectations of men and women make it hard for a marriage to survive in the post-1998 period. Many marriages break down, as women are not prepared to return to the pre-conflict status quo and to their traditional roles as wives and mothers within the home. Like Aoibhin, many respondents (7 of 17) highlight that men do not cope well with the changes in their private life. A new normality for women, visible in changing gender roles and perceptions, has been described as a central characteristic of the turbulences of the post-conflict environment in Northern Ireland. The absence of appropriate mechanisms for addressing experiences and changes during conflict leads to behaviours detrimental to health. Many collective identity narratives refer to post-conflict alcohol problems of men and contentious intimate relationships as symptoms of both "the invisible wounds people get through the struggle" but also of the "unresolved issue of gender inequality".[10]

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10 Interview, 26 March 2010, Belfast, page 3, lines 25/26, page 5, lines 10–14, page 9, line 13, page 10, line 15.

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When outlining the challenges resulting from the contentious intimate relationships, respondents express concerns about the increase in domestic abuse and in the workload of women (5 of 17). They emphasize that despite the increasing involvement of women in the public sphere, household duties and childcare remain predominantly the responsibility of women. While two female activists refer to slow changes, evident in some husbands taking on more tasks in the home, they also speak of other men reacting with violence to changes in the private realm.

Women often refer to traditional gender images when highlighting the division of public-male and private-female sphere, such as: "Women staying at home, making the dinner, and raising the children, while men bring in the salary and make decisions in the community."[11] Those traditional images still inform policy-making in Northern Ireland; they penetrate and compete with changes all interview participants experienced in gender perceptions and in their roles at both the community and the micro-level. The competition between old and new gender images becomes visible in an increase in hostility to those changes.

2.1.2. Gendered Structures and Symbolic Boundaries in the Public Sphere

In the course of the peace process, the perception of the state has changed for most activists who fought against the Northern Irish state (9 of 17); they describe the new situation as liberating as they do no longer have to hide or fight for their Irishness. Within this context, the meaning of security for many women has shifted from concerns about the survival of the community to emphasizing socio-economic inequality, domestic violence, and the struggle for gender equality within and beyond the borders of the community. Many activists (12 of 17) report that the start of the peace process opened different spaces for addressing women's concerns, in a changing political environment marked by the ceasefires and increased self-confidence of

women and awareness about women's issues. For all female Republican respondents, a new feeling of communality marked the first episode of the peace process, a grey zone in which compromises could be found based on the respect and equal acceptance of individuals from different sides of the divide. In order to "make peace work, Republican women moved out of their comfort zone (…), from the black and white us versus them [to an] us and them"[12] perception of Northern Irish society. Women from Republican communities now had the possibility to highlight "women's demands" in their activism. This connected them to women with similar demands outside their community boundary and allowed alliances to be built with women across the divide. Their shared aim was to include women's voices and experiences in a meaningful way in the peace process. For Bairbre, a feminist women's rights activist it was "a moment in time where people felt that this might work".[13] Evidence for this perception was found in the coming together of grassroots women with what she describes as "more traditional women's groups"[14] to create a women' party for the peace talks, the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC).[15]

However, the reaffirmation of the ethno-national boundary in the formal peace talks (1996–98) shifted the emphasis away from women's issues, increased divisions between women, and hence limited those opportunities. According to Niamh, a feminist Republican community activist:

> The start of the peace process would have been the kind of chance [to] start combining feminism and Republicanism more actively. (…) The priority here was always the war, the military movement and I felt like I wasn't part of the movement. But at the start of the peace process my feminism and my Republicanism finally came together. And then what happened was that Sinn Fein were excluded from the talks, so my campaign then became, to get Sinn Fein at the talks, not even around what they were going to do in the talks, but just even to get them there. So, my demands got really reduced there.[16]

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11   Interview, 8 March, page 7, line 6 ff. Visible also in other interviews with female community activists, conducted on 8, 9, 24, 26, 30 March, and 7 May, 2010.

12   Interview, 7 May 2010, Belfast, page 5, lines 38/39, page 24, lines 32/33, 39/40.

13   Interview, 30 March 2010, Belfast, page 18, lines 28–31.

14   Interview, 30 March 2010, Belfast, page 14, lines 14–16

15   The NIWC promoted "inclusion, equality, and human rights" and involved women from both sides of the ethno-national divide. See: Kate Fearon, *Women's Work: The Story of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1999).

16   Interview, 24 March 2010, Belfast, page 2, line 3ff.

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All of the respondents identifying as part of the Republican movement (11 of 17) feel a sense of entitlement to leadership positions as they secured the survival of their communities during the conflict. However, some women actively involved in the community sector (5 of 11) feel that men returning to the community after imprisonment started to compete with them for leadership positions and paid community jobs. Aideen, a community activist, says:

> If you look at any of the community groups they started from volunteers, from women volunteering whether it was a playgroup, putting a playgroup together and doing a wee summer scheme, having a Christmas party or whatever. They got bigger and bigger, but as soon as funding came, money being paid, (…) men came in and took those positions.[17]

While contention in the private realm during the peace process features prominently in the narratives of women involved in social mobilization processes in Northern Ireland, collective identity stories from Chiapas highlight this process as space for finding ways of resolving the conflict in the private sphere.

2.2. Tangible Transformations in Chiapas

The uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) in Chiapas on 1 January 1994 brought to light the marginalization of indigenous culture in Mexican nationalism and Mexico's settler society, which are dominated by the mestizos and culture of mestizaje.[18] After a short period of armed conflict, the peace accords of San Andres signed by representatives of the EZLN and of the Mexican government on 16 February 1996 granted autonomy, recognition, and rights to the indigenous population of Mexico – but were never fully implemented by the Mexican state. Women's concerns, in particular those of indigenous women, featured prominently during the conflict, in the negotiation process, and in the post-agreement

episode, evident in the institutionalization of the Revolutionary Women's Law,[19] discriminating between "good" and "bad" community traditions.[20] The period after the peace negotiation is marked by the absence of armed confrontation between the EZLN and governmental forces, the increased institutionalization of indigenous autonomy (Leyva Solano and Burguete Cal y Mayor 2007), and the continuing development of international Zapatismo (Olesen 2005), as an alliance between indigenous, mestiza, and global Zapatista activists. Further, the period after the agreement in 1996 was marked by violence on the one side, for instance the violent attack by right wing paramilitaries on the Christian pacifist group Las Abejas in Acteal in 1997 (FRAYBA 1998; SIPAZ 2009), and by peaceful protest, such as the march for indigenous dignity in 2001.

2.2.1. Transformed Gender Perceptions and Intimate Partnerships

Marga, an indigenous women's rights and Zapatista activist, feels that her relationship to her husband has changed significantly as result of the Zapatista mobilization. Having escaped the indigenous tradition of forced marriage as a young girl by joining the Zapatista movement, she believes that her personal progress is intertwined with the changes in her father's and husband's gender perceptions. She describes the process of her husband adapting to her changed gender images in their intimate partnership as challenging; first he was unfaithful and beat her when she complained about his "macho lifestyle".[21] However, the gender equality rule in the Zapatista movement made it easier for changes in gender images and structures to become a part of normality, and her work on women's rights provided her with the strength to stand up to her husband. Through dialogue they were able to address contentious issues and create a power balance in their relationship; her husband is no longer violent and fears most that she sees him as too uneducated and will leave him.

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17 Interview, 8 March, Belfast, page 6, lines 1–6.

18 Mestizaje is the process of racial and cultural miscegenation which began during the Spanish conquest; about 90 percent of the Mexican population is now considered *mestizo* (Gutierrez 1995, 161).

19 The Revolutionary Women's Law of 1993 comprises ten demands, including the right of indigenous women to political participation and leadership positions, the right to a life free of sexual and

domestic violence, the right to decide how many children to have and to raise, the right to a fair salary, the right to choose a marriage partner, and the right to good health and education services. For further details see: Shannon Speed, R. Aída Hernández Castillo, and Lynn M. Stephen , eds., *Dissident Women: Gender and Cultural Politics in Chiapas* (Austin: University of Texas, 2006), 3ff. It was expanded to thirty-one demands in 1996. Lutz Ker-

keling, *La Lucha Sigue! EZLN – Ursachen und Entwicklungen des Zapatistischen Aufstands* (Münster: UNRAST, 2003), 148.

20 The meaning of tradition as used in this article evolved from the perspectives of the interview participants.

21 Interview, 17 July 2010, San Cristobal de las Casas, page 7, lines 18/19.

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Carmen, an indigenous women's rights and Zapatista activist, feels that the relationship with her husband has been transformed from one dominated by violence into one based on "calmness and understanding".[22] Her husband now understands that Carmen is her own person and not his property. She describes how their relationship improved once he began to support her and help with housework and childcare when she went to training sessions and community events. Carmen refers to a better understanding amongst men for the situation of women and their needs as a central outcome of their involvement in the Zapatista movement and of her women's rights work.

Many indigenous activists (19 of 27) say that contention arose initially in private relationships as indigenous men were caught between old, male-dominated, and new, transformed community traditions. They highlight challenges for men in adapting to these changes; transformed community traditions "take power and control away" from men as they aim for gender equality and make violence against women a crime, and for instance "beating women to educate them" an inappropriate behaviour.[23] That way they reflect a changed normality. While many accounts of change in women's positioning and perceptions (referred to by 12 of 27 respondents) reveal male anxiety, confusion, and lack of self-confidence, women also mention an increased "understanding" among men of the need to change community traditions that support gender-based violence.[24] For instance, whereas indigenous men carrying their children was considered inappropriate in the public domain before the social mobilization process, it now forms a part of the new post-conflict normality. This is particularly true of Zapatista communities, where men taking care of their offspring while their wives perform public duties has become a part of normal community life.[25]

The reported improvement in male-female intimate relationships evolves from an increase in dialogue on changing community traditions and gender roles encouraged by the Zapatista movement in many indigenous communities.[26] In the private realm this dialogue fosters an understanding between husbands and wives of their different experiences, and of changes in gender roles. For many female activists, men's understanding of women's changed perceptions of their role in the community and in the family is central to the transformation and reconstruction of male-female relationships. Within this context, it is seen as essential for men to acknowledge that the traditional positioning of men and women in society is unequal and unjust. The post conflict dialogue between men and women on community traditions has helped many women to transform their relationships with their husbands.

2.2.2. Gendered Structures and Symbolic Boundaries in the Public Sphere

A re-engagement with the state in the peace negotiations (1995–96) and in the dialogue with the PAN (Party of National Action) government of President Vicente Fox in 2001 has led to a national dialogue on indigenous peoples' autonomy and strengthened women's belief in the peaceful transformation of unequal power structures. Indigenous women are proud about leading the way and feel encouraged in their activism for women's gender interests by the support of both male and female comrades. Many indigenous women (20 of 27) feel that the new forms of women's participation are stepping stones on the way to greater gender, ethnic, and class equality. In order to overcome remaining distinctions, such as mestiza (mixed race)/ indigenous, Zapatista/non-Zapatista, women feel that they need these distinctions first to be acknowledged. "Being aware of where women come from"[27] is important when working with and for other women. New community rules or traditions highlight the increasing role of men in the

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22 Interview, 28 June 2010, San Cristobal de las Casas.

23 Interview, 17 June 2010, Ocosingo, page 11, lines 22/23.

24 For instance Marga's interview, 17 July 2010, San Cristobal de las Casas, page 7, lines 18/19, but also the focus group discussions held in a community in the Selva region (which cannot be named

due for security reasons), 7 July 2010, and in Ocosingo, 13 and 14 July 2010.

25 Interviews with female community activists, San Cristobal de las Casas, 28 June and 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 July; focus group discussions in the Selva region, 7 July 2010; focus group discussions in Ocosingo,13 and 14 July 2010.

26 Interviews with female community activists, San Cristobal de las Casas, 28 June and 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 July; focus group discussions in the Selva region, 7 July 2010; focus group discussions in Ocosingo,13 and 14 July 2010.

27 Interview with Cristina, mestiza community and women's rights activist, 19 July 2010, San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas.

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home and of women in community leadership; intimate partner violence is prosecuted as a criminal act that disturbs the internal peace of the community.[28] Reflecting on the time before their active involvement in social mobilization processes, Marga and many other indigenous women often refer to their lives being dominated by bad traditions, which lead to them being triply discriminated: as female, indigenous, and poor.[29] They distinguish the bad traditions from new ones enshrined in the Revolutionary Women's Law and its principles. Bad traditions include the idea that the woman is property of the man and his family, as evident in the practice of selling girls into marriage. Another aspect of such bad community rules is control of the woman through the use of violence, in the community and in particular in the private setting.

3. Absent Adaptations and Transparent Transitions in Peace Processes: A Comparative Perspective

Changes in self-identification of female activists and in their positioning towards the state, the community, and the home are revealed in the understanding of normality in their narratives. The comparative analysis of collective identity narratives from Northern Ireland and Chiapas provide interesting insights into the way identity change and structural change during ethno-national conflict are translated into post-conflict processes. Comparing the two cases in a multi-levelled analysis reveals how peace processes at the macro-level of society impact on intimate partner relations and illustrates in particular how the absence of the acknowledgement of changes in gender identity at the macro-level of peace processes can lead to contentious male-female relationships and to an increase in intimate partner violence.

3.1. The Peace Process in the Private Realm

In their narratives, women from Northern Ireland and Chiapas reveal how the political peace process at the macro level impacts on their private lives. In both cases, changed female self-perceptions compete with remaining traditional male-dominated gender concepts at the macro-level of

political decision-making. However, the two cases differ in the way this competition is addressed and consequently in the distinct impact those changes have on intimate male-female relationships.

In Northern Ireland, political decision-making is dominated by the perspectives of those men who directly participated in the conflict and marked by the underrepresentation of the experiences women share of structural and physical violence associated with the armed conflict and its aftermath (Gallagher, Hamber, and Joy 2012, 71). The focus on the regulation of ethnic distinctions in the power-sharing peace agreement limits the space to address issues of gender-based violence; more specifically it fails to address the increasing number of family disruptions and intimate partner violence within the home, which are linked to the lack of reconciling "violent conflict masculinities" (Hamber 2007; Hamber et al. 2006). Statistics for domestic violence show a dramatic increase since the signing of the peace agreement; domestic incidents increased from 5,900 in 1985 to 15,500 in 2003 (PSNI 2003). The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI 2012) reports that in March 2012 the number of incidents of domestic abuse reached its highest level since the data series was instituted in 2004/2005; the latest figure of 25,196 for 2012 is 11.1 percent higher than in 2010/11 and 20.2 percent higher than in 2004/2005. The rise in domestic violence could be attributable to increases in reporting due to women having a stronger feeling of entitlement to assert their rights. However, domestic violence remains underreported as judicial procedures are expensive and difficult (Women's Aid Federation NI, 2009, as cited in Ward 2009). Lessons learned from recent work on women, peace, and security with grassroots or community activists in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland include major concerns about increasing levels of domestic violence particularly affecting younger women and about the reluctance to report such crimes (Kilmurray 2013). The lack of space to address contention in the private realm further con-

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28 Interviews with female community activists, San Cristobal de las Casas, 28 June and 2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 17, 19 July; focus group discussions in Ocosingo,13 and 14 July 2010.

29 See for instance interviews with indigenous community activists in Ocosingo, 17 June and 9 July 2010.

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tributes to an increase in self-inflicted violence visible in the number of male suicides. Between 1999 and 2008, suicide rates in Northern Ireland rose by 64 percent, the majority of suicide deaths in 2010 were males aged between 15 and 34, and a total of 240 male deaths as a result of suicide were registered in comparison to 73 female deaths (Gallagher, Hamber, and Joy 2012). The competition between the traditional image of hegemonic masculinity and new gender images is central to the contention in intimate partnerships between men and women at the private level of society; this becomes visible in challenges in the re-integration of male prisoners into their families and leads to an increase in contention and violence in intimate relationships post 1998. This leaves female activists halfway between aspirations for changed gender relationships and remaining unresolved gender inequalities.

In contrast to Northern Ireland, the macro-level peace process in Chiapas is informed by male and female perspectives and has opened spaces for the transformation of traditional gender images at the micro-level. This is visible not only in the way indigenous women have challenged community traditions that promote a masculine power structure based on the submission of women (Olivera Bustamante 2004), but also in structural changes in indigenous community traditions that take account of these changes. For instance marriage rituals obliging girls aged 11 or 12 marry often older men without their consent or the perception of violence against women as a form of education (Roman Motero 2004) are now outlawed in Zapatista communities, institutionalizing this change in perception. More significantly, the institutionalization of changed gender perceptions was based on a dialogue between men and women of the Zapatista movement, led by indigenous women (Kampwirth 2004; Lovera and Palomo 1997; Stephen 2001). The dialogue about the transformation of community traditions has resulted in men gaining a better understanding of the private realm from a female point of view, which has reduced violence in intimate male-female relationships (Hernandez Castillo 1998, 128–29).

3.2. The Peace Process in the Public Sphere
Periods of armed conflict in Northern Ireland and Chiapas have opened spaces for changing gender identity and socie-

tal gender roles. However, the ways those changes are addressed in the conflict settlement process distinguishes the two cases. The space that official peace processes between resistance movements and the state provide to include women's voices determines the way changes in gender identity becomes manifest at the community level and how they are adapted or contested in women's private realms.

In both cases, the peace process initially created new opportunities for including women's concerns, experiences, and perspectives. In Northern Ireland this is visible in the successful intervention of the Women's Agenda for Peace in Republican communities and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC). However, the women's role in the peace negotiations shifted from being agents of change to being mediators (NIWC) and supporters (Republican feminists) of ethno-national difference. The reaffirmation of the ethnic boundary in official peace negotiations and the power-sharing peace agreement has subjugated women's concerns to the conservative ethno-national political agendas. Those agendas of the post-agreement phase are determined by images of ethno-nationalism focusing on the aggressive defence of community rights (Ashe 2007) and are based on "sexism and the side-lining of women and alternative political approaches" (Ashe 2012, 234). The male monopoly in both nationalist/Republican and Unionist/Loyalist politics has resulted in weak representation for women in political decision-making in Northern Ireland (Galligan, Ward, and Wilford 1999); after the 2011 election, women hold 19 percent of seats in the regional parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, an increase from 12 percent in 1998. Further, members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition faced aggressive behaviour by male representatives and were described by some male politicians as "time-wasters" or "silly women" (Hinds 2009). In addition to the small number of female representatives in political decision-making, gender inequality remains endemic in the police service, where female officers are often referred to as the "shopping squad" (Hinds 2009).

Whereas power-sharing between the two conflicting ethno-national groups dominated the peace talks in Northern Ireland, the redefinition of power structures between the

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centre of mestizo power and the indigenous people at the margins of Mexican society, but also between men and women, were at the heart of the peace talks in Chiapas. By promoting new gender images informed by women's experiences and demands, the Zapatista movement and its supporters challenged traditional gender images, marked by violent and aggressive behaviour of men, at the macro-level of society. The high visibility of female indigenous commanders at the public peace process re-produces the paradox of the "power of the powerless" (Huffschmid 2004, 275) and penetrates the gendered image of the nation (Yuval Davis 1997) by bringing indigenous women's rights and liberation into the national debate.

By including discussions about the understanding of democracy, intersectional inequalities, and women's rights, the peace agenda in Chiapas was multifaceted. This situation is different from Northern Ireland, where the peace process was mainly one-dimensional and centred on the ethno-national divide. While ethno-national key stakeholders in Northern Ireland became part of the power-sharing government, the Zapatista movement disengaged the Mexican state after the failure of the peace agreement. The creation of an autonomous, self-sufficient, self-governing structure, the caracoles, provided an alternative to existing state structures.[30] As part of this process, the activism agenda has broadened post-agreement; the Zapatista movement has become one of the main actors in the national and global "netwar" (Ronfeld et al. 1998) for social justice and against the "dysfunctions of neo-liberalism" (Olesen 2005).

The different positioning of women within the macro-level peace processes in Northern Ireland and Chiapas has impacted the way changes in gender identity have been manifested at the community level of society in the two regions. In Northern Ireland, the role of Republican women in community activism has changed; although they remain active, leadership positions are increasingly taken up by men. Further, gender interests are often deprioritized

by community leaders, evident for instance in Sinn Fein's support for a DUP (Democratic Unionist Party) motion against the extension of the 1967 British Abortion Act to Northern Ireland in 2007 (Northern Ireland Assembly 2007; Sinn Fein 2007).

While women in Republican communities in Northern Ireland face challenges, the presence of women and feminist demands are making progress in Zapatista communities in Chiapas. This progress is connected with two central aspects: an expanding of the Zapatista activism agenda from local (indigenous rights) to global demands (anti-neoliberalism) and the ongoing development of indigenous autonomy. Indigenous feminist demands, such as the "parity or duality of men and women" (Marcos 2005, 89ff.) or the changing of harmful community traditions promoting violence against women (Lovera and Palomo 1999, 59–60, Kerkeling 2003, 151ff.) are enshrined in the Revolutionary Women's Law, which forms part of the new community rules. Indigenous women continue to play an important role in the Zapatista autonomous structure in the period after the peace negotiations. As result of the 50 percent quota in the autonomous government structures, the number of women represented in community leadership increased (K'inal Antzetik 1995; Millán Moncayo 2006).

In both cases, contentious intimate relationships in the private realm reveal difficulties in the adaption to changes in women's perceptions of themselves and of their role in society. However, while the space for addressing micro-level concerns was restricted by the one-dimensional macro-level peace process in Northern Ireland, post-conflict dynamics in the public sphere in Chiapas created a space for dialogue on issues of contention in male-female relationships.

4. Conclusions

The comparative analysis of female activists' collective identity narratives from Chiapas and from Northern Ire-

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30 The so called "caracoles" as the regional coordination of the autonomous Zapatista communities, and in particular the Juntas de Buen Gobierno (JBG) as their formal representation, are organized as basis democracy, including a 50/50 gender quota, providing an alternative to the male-dominated, top-down macro-level power structures of the Mexican state.

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land has shown that conflict provides opportunities for change in societal gender roles and a reduction in violence against women. It contributes to breaking down essentialist notions of ethno-national conflict (Yuval Davis 1997) and brings to light the centrality of the dynamics of peace talks in those processes in the public sphere that impact on the private realm. By doing so it offers a deeper understanding of reasons for and the consequences of the neglect of the private sphere in political decision-making in the aftermath of armed conflict.

In both cases, ethno-national conflict provided opportunities to change gender identity and societal gender roles. The inclusion of women in ethno-national resistance movements has shifted beliefs, ideas, values, and speech that promote male domination and superiority and female subordination and "secondariness" (Rowbotham 1983, 27); further it has challenged male-dominated national discourses on "women's place and role" (Sideris 2001, 145). However, the post-agreement processes in Northern Ireland and Chiapas differ in the way in which those changes are translated into peace processes, resulting in different outcomes for women in the period after the peace agreement. Political decision-making processes in Northern Ireland allow only limited space for the inclusion of women and their demands; this leads to increased contention in intimate male-female relationships and violence against women. On the other hand, in Chiapas the space for addressing concerns of gender-based violence and gender inequality widened during and after the peace talks, which allowed the different perceptions of men and women to be addressed more effectively; this in turn leads to a reduction of violence.

Two central aspects distinguish the two post-agreement episodes: firstly the space provided during the peace talks for including women and addressing gender-based violence or the dimensionality of the peace agenda. Secondly, the proximity of ethno-national resistance movements to the conservative macro-level of society, which is traditionally dominated by conservative images of hegemonic masculinities. In Chiapas, the demands discussed at the peace table were of a multidimensional nature, connecting the local dimension (land rights, indigenous rights, and indigenous autonomy) to the global fight against neoliberalism

(Olesen 2005); this allowed for the inclusion of women's demands and prevented the privatization of sexual violence in the aftermath of the armed conflict. In contrast, the focus in Northern Ireland on the ethno-national dimension of conflict fails to include women's voices and demands (Ashe 2012), which reinforces the private nature of sexual violence. Further, in Chiapas the indigenous Zapatista communities continue to be autonomous spaces after the peace agreement, whereas in Northern Ireland representatives of the Republican communities form part of the power-sharing government. This leads in the latter case to a penetration of the community space by conservative gender images, which pushes women and their changed gender perceptions to the margins. On the other hand, in Chiapas the community space remains dominated by changed gender images, marked by women's participation in the public sphere.

While we can draw interesting lessons from the way women engage in and are affected by similar mechanisms and different conflict contexts in Northern Ireland and Chiapas, those cases do not provide a representative sample of contemporary views on the peace and conflict processes; the analysis of a larger case study sample would be required in order to allow quantitative measures to be used to further explore the outcomes of identity change. We need additional in-depth case studies of the impact of identity shift and social change on intimate partnerships and sexual violence in the aftermath of armed conflicts in order to generate the data necessary for such a larger comparison.

Secondly, the scope of this research is limited to women who have been actively involved in social mobilization processes. However, those experiences cannot be seen in isolation from the experiences of men, and indeed of other women not actively involved in mobilization processes. Hence, further multi-level, comparative, and in-depth case studies of gendered experiences and perspectives of women and men during peace and conflict are required; in particular intersectional analysis connecting gender, class, and intergenerational dimensions of ethno-national contention.

This article demonstrates that significant changes in gender perceptions as well as the failure to address chal-

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lenges of peace in the private realm (violence against women, male suicide rates) often get overlooked through the focus on peace talks at the macro-level of society. This reveals the need to make a connection between macro-level peace processes and peace processes at the community level and in the private realm. In order to adequately address intimate partner violence in the post-conflict period a better understanding is required of the way women's participation in peace and conflict processes changes ethnic and gender identity and of how those changes are translated into peace processes. Within this context, a multi-dimensional and multi-levelled approach in both policy-making and academic research, which places a particular emphasis on the private sphere, is essential for the examination of gendered aspects of peace and conflict.

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