

Cartographies of reconciliation: Fostering peace through dance and heritage in Colombia^a

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Figure 1: e-Exhibition *Museum Bodies for Empathy* © María J. B. Salazar & Marco Bonilla

This e-Exhibition summarizes the research developed on one initiative of cultural activism called Museum Bodies for Empathy, which pursued social reconciliation through dance and heritage, working with youth from three Colombian communities: Cali, Galeras and La Guajira. The fieldwork was developed as a Participatory Action Research along with the NGO Embodying Reconciliation, during July and August of 2019. The project supported local leaders in their efforts as holders of cultural practices and created presential and virtual exhibitions showing their heritage. The project argues for the safeguarding of ICH as a pathway for peace and reconciliation and for the protection of cultural

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diversity. The collected material is being developed as a virtual Museum and will be released in December 2020. These cartographies hold a presentation of results for the research project.

Given the long-term armed conflict, these communities are narrated in the social imaginary from a conflicted perspective which include discourses of exclusion, discrimination, racism, and social stigma but have been resisting through their cultural practices. In Cali, the social narratives were associated with the labelling of afro Colombian groups with social issues such as violence and criminality and have been questioned through culture with afro colombian music and dance. In Galeras, the discourses are related to this land being taken by the Guerrilla or paramilitary some years ago but the people have raised their voices through the local practice of Live Portraits. Meanwhile, in La Guajira the narratives of the indigenous people were associated with cultural imposition, exclusion and discrimination, which has led to the displacement of their population, they have resisted through community Wayuú indigenous practices such as La Yonna Dance.

These contradictions were identified through the development of artistic workshops which involved telling the stories about the communities, the neighbours and the territory in relation with the cultural diversity. Identifying the characteristics, issues and culture of their communities through cartographies of their territory and their bodies helped these children to tell their story from a different perspective. They brought to the fore their cultural practices, their creativity and the sense of belonging to their cultural groups: afro Colombian, peasant and indigenous. These are the groups mostly hit and silenced by the conflict, which brings more relevance to the fact that they could build narratives about themselves, tell their own story and experiment their situation from this possibility of enunciation that will reach other national and international territories.

The e-Exhibition presents conflict and peace as coexisting narratives embedded in the bodies and the territories. The new narratives about the past have effects in the present, within a complex Peace Process taking place currently in Colombia. This transitional phase to peace involves the recognition of a multicultural Colombia, sustained in narratives of multiplicity as the aforementioned. Therefore, this experience showed dance and heritage as fruitful realms for building alternative relationality, alternative narratives enunciated from the communities, and as platforms for cultural resistance during atrocious political dynamics in the country.

Keywords: interculturality, cultural activism, narratives, communities, peace.