

The Arts of Survival: Experiences and Testimonies of the Marginalised

Tales of the Future: Senses, Creativity and the Arts of
Survival in Colombia Critical Reflection and Review



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1 INTRODUCTION

Colombia is at a crossroads in history. For the first time in over half a century, a peace agreement has been reached, signed by the national Government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Following an armed conflict which has defined its political and cultural dynamics and claimed over eight million victims¹, with innumerable cases of human rights violations, international humanitarian law (IHL) violations, abuse and contraventions, the country faces a new challenge; no longer one of continuing the discourse of war which has framed its history, but the consideration of peace against a different backdrop. In a short period of time we have moved from thinking the unimaginable to conceiving the possible, and in so doing have arrived at the achievable (Castillejo Cuellar, 2016). We need, then, to reconfigure and rethink the makeup of everyday life in order to engage in a process of transition, of post-violence, and to establish social and cultural ways of engaging with the future.

It is against this backdrop that societies turn to a variety of social and cultural resources which mould the “social imagination of the future”. From this perspective *Tales of the Future: Senses, Creativity and the Arts of Survival in Colombia* is a collaborative, experimental and itinerant project seeking to stimulate creative embryos (or what have commonly been called “artistic initiatives”) among young people inhabiting the borders of precariousness in Colombia. The project takes place against the backdrop of the country’s transition, which can be understood from two interconnected approaches. Firstly, as a process of movement from the unimaginable to the achievable, as the hope of a “new imagined society,” through the promise that when societies “advance” they “leave” their violent past behind. Then, secondly, from the understanding of transition as a process in which the ruptures and continuities of violence in Colombia must be recognised. Here we attempt to understand how communities and individuals manage to build futures amidst these landscapes of transition and post-violence.

It is in this context that the project takes on meaning. Amidst the promise of transition in Colombia, there is a need for projects which focus on methods of relating and interconnecting the future and the past from the perspective of the youth. These will, after all, be the ones to guide the construction of the country. This project focuses on different ways of relating the future, young people’s creative forms of survival, and the construction of projects that might arise and be sustained through the notion of peace on a small scale. This is peace within communities, the notion of possibility through diverse languages of collective pain, or specific modes of articulating the experience lived. A peace in the plural that speaks of the importance of building and understanding peace, more than just the establishment of a state-centrist form of institutionalism (Castillejo Cuellar, 2017).

Our objective is to undertake a study that will shed light on the issues and be taken into consideration in the processes being advanced in the country. Not framed in a single process but as peace in a general sense, which recognises the need for multiple small-scale peace processes. With this in mind, the first phase of the project focused on a research and data-collection process based as much on academic advances as young people’s arts and peace initiatives. This document therefore revolves around a critical analysis of, on the one hand, the national and international academic advances surrounding notions of memory, art

¹ According to figures from the National Center for Historical Memory (NCHM) in the report *Basta Ya! Colombia: memories of war and dignity* (NCHM, 2013).

and peace, and on the other, experiences of youth initiatives, national calls for projects and the institutional structure that has made these possible.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Over the past decades studies have been carried out seeking to provide the tools with which to evaluate the Colombian conflict, and recognise the multiple perspectives and diversity of actors and groups involved throughout the national geography. Notwithstanding, these initiatives, both institutional and non-institutional, should be approached critically and analytically, with the aim of presenting an overview of the subject's treatment to date.

2.1 Responsibility for establishing what happened

The National Center for Historical Memory (NCHM) was created, based on the 2011 Victims' Law, as an institution responsible for establishing what took place, helping fulfil the State's responsibility toward memory and upholding the dignity of the victims. With this objective in mind, investigative efforts to that end have been pushed forward, in which the principal sources of information are victims themselves. An example of the work undertaken is a report entitled *Basta Ya! Colombia: memories of war and dignity* (NCHM, 2013). In this document, an attempt is made to reveal the origin and evolution of illegal armed actors, not only as instruments of war, but as social and political products of the evolution of the country's historical configuration. Furthermore, it argues that "the reconciliation or reunification we all long for cannot be founded on distortion, concealment and forgetting, but solely on establishing the truth. This is a political and ethical obligation that challenges us all" (NCHM, 2013, p.16).

This institution, then, has documented violence through memory favouring the voice of the victim. It has sought to maintain an impartial position, recognising the complexity of the Colombian conflict and that perpetrators of violence have been multiple, on the side of the Armed Forces as much as guerrillas. It has thus been able not only to establish the actions, motives and intentions of the perpetrators of the horrors, but also to understand victims' experiences and recognise the damages they suffered (NCHM, 2013, p.25). Its focus has therefore been on reconstructing what took place in the country, since from its inception its remit has been firmly situated within the governmental structure for fulfilling State duty: providing the reconstruction of events, truth and reparation. However, the compilation of small-scale processes and initiatives, that offer new meaning for victims and the possibility of new futures through artistic expressions, has been left aside.

From this perspective the NCHM, as a governmental structure, has established an approach and understanding, a discourse, which positions victims through the notion of pain and suffering, seeking the vindication of their rights. This discourse permeates not only society in general, but also political, governmental, institutional projects and even those of NGOs seeking to contribute, thus creating a discursive framework which excludes ways of imagining and representing "victims". The word *victim* in itself is weighed down with a wealth of connotations that place it in the centre of the debate as regards the search for reparation. The victim, as a category, supposes the existence of pain and trauma which must

be overcome by some kind of narrative as a precondition for the suffering to end (Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017). In such a scenario there is a process of reconstruction of the subject fragmented by trauma, making a future possible.

This project moves away from such an interpretation of conflict and the victim. Without ignoring the importance of such types of vindication, we seek to build ways of coming closer to, and understanding, local processes as means of survival following unspeakable experiences. There should be a recognition that by focusing on this type of discourse, “other possibilities for considering the political dimensions of the past and of time” have been left out, relegating alternative views of the past to the margins (Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017, p.169), and we would add to this views of the future and dissident practices outside of the institutional radar. An effort that appears to have been made invisible due precisely to the discursive framework that has been built around the notion of the victim, and discourse from the governmental structure centred on pain.

Up to this point the fundamental role the State has played in the construction of discourses permeating society has been recognised. However, there are still considerations of notions of art, memory and peace which can shed light on the way in which the discourse has been handled in Colombia. These may or may not affirm the State’s discourse of reparation and reconciliation through the notion of suffering and/or offer a perspective of hope taking into account processes and initiatives loaded with possibility for the construction of futures.

2.2 The notion of Art

In considering notions of art, peace and reconciliation it is important to first understand what we mean by *the arts*, in the broad sense of the term, since we are concerned precisely with “arts initiatives” in this study.

Precision is key. We do not set out from the curatorial notion of art, that is, its aesthetic arrangement, which leads to an understanding of “art for art’s sake”; such an understanding is auto-referential and closed, being concerned only with itself, and does not take into account cognitive, historical, ethical or social content (Paredes, 2009). We distance ourselves from a notion of art whose interest lies purely in the representation of traumatic incidents by experts seeking to give a version of events. While more often than not this is the victim’s version, on many other occasions it is simply from the viewpoint of the expert. In this respect, it is pertinent to recognise that “art is not unequivocal; its comprehension and manifestations evolve as fruit of the concept of the human; of his work, of his nature and environment” (Antolínez, 2014, p.82).

We prefer to conceive of art based on its relation to society, as part of a complex network of interactions in which individuals consciously denote and argue artistic and creative expression to specific ends. We understand art as an “intentional, creative and transformative act which can serve as an instrument for boosting social change” (Antolínez, 2014, p.82). It should be recognised in a broad sense which, more than focusing on the notion of art for its own sake, creates space for the testimonial as an articulation of different languages of collective pain. Recognised in the notion of testimonial experience, then, is a complex network of relationships built around the arts of survival, as an element that is testimonial, creative and the creator of futures through languages of collective pain.

Furthermore, two elements should be recognised that can play an important role in how artistic-testimonial practices are shaped: firstly, based on the notion of emancipatory potential in artistic practices that feed into the way societies remember and forget in situations of post-conflict and reconciliation (Puzon, 2016). It goes further, however. We here notice a testimonial approach to art and its emancipatory potential as possibility for the construction of futures. To this end, we lean towards the notion of arts of survival as elements allowing the construction of means of subsistence through artistic expression. Or rather, testimonial expressions which configure, and allow us to understand, social interrelations, the past, and the subject as actors in the construction of future.

Secondly, art as agency (Antolínez, 2014). Conceiving of creative testimonial expressions of futures as agents allows for personal, as much as social and community development. From this perspective, it moves from being an artistic expression to an empowered voice that is transcendent. This allows it to, on the one hand, offer elements for the recognition and transformation of social realities and, on the other, foster processes of social inclusion (Antolínez, 2014, p.86). In this last case, pedagogical methods through art contribute to efforts for changing conditions in individuals' lives, and as object of this research, the lives of young people, where linking with artistic expressions contributes to their connecting with and committing to these processes, rather than with the dynamics of the conflict in Colombia themselves².

2.3 The notion of Memory

Up to now we have understood in the Colombian context, firstly, the State's duty of memory, which has been carried out principally through the voice of victims, perpetuating a discourse based on government perspective and thus seen as official, excluding alternative forms of testimonial expression. Then, secondly, "art" has been understood through testimonial expressions moving away from art in the traditional sense and seeking to shape experiences articulated by languages of collective pain. We should now, then, seek to understand how notions of memory are constructed, as these have been central to intellectual and political debate on the notions of reconciliation and peace. This is precisely due to their being closely linked with the State's responsibility for establishing what took place, for memory and to the victims.

In Colombia the notion of memory has had a long history and played a fundamental role. However, it was especially following the 2005 Justice and Peace Law (Law 975), which brought about the demobilisation of paramilitary groups and the creation of the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR), that memory began to feature in institutional discourse and be embedded in the country's agenda. Since then, the idea of a "memory boom" has come into play, due to the institutionalisation of memory, which brought with it strong social mobilisation, particularly victims' movements, cultural practices, academic production and artistic expression. (Cortés Severino, 2009; NCHM, 2013; Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017). The country's favourable moment, then, facilitated the creation of wide space for debate, action and discussion around processes of memory, allowing the spotlight to be shone on complexities, and spaces to be opened for future debate. Notwithstanding, this led to the normalisation of the notion of memory, which is generally

² This will be explored in more detail in the following section.

accepted and unquestioned, and which came into being bound up with the judicial contexts of justice, transition and the ‘never again’ (Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017, p.168)

As regards academic discussion, we are not here interested in understanding the debates between memory and history, memory and forgetting, or the production of historical memory (Guasch, 2005; Augé, 2000; Halbwachs, 2004; Connerton, 1989; Candau, 2006). We move away from this discussion, already extensively explored, to consider the ways in which constructions of national (official) memory exclude other types of memory. This allows us to begin to understand the need for paying attention to what we might call “memories at small scale” based on constructions of “peace at small scale”. Moving towards the notion of official memory or *collective underground memory* developed by Michael Pollak (2006), reveals memory as the collective operation of events and interpretations of the past constructed through “more or less average” initiatives; of defining and reinforcing feelings of belonging and social boundaries between distinct communities. It is, therefore, memory with a particular intentionality that brings together certain social groups, and in Colombia has been constructed with the victim as an element of denunciation. It is worth noting, then, that we still have not taken into account expressions moving away from that intentionality, which distance us from the construction of subjects as agents having reduced access to positions of power and with less say in the construction of that official memory.

On the other hand, it is expedient to return to an analysis of memory which positions the individual as agent in the construction of future. It is fitting, then, that we refer to what have been called “memory works”. This concept allows us to understand people themselves as active agents in the process of constructing memory; to understand the effects of multiple tales and their relation to the past, present and future, through different political efforts and aesthetics of feeling, hearing and seeing memory (Cortés Severino, 2009; Jelin, 2002; Shaw, 2015), and we would add of inhabiting the everyday. This, without paying too much attention to the representation of the past as conflictive in the present in order to question the political meaning of memory. Rather, we are concerned with understanding expressions of memory from the present as a means of articulating possible futures. In this sense, developing the idea through different narrative forms that arise out of creativity, imagination and the everyday, they are revealed as modes of incorporating and exploring languages of collective pain, against a horizon of future possibilities.

To this end, in Colombia it has been maintained that studies on memory have made concrete advances comparable to those in other Latin American nations (Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017; Cortés Severino, 2009). Memory did not emerge in Colombia as the result of a post-conflict process; it was established amidst the war, constructed as a memory of resistance and denunciation in the face of the conflict (NCHM, 2013; Pedraza and Álvarez, 2017; Cortés Severino, 2009; Rubiano, 2017). Nonetheless, there remains a debate in which to engage, since we must understand the institutional agenda in which these denunciations, in the form of expressions of memory, have been constructed and accepted. Few are the debates surrounding expressions of memory, or testimonials, that remain in marginalisation, that do not reach the state arena, that are constructed as more than a victims’ platform for denunciation - as has been argued through the “official” and institutional notion of memory - but as forms of survival in the face of the very dynamics of war. These are not testimonials which demand reparation but which, rooted in the everyday, build means of survival through languages of collective pain allowing young people to inhabit the borders of precariousness in Colombia.

2.4 Art, Memory and Conflict in Colombia

Throughout the Southern Cone forms of relating to the past through memory as political struggle have been constructed, in a bid to end internal conflicts and violence in each country. Efforts in the mission to end internal dynamics of violence, such as those of Chile and Argentina amidst the context of dictatorships, are examples of the relationships constructed between memory and violence, and later, art. (Cortés Severino, 2009). Colombia has been a strong advocate of this mission. Here, memory was not only constructed through institutional frameworks intimately related to the violence, but from a historical relationship between art and violence, equally intimate.

It has been argued that during the last decade discourse surrounding memory, victims, grief, and other elements has permeated artistic practice. This has been possible precisely thanks to institutional recognition of art as a fundamental element in answering symbolic reparation and the State's responsibility for the construction of historical memory. This is expressed through the Victims' Law, the importance placed on building the National Memory Museum (still under construction) and the Final Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Enduring Peace (Rubiano, 2017).

Artistic expression, then, has had a long history that cannot be ignored. In Colombia especially it is associated with the period known as *la Violencia*. Notwithstanding, we cannot fall into generalisations of the type which claim that art articulates violence as a channel of reparation. To fall into this argument implies a disregard of the multiple forms of violence that take shape, geographically and temporally configured, and the multiple responses through artistic expression, whether as elements of denunciation, of constructing the everyday, of survival and/or of producing futures.

Today in Colombia, against the backdrop of a peace agreement between the Government and the FARC, it has been assumed that we are in a post-conflict process, implying the need to understand dynamics from a different perspective. The violence that takes shape is qualitatively distinct from the violence of the conflict (Rubiano, 2017, p.104). While there are continuities in the dynamics of violence, other elements should be recognised which have not occupied a central role in the government's agenda: dynamics such as internal conflicts between neighbourhoods, invisible borders, the assassination of social leaders. In short, violence found especially in regions of the country where the State has been characterised by its absence, as in the region of Choco. In the same way, artistic expression has been transformed. Since the first decade of 2000 there has been an about turn towards "art as symbolic reparation", a kind of art seeking to reconfigure fractured social community ties (Rubiano, 2017). Today these testimonial expressions of languages of collective pain are constructed as the arts of survival, amidst a violence which, although different, is still present. On the one hand, we could argue, these enter into the rationales of cooperation and take on the very discourse of post-conflict settings³. On the other hand, they are constructed as an element for articulating the future, where rather than simple artistic expressions, they are established as testimonials articulating a violent past in order to make possible a future.

It is a case, then, of attempting to understand the multiple relationships established between art, memory and violence, and the multiplicity of practices which have been created, to make way for the notion of arts of survival as testimonial experiences for constructing tales of the future. In the words of Rubiano (2017), experiences which assume that the

³ This will be explored further in the following section.

political is not only in the content of works, in their declarations, whether as forms of denunciation, testimonial, or reflection, but that artistic practice is characterised by its interest in intervening in reality and its close relationship with communities.

That said, if we have moved away from the notion of the relationship between art and violence as a simple vehicle of denunciation, it is worth recognising other kinds of functions attributed to art in contexts of violence. It could be argued that other forms of understanding this relationship are constructed through the notion of “participatory art”. This refers to a horizontal axis, where there exists an active collaboration, and as such the project is not predetermined; that is, it can take various courses not previously planned. In this case, the community is actively integrated not only as a producer of sense, but also as a producer of content (Rubiano, 2017, p.114). From this perspective, art in contexts of violence functions, on the one hand, as an element helping to strengthen the internal organisation of communities (Jimeno, Varela, and Castillo, 2011), and on the other hand, as an element empowering communities to undertake public action which will integrate the community and help break the violence surrounding them. In this respect we can consider that interaction allows relational fabrics to be built between different subjects having no previous contact.

In Colombia, then, as Mauricio Antolínez argues (2014), we see that art can enable processes of development which go beyond the aesthetic; on the contrary, they are injected into social dynamics that support the comprehension and resignification of internal relationships themselves. Increasingly, space is given in the country to processes of resignification of the notion of art itself in contexts of violence:

Working amidst the visible and invisible, as will be seen in some of the works of Juan Fernando Herrán; working through sounds, rumours, silence and cries, as will be shown in the work of Clemencia Echeverri; the inscription of memories of violence in bodies, faces, looks and places, brought into the spotlight through the photographs of Jesús Abad Colorado; resignifying the archives on violence of the behemoth communications media and giving them different temporalities, in the work of José Alejandro Restrepo. All these works open spaces to question presence, the present and memory through the visual, the sonic and the corporal, reflecting upon it. (Quiceno Toro, N., Ochoa Sierra, M. and Marcela Villamizar, A. 2017, p.170)

Here we are interested in the resignification of discourse on the relationship between art and memory in contexts of violence as elements of denunciation, to allow for a relationship between art and violence based on the hope of building different futures.

2.5 Reflection

Since the new millennium a social discourse surrounding processes of memory in the context of violence has become institutionalised in Colombia. That which has been considered in terms of arts initiatives and memory has centred around a discourse of vindication of rights. These discourses seek to denounce traumatic situations and situations of violation of international humanitarian law. In this context there has been an institutionalisation of the relationship between art, memory and violence, or between the current political juncture and peace, as institutional agendas responding to state objectives. Art has permeated the community arena in the expression of traumatic experiences, made possible by incentives such as international funds for state financing or development and local initiatives, which

will be explored further in the following section. It should be made clear, however, that the distinction between art, memory and peace cannot be univocal; on the contrary, it should be understood through its context, which is ever changing. For this reason, emphasis has been given to the notion of testimonial experiences or practices above artistic experiences or practices, in order to encompass other forms of representation or of engraving the past in the present, of articulating diverse languages which inhabit the everyday.

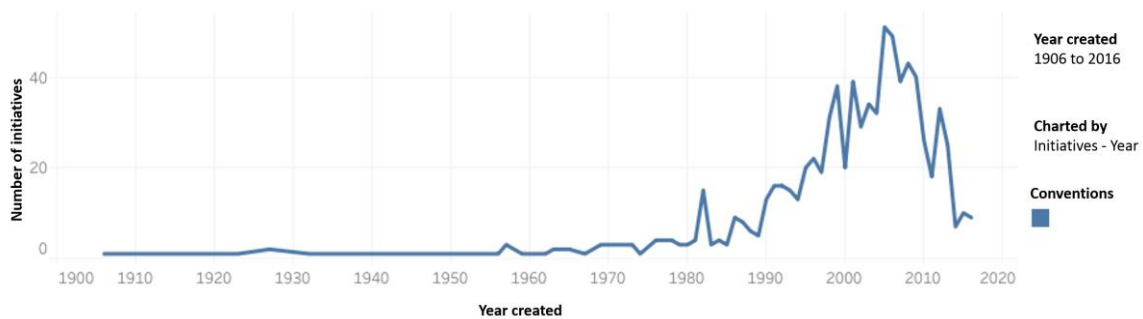
However, there remains a gap in terms of how these instruments of the arts of survival have been used as key elements for constructing futures. This project, then, seeks to set aside narratives of pain and victimisation in order to give pre-eminence to the narrative of hope and possible futures, which is as yet unexplored. We do not wish to delve deeper into hurt. The emphasis is on people's creativity for building - in the face of traumatic situations and discourses - possible futures through artistic narratives; testimonial experiences articulating languages of collective pain.

3 TESTIMONIAL EXPERIENCES IN COLOMBIA

We have seen that discourse on arts and memory initiatives in Colombia has centred around denouncing violent processes and vindicating victims' rights, with this relationship being instrumentalised to respond to state responsibilities of reparation and establishing truth. It is now important to acquaint ourselves with the arts, peace and reconciliation initiatives that have been advanced in the country, and carry out a critical analysis of institutional dynamics and the calls or incentives for evaluation processes of the same. This brief consideration of arts initiatives revolved around the research carried out by the author between March and September 2018, which took a small representative sample of 65 initiatives at national level. It should be highlighted that obtaining the data for all fields of analysis proved difficult. This was due to the fact that the sources consulted were mainly secondary sources, meaning certain variables (especially project funding and evaluation) were not easily obtainable, requiring as they do a direct contact. This being the case, research would need to be carried out going beyond simple documentation to engage in interaction with the various initiatives at national level, which task has not yet been undertaken.

3.1 Consideration of arts initiatives at national level

As mentioned in the previous section, since the new millennium and especially since the 2005 Peace Law there has been a memory boom in Colombia. In particular this has been a boom in peace, arts, memory and reconciliation initiatives being created throughout the country (see graph 1). Throughout this study questions such as, 'Which are the municipalities or departments with the highest number of initiatives?', 'Are initiatives really carried out from localities?', 'What types of initiatives have taken place in the country?' and/or 'What were the areas of work of these?' have arisen, guiding the analysis here presented.



Graph 1: Initiatives by year. Graph sourced from National Report [1900 Peace Initiatives in Colombia. Characterisation and analysis of peace initiatives of Colombian civil society 1985-2016] (Rettberg and Quispe, 2017).

Firstly, throughout Colombia's history peace initiatives have echoed and demanded an end to the internal conflict which has enveloped the country since the second half of the last century. As Rubiano argues (2017), civilian mobilisations have taken place in the country based on symbolic practices in the construction of memory and forms of transiting through pain (p.12). Experiences such as the *tejedoras* [weavers] of Mampuján in María la Baja, Bolívar⁴, the songs of the *Alabaoras* [Mourners] of Bojayá in Bojayá, Choco⁵, the women of *Ave Fénix* [Phoenix Bird] in Medellín, Antioquia⁶, the *Costurero de la Memoria* [Sewing Place of Memory] in Bogotá, Cundinamarca⁷, the *Salón del Nunca Más* [Room of Never Again] in Granada, Antioquia⁸, and many others are examples of the mobilisations that have sprung up in the country seeking and demanding to be heard.

These initiatives take on a variety of artistic forms, or rather, of experiences and testimonials employing art as an instrument of denunciation. This reinforces the idea that the field of studies into traumatic memory has begun to expand, giving place to testimonials in song, writing about the trauma, tapestry, needlework reflecting victims' pain, photographs, video, theatre, audio-visual installations and other expressions of memory. Experiences and testimonials which act as agents in the grief of communities and victims, articulating the arts of survival as political, expressive languages, testimonials that build futures. To mention a few examples, we could take *el Semillero de Trovadores Rurales de Antioquia* [the Seedbed of Rural Troubadours of Antioquia], led by peasant youth who compose *trovas* to narrate the

⁴ A group of women from villages in the mountain communities of *los Montes de María* producing woven depictions of traumatic events of the war in an attempt to deal with the traumas of the conflict. This initiative was awarded the 2015 Colombian National Peace Prize. A documentary was produced by Margarita Martínez; see Reconciliación Colombia (2015).

⁵ The initiative of *las Alabaoras* of the township of Pogue, Bojayá, reconstructed the work of dirge singers at funeral processions and other religious scenes in political spaces to vindicate, through testimonial in song, the memories of the people of Bojayá and the fundamental role of women singers in the elaboration of collective mourning (Quiceno Toro, Ochoa Sierra and Marcela Villamizar, 2017).

⁶ Initiative by women victims of the armed conflict in Medellín who, through victims' meetings in Medellín's House of Memory Museum found in writing a means of transiting through pain. Information taken from Valdés Correa (2017).

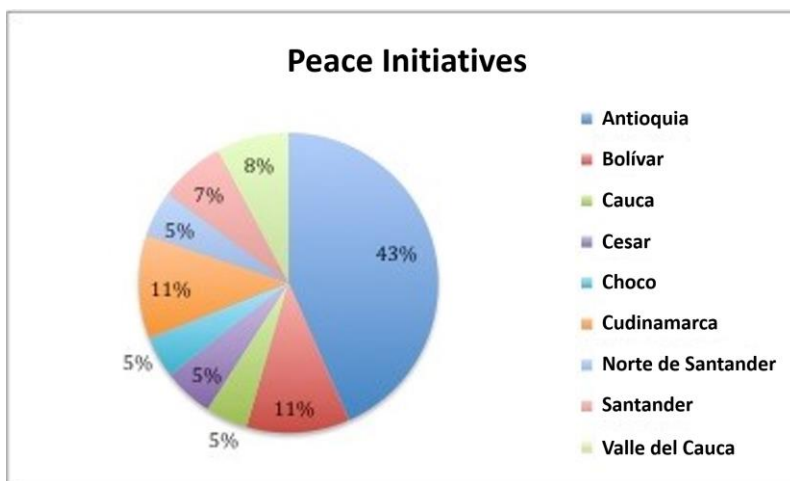
⁷ An initiative bringing together people from different parts of the country, affected by various actors, as a reconciliation initiative. Participants meet weekly in Bogotá's Centre of Memory, Peace and Reconciliation to sew and share their stories. For further details see Cinép. (2017).

⁸ An initiative seeking to reconstruct the memory of victims in Granada through photographs, video and text, on display in a permanent space in the Ramón Eduardo Duque house of culture, which aims to give place to the stories of victims and their families. See Corporación Prodepaz (2016).

events which took place in the region under the armed conflict, seeking to keep alive popular traditions of oral narrative (NCHM, 2015a). In Samaná, Caldas, a young relative of one of the victims installed a gallery of memory, led by the Fundesco Foundation, showing 43 photographic portraits of victims of kidnapping, murder, and forced recruitment and disappearance that do not reflect the suffering, but sensitise the community to the impact of the victimisation (NCHM, 2015b). Or we could take the documentary produced by young people in the Narrators of Memory Collective of Serranía del Perijá in Manaure, Cesar, in 2010. This reflects a generational dialogue between a group of young people and minstrels centred on narrating through the *parranda vallenata* to relate how the conflict has affected the community (NCHM, 2018).

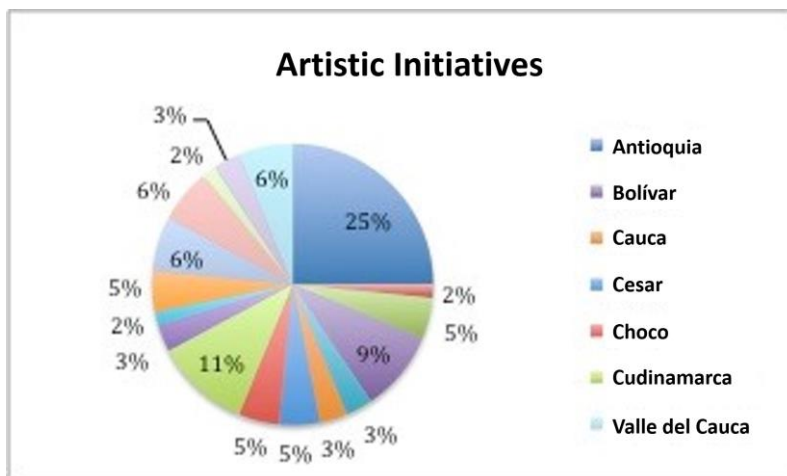
We could continue citing examples of artistic expression initiatives from across the country, but the task would be interminable. What we wish to highlight here is the variety of expressions which, through the use of art as an instrument, are constructed as testimonial expressions to create forms of the future carrying a political message of denunciation, demanding memory and the ‘never again’.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider the geographical spread of initiatives. With this in mind, a double analysis was carried out: firstly, taking into account the data collected within the framework of the study to obtain a representative idea. Secondly, data was taken from the database of actions and initiatives of memory at the National Center for Historical Memory (NCHM), which has undertaken the task of organising and consolidating multiple sources and databases to identify and describe memory activity carried out independently by actors within society, and obtain a general panorama of memory activities in existence⁹. This being the case, it was possible to determine which were the departments with the greatest number of initiatives; these turned out to be those departments most affected by the conflict (see graphs 1 and 2).



Graph 2 Peace Initiatives. Graph produced by the author based on peace initiatives data from the National Center for Historical Memory

⁹ The database of actions and initiatives of memory can be downloaded at: <http://www.centrodehistoriamemoria.gov.co/home-iniciativas-memoria/registro-de-iniciativas> (NCHM, 2015b).

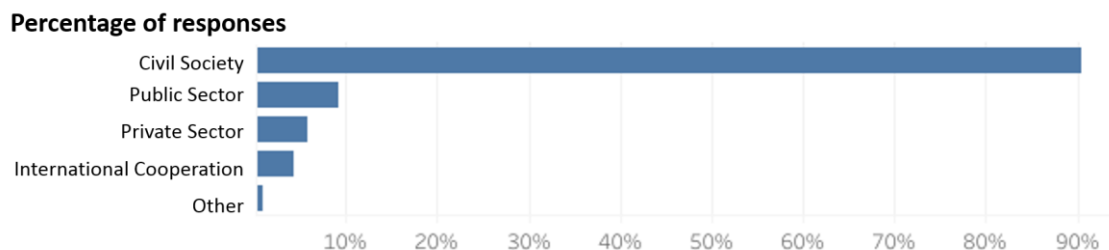


Graph 3: Artistic Initiatives. Graph produced by the author based on data collected on artistic initiatives at national level

It can be seen that the departments with the largest number of initiatives are Antioquia, Bolívar, Cauca, Cesar, Chocó, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander and Valle del Cauca. For their part, departments such as Antioquia, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Bolívar, Nariño and Norte de Santander (which do not appear in the graph, but also had a notable incidence of initiatives) are the regions of Colombia which historically have been most affected by the internal armed conflict according to the conflict map of the country. These regions have had the presence of the various illegal armed actors (FARC, ELN), paramilitary groups and new criminal gangs (BACRIM) entering the conflict for territorial control, due to their strategic location, especially those with links to the sea (Rettberg and Quispe, 2017).

In the same way, both graphs reveal a representative geographical distribution of initiatives, showing a tendency towards some of the largest cities in the country, for example the capital, Bogotá, and Medellín in Antioquia. These cities offer an important institutional connection for initiatives and allow for articulation between organisations and access to international cooperation. The task now is to understand why these initiatives take place in these regions; a case of understanding the dynamics of the calls financing the projects and the institutions facilitating them.

Thirdly, initiatives in Colombia have for the most part been driven by civil society. As mentioned, since the new millennium peace initiatives in general (and related to arts, memory and reconciliation in particular) have increased significantly. These initiatives are pushed forward by victims, by civil society, rather than an institutional instrument, be that public sector, private sector or based on international cooperation (see graph 4). This implies an exercise in recognising the work that has been gaining momentum from local level with a high incidence. However, initiatives created in the borders of marginalisation are yet to be recognised; that is, those testimonials not reaching the radars of institutions, precisely because they do not meet the conditions established by the institution for recognition as initiatives, or simply because they are “so small” they are unable to obtain recognition within the accepted definitions of memory and peace initiatives.



Graph 4: Actors creating initiatives. Graph taken from Rettberg and Quispe (2017).

3.2 Institutional dynamics, calls and evaluation

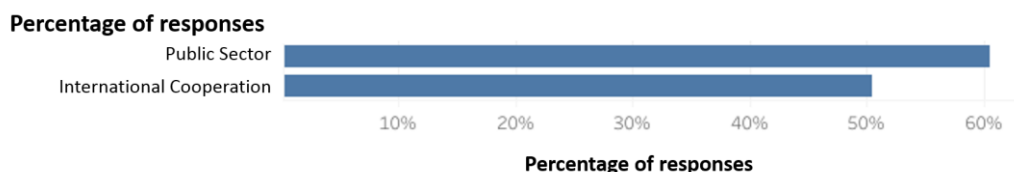
Upon analysing arts, memory, peace and reconciliation initiatives at national level it became apparent that these are immersed in institutional dynamics and frameworks that determine what is considered an initiative and what receives financial support. For this reason, it is necessary to understand the dynamics in which they are embedded, in order to identify the requisites for obtaining funding, as well as to formulate an overview of which initiatives are recognised as such and which remain outside of the institutional funding structure, both at state and international level.

Firstly, we need to establish a historical framework that will allow us to understand the dynamics of funding. After the Second World War, development projects, characterised by international funding to address problems of poverty at global level, and especially to help underdeveloped countries escape their situation of “underdevelopment,” were proliferated and justified as a necessary measure to help poorer countries escape poverty (Escobar, 1996). Since then, it could be said, there has been a boom in projects driven by developed countries which fund initiatives in countries denominated as belonging to the third world. Notwithstanding, a close analysis should be made of these dynamics. This research falls within this brief historical-theoretical framework. We should understand how this financial support has been given, in this case both at national and international level, to facilitate critical analysis of the processes carried out, the institutions financing initiatives, the groups receiving funding and the monitoring and evaluation undertaken for these processes.

Firstly, the percentage of initiatives funded should be highlighted, whether through the public sector or international cooperation. This analysis is reflected in graph 5, taken from the National Report, “*1900 Iniciativas de Paz en Colombia. Caracterización y análisis de las iniciativas de paz de la sociedad civil en Colombia 1985-2016. Informe Nacional*” [1900 Peace Initiatives in Colombia. Characterisation and analysis of peace initiatives of civil society in Colombia 1985-2016. National Report], produced in collaboration between the University of the Andes and Paso Colombia (Rettberg and Quispe, 2017), and comparison with the data collected during this study. However, it should be made clear that data regarding the financing of initiatives was not available first-hand, limiting the level of analysis possible, although an approximation is presented here.

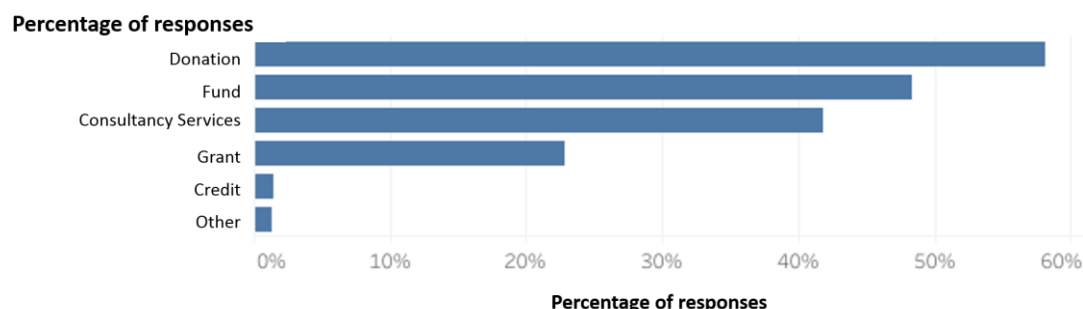
From analysis of the data, it is clear that both international cooperation and national funding play an important role in the funding processes for arts, memory, peace and reconciliation initiatives. Regarding funding from public sector entities such as City Halls and Ministries - for example the Ministry of Culture and its annual culture incentives, the Secretariat of Culture, Recreation and Sports, the High Counsel for the Post-conflict, The

Colombia Reconciliation Fund, among others - these are the entities showing the highest level of support to initiatives. International cooperation for its part also plays an important role; organisations such as the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the United Nations with the United Nations Development Programme (UN, UNDP), the German embassy, the Cooperative Development Foundation of Canada (CDF), the Build Peace Fellows programme, and others, are a small sample of the institutions that have shown an interest in supporting arts, memory, peace and reconciliation initiatives in the country.



Graph 5: Funding sources. Graph taken from Rettberg and Quispe (2017).

That said, funding for initiatives includes another source (see graph 6). That is, the focus is not only on the public sector structure and international cooperation, but rather these may receive donations, seek loans or other funds or carry out consultancy services. It should be pointed out that initiatives able to pursue loan or consultancy-based funding tend to be small in number, when compared to the large number of initiatives in existence. These have to comply with legal requirements and other demands in order to receive such funding: as such they are generally not-for-profit organisations which are specifically positioned, such as foundations, corporations or associations.



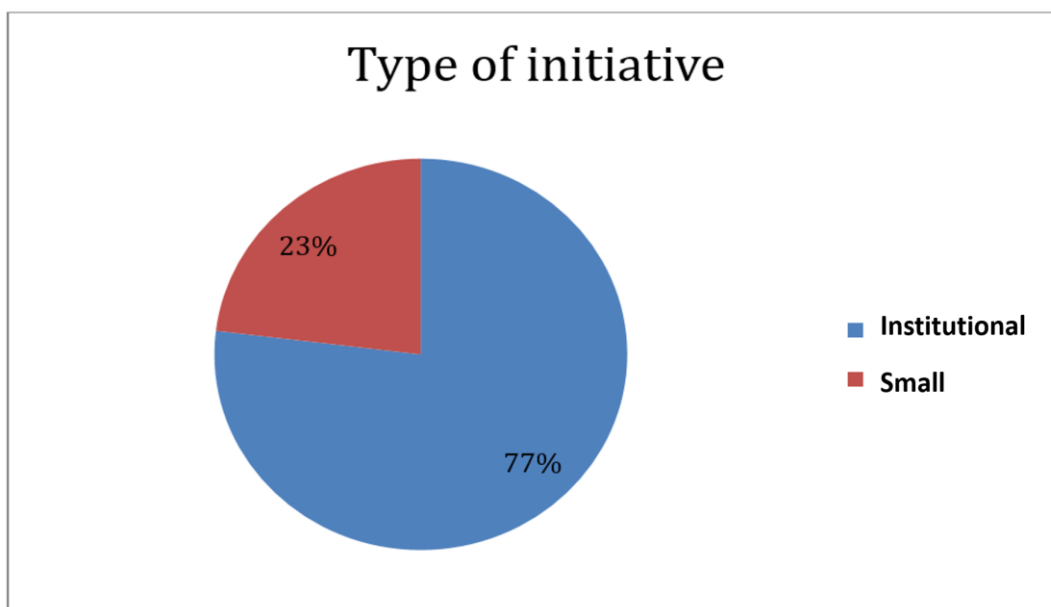
Graph 6: Other funding types. Graph taken from Rettberg and Quispe (2017).

This being the case, several questions must be asked. Which institutions receive such funding? What are the requirements for submitting responses to calls? What are the general characteristics of the calls? To whom is the incentive directed, and, how are processes of monitoring and evaluation carried out? To answer these questions we must analyse the dynamics of calls for arts, memory, peace and reconciliation initiatives themselves. Here should be recognised the difficulty of analysing the data, since categories usually exist simultaneously in both calls and initiatives. For example, a call may be directed simultaneously at youth, women or ethnic groups, or encompass a range of different types of initiatives, such as peace-building, historical memory building, sports-related, artistic and innovative proposals meeting the call's aims.

In the first place, it was seen that the majority of calls and initiatives, if not all, have been shaped based on the discourse of armed conflict and the construction of peace. Given

that the country is passing through a conflict, and with the recent formulation and signing of the peace agreement between the FARC and the Colombian Government, incentives have been aimed at initiatives confronting the country's situation, which seek to denounce, are directed at constructing peace, and which take the victims of the conflict into account. Support is directed, then, at initiatives recognising the processes of specific groups, generally excluded historically (women, youth, indigenous populations, Afro-Colombians). The aim being to recognise and support the efforts of initiatives based on diverse artistic, cultural and creative expressions, in the context of building a culture of peace and building processes in priority areas. Among these are initiatives for the construction of historical memory, reconciliation, and social innovation focused on building peace and participation, among others.

Secondly, taking into account the group to whom calls are directed, it should be argued that applicants would need to be older, in the case of individual applications, or legally registered institutions, such as legal entities. It is worth mentioning that funding is usually awarded to registered groups (generally NGOs), and is in fact directed at these, since they have the institutional structure to facilitate compliance with the equally institutional requirements of calls (graph 7 demonstrates this assertion). Other variables found among call requirements, and appearing as central, have to do with a demonstrable trajectory, in terms of being a registered group able to demonstrate resource management and previous projects, since this is what guarantees experience and expertise in management of community arts, peace, memory and reconciliation projects.



Graph 7: Type of initiative. Produced by the author based on data collected during the study.

This being the case, from the data collected during the study on initiatives and calls (state, district, private, national and international) for arts, memory, peace and reconciliation project funding, we can conclude that calls are aimed primarily at registered organisations, to the exclusion of initiatives not operating within these dynamics.

Thirdly, initiatives have been aimed particularly at victims, territories or civil society organisations in those territories, and youth. As previously mentioned, this type of analysis

faces the difficulty of the overlap between the population groups to which calls are directed. Nonetheless, it can be concluded that calls are based on an interest in supporting initiatives for victims, youth and organisations in the regions affected by the conflict. In this respect, and bearing in mind this study's focus on young people, the requirement for being over a certain age or from a registered organisation is a barrier for youth access to the resources available to support arts, peace, memory and reconciliation initiatives.

Finally, attention should be called to the lack of monitoring for the processes carried out when it comes to calls. Based on this study's methodological approach, collecting information from databases and following up available data, both in terms of academic references and websites for institutions and for calls, it can be seen that monitoring and evaluation activity is practically null. Very few institutions are concerned with establishing a monitoring and evaluation process for results obtained. Nonetheless, there is still the possibility that such processes do take place but are not available for searching. It would therefore be necessary to carry out field work with the institutions concerned to begin to understand the internal dynamics of each institution and their operational processes, as well as the specific projects they facilitate.

Thus, there are institutional funding dynamics embedded in the historical framework of international cooperation and Third World development projects. Here it is the large institutions, national and international, that have the resources and comply with the conditions to be able to access them. This means that initiatives receiving economic support should subscribe to various things: firstly, to the discourse surrounding the construction and promotion of a culture of peace which helps overcome the violent effects of the country's internal armed conflict; secondly, to an institutional framework, where the characteristics of being a formally registered organisation, with a demonstrable trajectory, registered groups with expertise of artistic themes, are fundamental to accessing funding and, thirdly; they should be by or for youth, victims and the populations of affected regions. However, there are still a whole host of arts of survival, which inhabit marginalisation, unable to access resources since they do not meet these criteria. These are small-scale peace processes on the margins of institutional dynamics, and as such do not receive funding.

3.3 Experiences and testimonies from marginalisation: art on the corner

May art, may harmony, may love,
be the strength that unites us, that binds us. May conscience
be the motor that guides our actions and sets our spirits free.

That together in community and by reason of society,
We can find a better future.

(Words of a participant of
Caravana por la paz, la Vida y la Dignidad
[Caravan for peace, Life and Dignity], 2016)

Thus far, we have recognised that arts, peace, memory and reconciliation initiatives in Colombia have had a special emphasis since the new millennium, and through a variety of artistic forms articulate the arts of survival using political, expressive and testimonial languages as a channel of denunciation, seeking to build a culture of peace and future. These initiatives are spread across the entire Colombian geography, and are for the most part driven by civil society, although concentrated in areas where the effects of the armed conflict have historically been most deeply felt. On the other hand, initiatives are framed within a context of institutional dynamics that prioritise funding for the projects of formalised organisations which subscribe to the discourse of peace-building and are directed at victims, youth or regional organisations. However, they exclude small-scale peace processes not operating within these institutional dynamics.

This section seeks to briefly analyse the experiences and testimonials being constructed from marginalisation. Our aim is to understand the importance of giving space to these within the institutional funding system, recognising them as small-scale peace processes building ideas of the future and promoting dynamics which remove young people from the country's context of violence. To this end, we use the data collected in two field visits, the first to the cities of Neiva, Ginebra and Cali, and the second to Quidó and Bojayá, Choco. These took place in August and September respectively.

There are numberless processes in the country seeking to build peace in the smallest settings, in the neighbourhoods, with the aim of encouraging activities that will integrate the community and meet the internal conflict. These activities usually arise from the same body, from the many arts expressing a reality through that body, demanding change. Varied, but few, have been the attempts to approach this small-scale peace, to promote it or even to document it, and these have not managed to make their mark in a great way.

Experiences such as those of the Department for Social Prosperity (DPS) *Legión del Afecto* [Legion of Affection] programme from 2002 to 2010, demonstrate a different methodological effort at peace-building and reconciliation in the everyday of people at the smallest scale, in peripheral urban zones and in rural areas where barriers of violence and conflict impede contact with the community. This programme had as its protagonists young people embroiled in the dynamics of war for various reasons, be they forced displacement, violation of human rights, dispossession, drugs or others. It sought in this manner to move away from a focus on youth violence to highlight the capabilities of the youth, their creative and artistic potential, "their values in support of solidarity; their capacity for love; for seeing, hearing and feeling; their deep commitment to the exploited, humiliated and offended" (Manrique, 2014).

Later, participants of the *Caravana por la Paz, la Vida y la Justicia* in 2016 held that these kinds of programmes work, being situated alongside projects created thanks to the *Legión del Afecto* (Ledesma, 2016). This as a brief introduction to the necessity of giving space to projects centred in the everyday, once again in the construction of peace at small scale. It should be understood that these require a different methodological approach, not only the signing of a peace process between the FARC and the Colombian Government, but the signing of agreements against small-scale violence, the everyday violence we have overlooked, and which today demands we take it into consideration. A methodological approach, in short, which makes young people the protagonists and recognises their efforts for peace.

The experience of the *Legión del Afecto* gives us insight and encourages us to believe in the project here proposed. However, it was really our brief tour of Ibagué, Ginebra, Cali,

Quibdó and Bojayá that convinced us to continue working to give voice to these testimonies and experiences, historically marginalised by the context of war and the Colombian State's lack of presence. For this reason, we put forward a reflection of our own experience.

The journey of trying to understand how that small-scale peace is configured began in Ibagué. Here foundations such as *Yapawayra* - which works with projects by young creators of peace initiatives, with displaced persons and victims of the conflict in areas where state presence is null - are putting forth visible efforts to support groups of young people historically marginalised. Among other things, this marginalisation has been manifested in terms of access to economic resources that can boost their efforts, especially as regards formalisation. Upon our entering into dialogue with the community, they confirmed things such as, "often becoming registered ends up costing more, due to tax returns and all that implies," or, "the money gets eaten up in hiring administrators or solicitors," or even, "becoming registered breaks organisations".

The questions that might then arise would be: what implications does funding institutions' requirement for those seeking funds to be registered have on communities? What happens to the (already marginalised) initiatives left outside by an inability to meet this requirement? Answering these questions requires painstaking fieldwork which was not possible due to setbacks early on in the project. However, it gives us an important point of reflection for deciding to listen to those who have not been listened to, the marginalised of the marginalised, who build from their body and their everyday.

Meanwhile, the thinking that has guided this project and informed both field trips relates to the notion of art, of the testimonial, as a transformative and future-building element. As stated by the inhabitants of the communities visited, art becomes a channel to tell stories that have been excluded. Art defines people. Art breaks invisible barriers. Art brings together people previously in conflict. Art speaks. We need to understand how communities have built small-scale peace processes through their own creativity, recognising art as a vehicle for mobilisation and peace-building. To help the reader understand this dimension a little better, we present below a short extract from a performance that took place in the city of Cali, in the Potrero Grande neighbourhood. This performer's natural onstage expression and skilful portrayal are intertwined with personal experiences, giving a keen ability for drawing out a response in the spectator.

*Why do you call me black?
I don't call you white, or Indian, or yellow!
Adjectives were made to describe;
Or perhaps you need to describe me to tell me I'm different?
I'm more worried about your hang-ups!
For they brought hunger, war and slavery.
But today we want to change history!
Today I am of the people, the black, the white and the Indian.
I am the same...
Oh! My beloved land,
Origin of our ancestors.
We respect you, mother land.*

This is just one example of the innumerable stories being told in one of the neighbourhoods most conflicted and battered by the violence in the city of Cali. However,

not only in Cali, but in every one of the cities visited we were met with new people, new stories, new constructions of peace in small places, which drive and sustain the imperative need to begin working from a different methodology. Without a doubt, as we further traverse the geography of Colombia we will encounter more stories and creativities to be shared. Experiences of young people in Ibagué who with their hands create, heal and build:

“...And that transformed the negative energy. Through the art of turning, going out and travelling, meeting people, writing, it heals. So now I can listen to others because everyone has something to give. These neighbourhoods are full of something to give, everything is full to give but it goes dim, it gets extinguished because people don’t believe in art, they don’t believe in things made with hands. Hands are powerful, they’re actually seriously powerful. And that’s the message I want these works to give; our life, that it isn’t bad.”

Choco is a Colombian department characterised by its immense wealth of natural resources, but also as a strategic setting where different armed groups have had interest in keeping control, making it one of the most violent regions in the country. Here also, the artistic initiatives of young people are without number. In the north of Quibdó, the department’s capital, we discovered one of the smaller initiatives. A young leader, whose name cannot be divulged, at only twenty-seven years old has been working with the neighbourhood children for the past nine years, to keep them away from the dynamics of the conflict. Nine years in which dance, and children’s interest in learning to dance, not to mention his incredible talent, has allowed them to occupy their time and mental energies in meaningful activity, rather than getting caught up in neighbourhood criminal gangs. Here more than all other settings, we saw the efforts of peace at small scale. This is a place where invisible barriers have prevented other people from coming into the neighbourhood, where there is no form of institutional support, where the needs for driving the initiative, economically speaking, are in reality small. For this reason, the young dance instructor says, “We’re eking out an existence here. But the idea isn’t to stop working with the kids. Because that’s what I do, I don’t expect anything back. Because I want there to be no violence here in our community. If you get me.”

Meanwhile, a participant of *Caravana por la Paz, la Vida y la Dignidad* maintained, “Colombia is a country that has always surprised me; amidst so much pain, amidst so much death, such happiness, such hope... We’re a very happy people and I think it’s that happiness that has allowed us to face so much pain.”. In such a violent context as Colombia’s has been to date, people’s capacity and creativity for building notions of community and peace have been immense. Faced with a conflict in the country lasting over half a century, without any real institutional or state support, they have demonstrated down to the smallest level their desire to build a different country. Here we can only showcase a small portion of the data recorded to date, which is itself a tiny snapshot of what is being done in Colombia.

Finally, testimonials from marginality have been built in the country making a stand for better futures, for removing young people from the dynamics of war and building possibilities for the future from the body itself. Artistic expressions have been fundamental in mobilising youth and have allowed invisible barriers preventing community integration to be broken. Gargantuan efforts still need to be made to build peace processes; efforts that should recognise peace processes at small-scale. This justifies the need for a change in methodology recognising minute constructions of peace from the everyday, and motivating

them to build integration and community from the ground up in order to lay the foundation for a better future.

4 CONCLUSIONS

Imagining a new society also leads to imagining and creating ways of making it possible, even within this research exercise. In this sense, we have seen the need to put forward an itinerant methodological proposal centring on exercises of testimonial experiences as means of articulating possible futures. Through testimonial initiatives at small scale, new tools can be contributed for considering works in the construction of memory, art, peace and reconciliation.

Following two very brief field visits, and with feelings and thoughts of how much more extensive they needed to be, this project rests on the conviction that it is in everyday dialogue, in conversation with people in communities, that we realise the enormity of testimonial efforts towards constructing the future. People ceased hoping for something from the top a long time ago, and they are making movements to construct from the bottom, to shape their realities. Our energies should centre on listening to those efforts. We cannot continue charting vertical processes, where institutional dynamics and tensions guide and influence the selection of initiatives. We must build horizontal processes that make communities the protagonists, recognising their potential for creativity and the construction of possible futures.

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