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INTRODUCTION

Artistic creation in peacebuilding

Elena Grau

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Can art practice contribute in the transformation of conflicts? What role can art play in the development of a new reality? What are the relationships between artistic and social creativity? We dedicate the central subject of this issue of the magazine *Peace in progress* to the reflection on these questions, in order to demonstrate that art forms can be effective tools when it comes to building peace. We believe that, due to its nature —meaning connected with intuition, emotion and imagination— art practice can trigger transformations capable of stopping dynamics of violence and offer creative spaces which help us repair the broken coexistence. To be able to count with different answers, we have requested texts to several persons connected with the art world, who project their activity in contexts linked with social movements, processes of conflict transformation or the recovery from the consequences of violence. We also included several experiences from artistic activities, aiming at promoting coexistence, memory recovery and the healing of open wounds, caused by violence in a specific social fabric.

In the first article, Ramon Parramon defines creativity as a human quality which can be described as the capacity to imagine, produce ideas and solve problems. Art, as a creative expression, mostly raises questions which can be useful in the transformation of reality. Therefore, the author states that the role of art in conflicts is to generate capacity of critical action and that committed art cannot act as if it was disconnected from a more complex social action. By this, he means that transformative artistic creativity is not just a different type of creativity from the social one and that, precisely, it becomes meaningful when it is expressed and received in a social context. Social and artistic creativity establish synergies in processes of conflict, resistance, memory and reconciliation. After pointing out this fact, Cynthia Cohen gives a glimpse of a possible future for art in peacebuilding, taking into account that conventional environments of the latter more and more acknowledge the fact that exclusively rational approaches are not sufficient to generate changes, capable of stopping the dynamics of violent

conflicts. On the other hand, the aesthetic experience, involving the senses and cognitive, emotional and spiritual faculties, generates unique opportunities of individual and collective learning, empathy, imagination and innovation, which are fundamental aspects of peacebuilding.

“Art practice can generate transformations, capable of stopping dynamics of violence and offer creative spaces which help us repair the broken coexistence”

The task of contributing in the healing process of entire populations, affected by traumas caused by violent conflicts, is one of the contexts of peacebuilding where art practice has delivered important results. Marián López Fernández Cao explains how art can help to re-establish order and serenity where pain has previously shattered human beings and their perception of the world. The creative process allows recovering meaning and generates narratives, showing a way out to what had been locked inside; it allows sharing and showing open wounds. The symbolic language can help to express what seems impossible to express. The context of art, therefore, can be a safe space where someone who has been treated as a disposable object can start feeling human again; think that he can love and be loved again. Creation as a boost for individual and relational processes widens its field of operation in citizens' dynamics where art and activism come together. On the other hand, Alex Carrascosa draws a proposal for an *artist* model, based on social technologies, that works with components he calls *æffective* and *creative*, meaning they involve affection, creation, effectiveness and activism. The *Artist Assembly* has a proactive format of citizens' and intercultural relationships and synergy, combining three elements: the head (reason, ideas, thought), the heart (emotional experience) and the hands (creative capacity). With this model, the author invites us to face the context of the conflict in the way an artist does when starting his next work.

Beyond the more theoretical reflections, the monograph also dives into two specific peacebuilding experiences where art has played a major role. The first one arose in the *Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente* (CEDECA, Centre for the Defence of Childhood and Adolescence) in the favela of Sapopemba in São Paulo, Brazil, which aims at increasing the occupation of spaces which were previously impregnated with the culture of violence. The experience of organising the event *Rap em Festa* has allowed them to understand that culture and art constitute the best way towards consensus between young people, since they generate interactions that can lead to dialogue, coexistence agreements and respect in war zones. CEDECA uses these tools to face challenges going from the dispute for territories with criminal gangs, the conduct of police forces, generational and racial prejudices to the rooting of macho and homophobic culture.

“The connection between artistic and social creativity can be a crucial element in the reduction of violence and its consequences”

The second experience is the occupation of urban spaces through artistic productions —the performance called *Cuerpos Gramaticales*— in the *Comuna 13* of Medellin, Colombia. This organisation saw the light 15 years ago and was boosted by Agroarte in a context of commemoration and honouring of the people who disappeared in the *Comuna 13* as the result of several random attacks, carried out by security and paramilitary forces against civilians. *Cuerpos Gramaticales* is an action with an enormous symbolic power, trying to express feelings linked with territory and the recovery of the communities’ collective memory, promoting resistance and forging a memory for the future.

Finally, the interview with Roberta Bacic brings us in contact with the experience where hessians, an artisan fabric, are woven by groups of Chilean women, originally helping them to denounce human rights violations during the Pinochet dictatorship and to process the painful experiences of loss and repression using an appropriate

language. The textile art of these Hessians has spread to many other countries and has helped, through the creation of groups of mostly women, to strengthen community bonds, empower participants and create a space for expression, contributing to rebuild individual and collective life which had been interrupted by violence.

The reflections and experiences we present in this issue of the magazine *Peace in progress* allows us to conclude that the connection between artistic and social creativity can be a crucial element in the reduction of violence and its consequences, because art practice and social dynamics mutually boost each other in the peace creation process.

IN DEPTH

Can art resolve conflicts, or does it live on them?

Ramon Parramon

Artist, director of Idensitat and art director of ACVic

In a global context, marked by several social conflicts, we can ask ourselves what role contemporary art plays or can play, with the objective of impacting the development of a new reality. One of the first obstacles we would need to remove when wanting to question the impact art can have on the transformation of reality and, as such, its capacity to participate in the resolution of conflicts, is the fact that artistic creativity is a part of social creativity. One of the incipient definitions of creativity goes through its understanding as an untransferable human quality, which can be defined as the mental ability to imagine, produce ideas and resolve problems¹. Although this could be a perfectly applicable definition for the big majority of human activities, since all require a dose of creativity, it does not really fit the description of art.

More than solving problems, art creates new ones, or asks new questions that can be useful in the transformation of reality. In this way, if we expect art to offer some kind of concrete utility like, in this case, a contribution in the resolution of conflicts or, at least, the introduction of changes, it needs to be combined with other types of creativity, coming from the context of other disciplines. The creative act needs to socialise by sharing, collaborating and getting involved in other forms of collective actions of a social and political nature. In fact, art has traditionally been associated with a type of personal creativity, with psychological roots and understood from an extraordinary perspective (inspiration, genius), to produce ideas, express them and bring up alternatives to situations which can –or not- affect social reality. As such, we need to start from the idea that the artistic creativity we are addressing here is not a different kind of creativity than the social one, but rather starts making sense when it is expressed from and received within the social context. It is produced in the context of an interconnection between creative subjects, infrastructures, institutions and collective bonds.

Although creativity can also develop itself in contexts of destruction and violence, the artistic and cultural productions blossom and expand in periods of peace and stability. Throughout history, a large part of artistic productions has fed on conflict, sometimes representing war events, in other occasions pointing out facts or specific elements in a critical manner. The same museums, erected as temples of civil society as symbols of social wellbeing, consensus and peace, are infrastructures, many of them built on war loots, ransacking, invasions or cultural expropriation. The exhibit project “1516-2016 Tratados de Paz” (1516-2016 Peace Treaties)², gathered around 400 works from classic and contemporary artists on the peace-war dichotomy. An exhibit that was organised, based on works on loan from different European museums, influencing in the ambiguous symbolism there is behind the security, the abundance and the image of a happy world, represented by the museum itself. As was said in the presentation: “Peace is not just the utopic representation of our societies, but also the other side of war”.

“Artistic creativity starts making sense when it is expressed from the social context, in the framework of an interconnection between creative subjects, infrastructures, institutions and collective bonds”

Throughout history, the relationship between art and armed conflicts has been significant and become a source of prolific production which, in the most contemporary context, is canalised in a front of social criticism, exposing the postcapitalist, economist or imperialist system hiding behind the scene of modern conflicts. In the sixties, coinciding with the end of artistic avant-garde, this criticism on the system was established as a mechanism of cultural and artistic production. One of the authors, displaying a position against the war in a very direct way, is the American artist Martha Rosler who, in her initial work “House Beautiful: Bringing the war Home”, a collage produced between 1967 and 1972, combines images of the Vietnam war with images of domestic interiors, extracted from news media. It shows the conflictive relation between the quiet day-to-day comfort from people living in a country which is directly or indirectly involved in a war conflict, and the images of the location where devastating operations are being carried out. It becomes a criticism on American society, but

also a portrait of the social struggles in which the artist was involved: the mobilisations against the war (first against that in Vietnam, later against the war in Iraq), the position of women (committed in feminist movements) or social inequality in urban contexts (based on later works on *peripherisation* in big cities).

This is a concrete example of how the work of this artist could have become an anecdotic and sterile fact, if it had not been for the connection with feminist and anti-war mobilisations, or in the defence of the right to a worthy life in the cities. This critical function of art has been one of the main strongholds which, from the late sixties until now, have inspired many artists such as Hito Steyerl, Muntadas, Marcelo Expósito, Hans Haacke, Alfredo Jaar, Daniel García Andújar, María Ruido, Teresa Mulet, Democracia, to name only some of those who are working on contemporary conflicts, tensions and violence from a politico-social position that goes beyond the specific territory of art.

“Committed art cannot act in a disconnected way, thinking its final objective is a museum; it needs to be part of a more complex and extra-disciplinary social action”

This text wants to clarify two ideas in the connection between the role of art and conflicts, one of them being that critical capacity and action is a valuable component of social action; the other one is that committed art cannot act in a disconnected way, thinking its final objective is to end up in a museum, even if the museum is the result and reflection of contemporary contradictions and conflicts. If art claims to be a useful element in the development of a new reality, beyond simply pointing at its miseries, it needs to be part of a more complex and extra-disciplinary social action, in the sense of exceeding its limits and reconfiguring itself in territories of cooperation and dialogue, aiming at participating in a “global mobilisation to sabotage reality”³.

Precariousness as one of the main latent conflicts

From this spot, I would like to reorient the notion of violent conflict towards a daily and nearby globalised situation, the one which is defined by precariousness. This is one of the topics which is generating –and foreseen to generate- more conflicts in our direct surroundings and beyond. A situation that affects increasingly more persons, and is a direct result of the alliance between neoliberalism and public authorities over the recent decades⁴. A continuous version of the class struggle which displays its results through social and global duality between the conjunctions wealth-power and poverty-invisibility. Once the welfare state has been dismantled, the new global economy involves painful sacrifices, less security and less social protection⁵.

To understand what we are referring to when speaking of the concept of precariousness, we take the arguments of Judith Butler who considers two large groups of people who suffer from high levels of invisibility and vulnerability, and whose opinion, therefore, weighs very little. One of these groups are the victims, living in war zones or occupied territory, exposed to violence and destruction, with little possibilities of safeguard. Many of them live in forced displacement or temporarily in neighbouring areas, waiting for the borders to reopen. The other type of precarious subjects are those who belong to the category of expendable and disposable workers, whose personal stability is in danger, due to the fact they find themselves in a situation of extremely vulnerability and threat. As Butler said, “survival cannot be the objective or goal of life itself”⁶.

“Art, working for the transformation of reality, needs to be committed, active and critical, conscious of its capacity of political and social influence”

If we go back to the initial topic on personal creativity and social or collective creativity, we need to think that any subject, in order to create, think and propose, needs to have some minimum needs of social welfare covered, and these needs must be

protected at an institutional level. Social creativity cannot be disconnected from this matter, it cannot exist without counting on subjects with the ability to develop their creativity or, let's say, their lives in decent conditions. This is not a question of dichotomy between private space versus public space; the fact is that, in order to be present in the public space (in the sense of being able to actively participate in the social space), some minimum needs must be covered, which is not the case for people living in a situation of precariousness or social invisibility.

In order to address the question What can art do in this context?, we need to speak from the start about a type of committed and active art, aware of its capacity of political, social and, therefore, critical impact. Not from within a kind of art, useful at the service of some programs, full of good humanitarian -often patronising- intentions, but often resolved in micro-workshops. We would be talking about a type of art which often stops to consider itself as something differentiated and disconnected from other approaches with social objectives. We need to relieve the term art so that its methodologies and investigative particularities can become part of more joint, more hybrid and, above all, less artistic actions. Art which, in certain moments, collaborates, and in others, unites in a specific social action and works for the transformation of reality, based on the recovery of public space and the responsibility of the institutions. Less talking and imposing, more listening to each other, that's what makes the difference. In order to understand the type of art to which we refer, we can finish with a quote by Joseph Beuys: "We still live in a culture that tells us: there are those who are artists, and those who are not. This statement is really inhumane, and where the concept of alienation between men emerges."⁷.

1. Torre S. and Violant, V. (2003) *Creatividad aplicada*. Barcelona: PPU/Autores.

2. *Tratados de Paz*, a project that counts with several exhibits and different commissioners, was presented in the framework of San Sebastian 2016 European Capital of Culture. The exhibit *1516-2016 Tratados de Paz* exhibit has been commissioned by Pedro G. Romero, and presented in two of the city's museums: [San Telmo Museum](#) and the Koldo Mitxelena Cultural Centre.

3. LOPEZ Petit (2009) *La movilización global. Breve tratado para atacar la realidad*. Madrid: Traficantes de sueños.
4. FISHER, Mark (2016) *Realismo Capitalista. ¿No hay alternativa?* Buenos Aires: Caja negra.
5. ZIZEK, Slavoj (2016). *Problemas en el paraíso. Del fin de la historia al fin del capitalismo*. Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, pp.50.
6. BUTLER, Judith (2017). *Cuerpos aliados y lucha política. Hacia una teoría performativa de la asamblea*. Barcelona: Paidós.
7. BEUYS, J., HARLAN, V. (1992). *Qu'est-ce que l'art?* París: L'Arche.

IN DEPTH

Arts and building peace: the basics and envisioning the future

Cynthia Cohen

Director of the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts Brandeis University, USA

Throughout human history, and in every culture, communities have improved their lives through engagement with creative and expressive forms. Cultural heritage and the arts are resources for marshalling attention to urgent concerns, addressing conflicts, reconciling former enemies, resisting authoritarian regimes, memorializing the past, and imagining and giving substance to a better future. Communities express their deepest values and ethical commitments through aesthetic forms and processes. Humanity dignifies, restores and reimagines itself through creating, performing, interpreting, preserving and revising its cultural and artistic heritage.

Recognition of the contributions of arts and culture to peace is real and growing. It is fueled not only by artist-peacebuilders and cultural facilitators, who are strengthening their practice through documenting, assessing, and critically reflecting upon their work. Interest also is increasing from practitioners of more conventional peacebuilding approaches, such as mediation, facilitation, negotiation, transitional justice, human rights advocacy, and development, who are acknowledging that rational modes of engagement alone are insufficient to engender the kinds of transformation necessary for interrupting the dynamics of violent conflict.

Whether a work, artist, or institution contributes to more just and less violent communities depends upon the creators' skill and the aesthetic and ethical intentions of the artists and producers; the aesthetic and ethical sensibilities embodied in the work and ancillary activities; the resources – sometimes from non-arts groups such as mayor's offices¹, truth commissions² or human rights organizations³ – devoted to extending the reach of an initiative; and, of course, the responses of those who witness and interpret the work.

When the arts function as art, they evoke distinctive qualities of attention and response that can best be understood within the framework of “aesthetic experience.”⁴ Aesthetic experiences, in general, are intensely felt human apprehensions of the world, engendered by engagement with nature and with certain human-made forms and processes. They arise from the reciprocity between the forms being perceived and the perceptual capacities and sensibilities of the perceiver(s). Aesthetic apprehension of a work results from the interplay between the formal qualities of the work (rhythm, texture, form, density, pacing, etc.) and the perceivers, who open their senses and their minds, allowing themselves to receive the work and notice its resonances within them.

“The arts and cultural practices aim to embody a kind of power that rests not on injury or domination, but rather on reciprocity, connectivity, and generativity”

Aesthetic experiences engage the senses as well as the cognitive, emotional, and spiritual faculties to invite special qualities of embodied attention and response, such as disinterestedness, passionate commitment, receptivity, alertness, serenity, playfulness, and metacognitive awareness. These qualities of presence afford unique opportunities for individual and collective learning, empathy, imagination, and innovation, all of which are central to peacebuilding efforts. For instance, even when an artwork’s content is upsetting, painful, or jarring, its formal qualities can enliven and energize its perceivers to face and act on conditions that otherwise might be too unbearable to confront.

Also, for both artists and witnesses, engaging with the arts can restore and nourish capacities most needed for the creative transformation of conflict, including communicative abilities that often are diminished by violence.

In peacebuilding initiatives, the arts and cultural practices aim to embody a kind of power that rests not on injury or domination, but rather on reciprocity, connectivity, and generativity. The arts can be crafted to engage people compellingly, but non-co-

ercively, in the issues that confront their communities. Evidence of this power can be felt in the transformation of energy in a theater or in changes in relationships evoked by a poetry workshop; it can also be assumed based on the record of illegitimate regimes that repress, imprison, exile, and even assassinate artists.

Of course not all artistic works or expressive cultural practices build peace. In fact, there are many instances of art's power marshaled in service of militaristic regimes and used to exploit vulnerable constituencies in the quest for profit. For instance, colonial administrators built grand theaters for showcasing the hegemonic culture of the empire, diminishing by comparison local and indigenous performative practices and cultural forms⁵. Infamously, music has been appropriated into regimes of torture⁶, and aesthetically-refined films were used as Nazi propaganda⁷.

In conflict regions around the world, artists and cultural workers undertake projects that address important peacebuilding challenges. By way of illustration, but by no means an exhaustive accounting, arts- and culture-based initiatives can be crafted to:

- Strengthen campaigns of nonviolent resistance
- Create opportunities for members of adversarial communities to meet in positive, creative contexts
- Support communities to engage in the difficult work of reconciliation⁸
- Draw global attention to abuses of human rights and reinstate a sense of agency among victims
- Restore identity, meaning, and hope in the face of alienation, dislocation, and disruption

As the field of peacebuilding and the arts gains legitimacy, artist-practitioners are grappling with several interrelated challenges. Among them are acknowledging and minimizing risks of doing harm. For instance, artist-peacebuilders can minimize the risk of:

- Engaging in “epistemic violence” (injury to local ways of knowing, cultural practices, and forms of expression)
- Worsening divisions between conflicting groups

- Re-traumatizing communities and individuals that have suffered from violence
- Undermining artistic integrity by involving artists in crafting requests for proposals and calls for productions
- Creating or perpetuating injurious power dynamics
- Subjecting artists and project participants to physical harm or incarceration, particularly in societies with limited freedom of expression or autocratic governance⁹

While artist-peacebuilders want their approaches to be embraced by and be of use to the related fields of development, public health, education, human rights, transitional justice, etc., they would like their partners to understand that the transformative power of the arts relies on artistic integrity.

“Arts-informed initiatives can support communities to identify sources of resilience and craft imaginative solutions to seemingly insurmountable threats”

The absence of a shared vocabulary can create an obstacle for artists and non-artists who seek to collaborate. The *Acting Together on the World Stage* project proposes a framework that is designed to facilitate communication and respectful exchanges between artists and other peacebuilders. This ‘permeable membrane’ framework focuses attention on both the transformations achieved within the bounded spaces of artistic workshops, rehearsals, and productions and the impact when such changes are “cast back” into communities¹⁰.

In the coming half century, the world will be grappling with violent conflicts related to extremism, climate change, migration, growing inequality, and unaddressed grievances, as well as the apparent breakdown of the governmental, financial, and educational systems that have been relied upon to address such problems. Solutions to these overwhelming challenges require creative approaches, global in scale, but finely tuned to meet the challenges of local contexts.

Arts-informed initiatives can support communities to identify sources of resilience and craft imaginative solutions to seemingly insurmountable threats. To make its most effective contributions, however, the peacebuilding and the arts field would benefit from a much more robust infrastructure¹¹: institutional spaces for documentation, dissemination, and research; e-journals that invite multi-modal presentations that reflect both artistic excellence and intellectual rigor; local, regional, and global networks of effective action that link practitioners across generations and regions.

1. Doris Sommer, "From the Top: Government-Sponsored Creativity," in *The Work of Art in the World: Civic Agency and Public Humanities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

2. Salomón Lerner Frebres, "[Memory of Violence and Drama in Peru: The Experience of the Truth Commission and Grupo Cultural Yuyachkani](#)," 2011.

3. Aida Nasrallah and Lee Perlman, "Weaving Dialogues and Confronting Harsh Realities: Engendering Social Change in Israel through Performance," in *Acting Together, Vol. I*. New Village Press: 2011

4. Cynthia Cohen, "[A Poetics of Reconciliation: The Aesthetic Mediation of Conflict](#)" (dissertation, UNH, 1997), 247–51,

5. Charles Mulekwa, "Theatre, War, and Peace in Uganda," in *Acting Together, Vol. I*. New Village Press, 2011.

6. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, [Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program](#), 2014,

7. "Leni Riefenstahl," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#).

8. Cynthia Cohen, "Creative Approaches to Reconciliation," in *The Psychology of Resolving Global Conflicts: From War to Peace, Volume 3*, ed. Mari Fitzduff and Christopher Stout (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005).

9. For ways of minimizing risks of these potential harms, see Cynthia Cohen and Polly Walker, “Minimizing Risk of Harm,” in *Acting Together*, 2011.

10. Cynthia Cohen, “The Permeable Membrane and the Moral Imagination: A Framework for Conceptualizing Peacebuilding Performance” in *Acting Together, Volume II: Building Just and Inclusive Communities* (Oakland, CA: New Village Press, 2011).

11. Jonathan White and Cynthia Cohen, “Strengthening Work at the Nexus of Arts, Culture and Peacebuilding” A Working Session Convened by Search for Common Ground and the Program in Peacebuilding and the Arts at Brandeis University, 2012.

Note from the author: This essay is adapted and abbreviated from an article by the same name that appeared in *Insights*, an e-newsletter published by the United States of Peace. Please turn to the [original version](#) for important details that were cut due to space constraints.

IN DEPTH

Art's capacity to process traumas

Marián López Fernández Cao

Member of the collective En Pie de Paz

“Although we know that after such a loss the acute stage of mourning will subside, we also know that we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And, in fact, this how it should be.”

(Freud, 1927)

Viktor Ullman, a musician who was locked away in the Theresienstadt ghetto during the nazi regime which devastated the whole of Europe, and died in Auschwitz, pointed out that the ability to create runs parallel with the ability to survive. We will not succeed to erase the marks, make the wounds disappear, as pointed out by Freud, but art can achieve, there were the world and the human being are fragmented, feels incoherent and disorganised, to establish a certain order and formal serenity, transfer us to a time, different from everyday life, and help in assimilating the pain.

When looking closely at art, produced in times as harsh and difficult as the ones we mentioned, it is striking how somebody can even create art in moments like that. However, Ullman showed us, just like many other persons who created and helped creating in those settings, like Friedl Dicker-Vandais –pioneer in Art therapy–, Charlotte Delbo and so many others, that art can help us conserve our dignity as subjects when reality insists in converting us into disposable objects, and how the creative process can give us back the ability to recover an own name and regain control over situations where we have been violated. Observing the work, realised by Friedl Dicker-Vandais in Theresienstadt, with traumatised children, deserted and torn from their family environment, studying the method she uses to transform them into observers of reality, aware of their surroundings, master of their own perceptions, as well as capable of

exteriorising their fears, anxieties and the terror that invades them, makes us realise how the art world can be a safe space where people can start feeling human again. Where they can start thinking again they can be loved, that they can love again.

What is trauma?

Trauma is, by definition, as pointed out by Van der Kolk (2015, 2), unbearable and intolerable. The common denominator of psychological trauma is the feeling of “intense fear, fragility, loss of control and threat of annihilation”¹. In this sense, trauma is extraordinary, not because it rarely occurs, but rather because it goes beyond the normal capacity of adapting to life. The human being remains destined to a language-less, preverbal, feeling. His body shows symptoms, relives the terror, rage or impotence, as well as unchaining the impulse to fight or run, of action or paralysis, in ways and feelings which are impossible to understand and difficult to articulate (Van der Kolk, 2015 48). His body keeps the score –just like the title of Van der Kolk’s work says– probably for the rest of his existence.

The psychological trauma is an affliction, defined by the lack of control over the situation, through an absolute lack of power over the circumstances that surround us. At the time of the trauma, the victim feels himself completely vulnerable, and under the power of a force that overwhelms him. When this force is natural, we speak about disasters. When this force is held by other human beings, we speak about atrocities. The traumatic events exceed the normal care systems which offer the people a feeling of control, connection and meaning in life.

“Art can help us conserve our dignity as subjects when reality insists in converting us into disposable objects”

In agreement with various authors and experts (Hermann, 1992; Van der Kolk, 1994), we can state that the systematic study of traumas depends on the support of the society where it is generated and of the corresponding institutional and political administrations. The study of traumas, deriving from military conflicts, only becomes possible

when a context exists which legitimises this pain and listens to it. The study of sexual traumas only becomes legitimate when a context exists which confronts and challenges the subordination of women and children in this environment and in society. In this manner, and in agreement with Judith Hermann (1992), progress only appears when there is a social –and legal– movement, strong enough to legitimise and embrace the alliance between researchers and patients who confront the common processes of silence and denial. Repression, dissociation and denial are phenomena that occur both in the individual as in the social conscience (J. Hermann, 1992). Meaning, as long as the society in whose centre the trauma has been generated does not legitimise and recognise the victim, does not sanction the traumatic fact, healing is difficult to achieve, since it denies the ongoing healing process in itself.

As such, the marks of this painful event prevent the human being from being happy again. Part of its effects, especially when the painful event is due to interpersonal violence –either sexual abuse, physical or psychological violence, warfare, etc.– is related to physical consequences –a continuously activated alarm system, anxiety, stress, stiffness– as well as with deep psychological marks: inability to tackle the event or tackle it in an automatic way without any real involvement, selective oblivion, dissociation, inability to start new personal relationships, based on trust, etc. The person who went through a traumatic experience which remained without resolve, without assimilating or processing, remains at the mercy of its effects, which will probably be transmitted in an intergenerational manner.

“The creative process is a way of giving meaning and creating narratives; it allows us to express in an organised manner the internal material of our experiences”

The memory of the trauma is not built up as a coherent story where all aspects of the experience are merged into a narrative and in an integrated way in the vital and intimate dimension of the subjective time, but rather in a way where remembrances of the trauma consist of fragments, separated from conscience, which have not been assimilated and remain disconnected from the global story of the person's life. This fragmentary condition implies, in return, a lack of control on the side of the victim which gives the traumatic memories an invasive character which will continue torturing the victims for an indefinite period. The time of the trauma remains frozen in the human psyche. A period of time which has come to a stop, impossible to move, terrifying, which comes back over and over again, through intrusive thoughts and nightmares.

The creative process in the assimilation of the trauma

Since a few years, neuroscience has started showing us what artists already knew in a practical manner: that the symbolic language can sometimes help, beyond the analytical and discourse language, in expressing the inexpressible. Theorists of the stature of Van der Kolk, Hermann, Lusebrick or Cozolino (Van der Kolk, 1994; Hermann, 1997; Cozolino, 2014) have demonstrated how the emotional memory, within our brain's right hemisphere, where the effects of the trauma are stored, disconnected from the discourse thought, can be activated through images, senses, symbols, and recover, through creative processes, a way of assimilating, in body and mind, a painful event.

The creative process is a way of giving meaning and creating narratives. As a structuring process, the creative process allows us to express in an organised manner – through formal structures, related to colour, intensity, lines, planes or marks in clay, stone or other elements– the internal material of our experiences. For the trauma, the exercise of the creative process in therapeutic environments allows the images, linked to these episodes which remained anchored in the subject, often making it impossible to process them, to gradually emerge and experience in a safe way the physical and emotional memories and, in this way, to integrate them in the here and now, so that the neuronal kinaesthetic and emotional routes can learn new ways (Siegel, 1999, in Riley, 186).

“In its social dimension, art –combined with its communication component– allows to externalise and share the pain, open windows, show the wounds”

In a process of internalisation-externalisation and again internalisation, the assisted creative process allows and boosts the inner chaos and, with it, the images, sounds, body marks, smells, which have remained anchored in the emotional memory, in order to organise and exteriorise it. Starting from the projection of emotional images and memories, in a safe space, the creative process promotes the transformation and the external readjustment of this material and a new internalisation or acceptance, this time with the subject in control of the situation and where his emotions can start being understood and expressed, there where the trauma prevented him from feeling safe or from being able to decide or even to understand. The capacity of the creative process to externalise what remained internalised not only allows to bring it out in the open and observe it, but also to understand and reorganise that what happened, transforming it into a narrative which helps us to continue living.

In its social dimension, art –combined with its communication component– allows to externalise and share the pain, open windows, show the wounds. The work performed, both on the individual as on the participative level, where people have shown images, faces, sentences, names, dates, sounds, of the loss and the destruction, helps, in a communitarian ritual manner, to give shape and social recognition to the pain, fundamental element in the assimilation process of the trauma. The social recognition of the aggression through the collective work, the social condemnation, shows itself as a profound element of repair, essential for the victim, where the human being can start connecting again with the community. Art has always been a loudspeaker for the wounds, there where the State refused to recognise them, and has helped to give visibility to what society tried to conceal: raped or murdered women, as well as missing and tortured persons have been the subject of a big part of art works which have been shown to the public, opening its entrails and the wounds of a –sometimes rotten– conscience.

Art, linked to transitional care processes and connection, reveals itself as a symbolic tool where we can lay down, in a finally safe environment, all the fears we kept locked up at some time in our lives. Art, as a potential space between us and the world, can renew our ability to live and make us think we can start again.

I'm begging you
do something
learn a step
a dance
something that justifies you
that gives you the right
to be dressed in your skin, in your hair
learn to walk and to laugh
because it would be too dumb
in the end
that so many died
and that you live
without doing anything with your life

Charlotte Delbo²

1. According to the Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry.

2. Je vous en supplie/ faites quelque chose/ apprenez un pas/ une danse/ quelque chose/ qui vous justifie/ qui vous donne le droit/ d'être habillés de votre peau de votre poil/ apprenez à marcher et à rire/ parce que ce serait trop bête/ à la fin/ que tant soient morts/ et que vous viviez/ sans rien faire de votre vie

IN DEPTH

The Artist Assembly

Alex Carrascosa

Designer and dialogue facilitator

*Against your words, my ears;
Against your rifles, carnations.*

Civil rights, the (in)surge(ncy) of Artivism and the birth of social technologies

In the midst of the world's reconstruction during the fifties, when the majority of governments had recently subscribed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the awareness on civil rights has been rooted in the societies, triggering several initiatives, including antagonistic ones regarding the means they used: a) disruptive actions, violently opposing the system, like the internationalisation of guerrilla operation by Che Guevara (1963-1967); b) reactive actions in the shape of nonviolent confrontation with the system, like Rosa Parks' refusal to abandon her seat on the bus which was reserved for white people, in Montgomery (1955); and c) proactive actions, in the shape of constructive alternatives, like Paulo Freire's "culture circles" where people make critical reflections on their position inside the context (1960-1964), the "self-awareness groups" of the New York Radical Women, popularising the slogan "the personal is political" (1967), or Alexander Dubček's "socialism with a human face" (1968). These and many other actions seemed to have inspired the writing of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in force since March 1976 and ratified by the Spanish state in July 1977.

This context in itself encourages the (in)surge(ncy) of the main strategies of *artivism* or social and political activism through art. The Situationist International inspires the *Militant Research* –laboratory for observation, filtration and objectification of reality in itself–, as well as *Culture Jamming* –(counter)cultural interference and alienation.

Meanwhile, the “Tucumán is Burning” campaign in Rosario (Argentina) promotes Mediactivism –critical documentary information through non-normalised media technologies and platforms. *Culture Jamming* and *Mediactivism* constitute, in turn, the bases for the *Communication Guerrilla*, a media sabotage strategy usually attributed to collectives like the Guerrilla Girls or Gran Fury. From their side, the *Teatro* (Theatre) brings down the fourth wall, goes out to the streets and infiltrates the districts. And, along the lines of the Amsterdam Provos, ACT UP!, *Mujeres Creando* (Women Creating), the Women’s Action Coalition and, later, Reclaim the Streets! (RTS), the *Equipos Fiambreira* (Lunchbox Teams) and Yomango consolidated *Acción Directa* (Direct Action), the best known *activist* format.

“The great activist strategies have become a regular resource for rallies and sleep-ins against mercantile fundamentalism, war and social cuts”

In parallel with *activist* dynamics, new collective relationship and interaction models are under investigation in the scientific world. In 1972, the report “Limits to Growth” was published, alerting on the unsustainability of the global growth model and predicting its collapse within a period of 100 years. In view of this evidence and building on Kurt Lewin’s group dynamics, as well as on his Psychosocial Field Theory, Peter Senge tackles the challenge of helping people and organisations to become aware of the thinking and interaction patterns we use to *recreate* the very system by which we are affected. In addition, in the mid-eighties, Marvin Weisbord suggests to “get the whole system in the room” and creates the Future Search, a method of group facilitation which anticipates an entire generation of Social Technologies¹; among them Deep Democracy (Mindell, 1988), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Srivastva and Whitney, 1987-2001), Open Space (Owen, 1992), World Café (Brown and Isaacs, 1995) or Change Lab (Scharmer and Jaworski, 2000).

The Change Lab precedes the Theory ‘U’², a social technology paradigm developed by Otto Scharmer who, precisely, takes the stick from Senge in “closing the return loop between the behavioural representation [visible but unconscious] of the structures of which we have become a part, and the source [conscious but invisible] of our

thoughts” (2009: 53, 135). The Theory ‘U’ performs an *inquiry* on the intention of our actions, on the *self-observation* for each individual and group, and on our relational field, with the objective of finding the turning point for an *æffective* transformation (affective and effective) of our surroundings.

The *Artist Assembly* proposal

At present, we observe how the global nature of civil rights awareness during the fifties, sixties and seventies has been followed by a progressive *conscious alterglobalisation* against the corporatist economy. The alliance between political and corporate elites, with the objective of privatising public resources, deregulating governments and cutting social expenditure, as well as the so-called “war on terror”, declared after the 9/11 attacks to impose “shock therapy and tabula rasa” (Klein, 2007) with similar intentions, have been contested by a *glocal*, increasingly interconnected, citizens’ movement: from the Seattle Battle to the World and Intergalactic Social Forums and, from there on, to the sit-ins and sleep-ins in the centre of Beirut, in the temples of Yangon or in front of the Reykjavik Landsdómur; from the Sahrawi *jaims* of Gdeim Izik to the Kasbah in Tunis, the Tahrir square in El Cairo and the University of Sana’a; from the Puerta del Sol in Madrid to the Syntagma square in Athens and the Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan, or the Gezi park in Istanbul.

While the five main activist strategies –Culture Jamming, *Mediactivism*, Social Theatre (and within this section, Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed), *Acción Directa* and Militant Research–, have become a regular resource for rallies and sleep-ins against mercantile fundamentalism, war and social cuts, the Assembly has been the tool par excellence; an active instrument, only not creative, often characterised by ideological confrontation: a vicious circle of opinions, reactions, replies and counter-replies. Consequently, for this article, I propose an *æffective* and creative assembly model –essentially *artist*– based on social technologies: an *Artist Assembly*.

CiteCite I propose an “*æffective*” and “*creative*” assembly model –essentially *artist*– based on social technologies: an “*Artist Assembly*”

We need to specify that each social technology follows a different purpose. Some methods address the processes as a whole –vision, analysis, design and execution–; while others reinforce one or several of its stages, as there are the staging, dialogue, conflict resolution, decision-making or prototype testing. In this case, the *Artist Assembly*

is based on three technologies –the aforementioned Theory ‘U’, the Design Thinking and the *Dia-Tekhnē* or Dialogue through Art–, building a structure that combines our three main sources of knowledge: the head (reason, ideas, thought), the heart (emotional experience), and the hands (creative capacity) –John Dewey’s three H’s: Head, Heart and Hands.

Mapping of the context (*Head*):

- Puzzle of the common stage –formed by the set of pieces of the different agents (one or more pieces per agent)-, which provides us orientation, showing us where each of us is standing and the point we want to reach.
- Identification of shared or complementary needs and challenges.

Personal challenges (*Head + Heart*):

- Each person involved builds a story which condenses his direct or close experience of a specific shared need or challenge.

Interrelations (*Heart*):

- Emphatic listening to the account of the other person, focussing our attention, suspending our judgment (this means, detached and with open intentions) and putting ourselves in his place.
- Practising generative listening, by counting and illustrating the story to ourselves.

Ideas-Strength (*Heart + Hands*):

- Capture (as if it was photography) the impressions, feelings, images or metaphors, inspired by the listening exercise; and translate them in *Ideas-Strength* (significant verbal and/or graphic statements).

Action (*Hands*):

- Expression of the Ideas-Strength in plastic elements and using those to build *Stages of the Future* –3-dimensional (if static) or 4-dimensional (if sequential) prototypes or mock-ups where one, two or three steps or immediate actions are represented.
- Design of *Environments* (or ludic-symbolic transformations of the surroundings), as well as actions or interventions at citizens' scale: *from workshop to square*.
- Further sessions of action monitoring and mapping of consecutive paths.

In short, the *Artist Assembly* offers to collectives, organizations and communities a proactive format of an intercultural and civic relation and synergy. It leaves us facing the social, political and economic stage, in the same way an artist needs to face his next work.

1. The term Social Technologies is given to the application of scientific knowledge on human systems –and not on inert matter– with the intention of helping them to observe and understand themselves. This concept is synonym for Soft Technologies, or also Emotion and Communication Technologies, meaning, the ensemble of techniques and methods, used for the development of human relations and interactions.

2. For more details on the Theory 'U', I recommend visiting or participating in the online course *U.Lab: Transforming Business, Society, and Self* on the platform [edX](#) and on website <https://uschool.presencing.com/ulab>

IN DEPTH

Art and Culture: Occupy in order not to back down

Sidnei Ferreira and Valdênia Paulino

*Centre for the Defence of the Rights for Children
and Adolescents CEDECA, Sapopemba, Brazil*

“It was New Year’s eve. Everybody was celebrating. My grandmother’s cabin, a shack in the favela where 12 people were living, own sons and daughters as well as fostered ones, was full of people eating and drinking. The noise of voices was competing with the sound of samba and the fireworks which invaded the sky that New Year’s night. Despite all this racket, the sound of shots, coming from the other side of the favela, caught everyone’s attention. There were many of them. What we didn’t know was that several shots hit two of my uncles, one of them 10 and the other one 19 years old. They were two of the eight people, killed in the carnage at the end of that year. There were many speculations, but the motive was none other than the fight to control drugs traffic in that area. Those who lived on one side of the favela could not go to the other side without an order from the traffickers. Persons hating others without even knowing them, only due to the fact they were living on opposite sides. My uncles didn’t have anything to do with the quarrel but, as often is said, “they were in the wrong place at the wrong time.”

This was the testimony of the adolescent Paulinho during a round table for the preparation of the Rap em Festa, an event organised by the *Centro de Defesa dos Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente* – CEDECA (Centre for the Defence of the Rights for Children and Adolescents), with the aim of creating a space for the hip hop movement, the main cultural expression for the suburbs’ youngsters since the eighties; as well as a space for dialogue between the different groups of the favelas in the region and a resistance strategy against the huge pressure and attacks by the police, who insist in criminalising the black, poor youngsters from the suburbs.

Hip hop is not just a music style, but also a culture, a way of life, joining several elements among which we can find criticism against the system of predominant social, political and economic exclusion in Latin America. It allows the young people to bring out their cry of resistance against the many deadly assaults they witness day after day. We're talking about death squads, hired by traders, about the deaths provoked by the conflict between traffickers, by the violence perpetrated by the military police, and by the complete absence of public policies. In this setting, culture and art become strategies of survival and instruments in the battle for public spaces.

Down the sewer
It's down the sewer
Where the dignity runs
From the mulatto kid
Who, though innocent,
Suffers the cowardice
Of the uniformed scum
So said the papers
The very next day
Very successful police operation
15 killed, hundreds wounded.

Kauë Nascimento, 14 years¹

For many years, *Rap em Festa* has been organised without interruption in the playground of a neighbourhood public school, transforming itself into an important cultural display, as well as meeting place for many young people, both from inside as from outside the area. The preparation of the event took a whole year. Groups from different locations in the region and, quickly, from the entire city and the whole country, agreed on a theme which they would study and debate for months, with the aim of writing song lyrics and designing the production of dances and graffiti.

The agreements of coexistence indicated that the bases of the road towards respect and dialogue had been set. All groups made their presentation. There were two days –and part of the night- full of presentations, inter-territorial dialogue and exchanges. There were some quarrels, which were resolved on the spot, such as having to inter-

ferre to avoid firearms or blank weapons to be brought in, as well as the use of drugs in the school. But nothing the assurance of a warm welcome, the passion for art and mutual respect could not resolve.

“Humour, sports, art and culture bring along an interactive power, capable of generating peace dialogue in war zones”

Soon, the CEDECA understood that culture is the best way to build up dialogue and consensus between young people. But also that was the subject of a dispute. In Brazil, for a very long time, politicians and authorities have used popular art and culture with the objective of entertaining the masses (people living in a situation of poverty) to prevent them from thinking. In this manner, besides keeping them under control and alienated, they were able to increase their own personal fortune through artistic contracts without previous public tender process. Amazing! Everywhere, young people are echoing their cultural knowledge. For CEDECA, humour, sports, art and culture are cornerstones because they bring along an interactive power, capable of generating peace dialogue in war zones.

The cultural projects grew. In the capoeira, the memory of the black people's resistance during centuries of slavery; in the samba, history, politics, social inequalities, the day-to-day life in the favelas and *morros*², the pain and love, sung in poetry to the sound of percussion instruments, cavaquinhos and guitars; in the rhythm and poetry of RAP, the cry of outrage and the rebellion against the contemporary systems of death. And that's not all! The urban dances transport the bodies of the black and poor youngsters to places, forbidden by the unofficial social apartheid. On the walls, their boldness shines through the graffiti strokes. And we cannot forget the popular libraries: a small corner in a room is enough to pile up those books whose stories will never be told by the official education channels.

It became CEDECA's main worry to find ways to make progress in the dialogue with other suburbs and in the occupation of spaces which were still impregnated with the culture of violence, since the fear to cross unknown areas, the criminalising police control and low self-esteem continue to confine many young people in these territories. As such, we're working in these spaces, through artistic and cultural activities, to give new significance to the suffering, the fears and the processes of humiliation, trying to discover hidden talent and knowledge. Getting to know the other through art allows us, beyond the exchange of knowledge, to exchange affection and to reveal collective identities. Identities which are denied and subdued by the political and economic elites, who fear the awakening of the suburb youngsters' critical conscience.

"I went back home with a library book when a policeman stopped me, took the comic book away from me and tore it. It was humiliating. I felt a lot of anger". (*André, 10 years old*)

"Getting to know the other through art allows us to exchange affection and to reveal collective identities"

CEDECA is present in the public schools' playgrounds, spaces the students used to avoid and which now have acquired a new meaning, thanks to the cultural activities. Moreover, it is also present in public places and sports fields, in a fierce battle against drugs trafficking and the concomitant police violence.

We're talking about a presence which had to be conquered, starting from many challenges. External and internal challenges. The external ones are related with the fight for space against criminal groups, the attenuation of public and private security forces and the generational and racial prejudice of the community's public institutions and conservative groups. On the other hand, the internal ones are linked with the deconstruction of the macho and homophobic culture many youngsters still display. If we can say that economic inequality is a matter of consensus, it is sometimes necessary to continue questioning those other issues in the content of the different cultural events.

We know that we can only face and overcome inequalities collectively. Only organised movements can constrain and give new meaning to the spaces of power. And the cultural movements can precisely influence in this area; by boosting dialogue, the exchange of knowledge which emerges from the black and poor youngsters, the aggregation by means of expressed affection through art and dealing with the genocide of young people. Therefore, it is necessary to occupy the spaces. Occupy in order not to back down.

Two tracks, alley nr. 2, old “Beco da Morte”
Crossing mountains of trash and open air sewers
Avoiding the dogs and trying to squash the rats
For each resident, there’s seventy

Don’t lose faith, just continue
They say he’s better!
Subprefecture “Trincou” is now called “Rua Nova”
They opened a trench, we can pass like pigs between the trash

We’re almost at the top, on the left
Black men and women, together with black boys and girls.
Our weapons are heavy
Books, literature, spray, street dances,
Ballet, guitar, capoeira, storytellers
Playground, percussion, workshop and recording studio

Revolution?
No, no, no...
This is no revolution.

Maybe!
Unity, evolution, humanisation

Art is gratitude

For the Erês³ respect, loads of respect
Hoping they're not like so many others...

“ITALO”, hey!

The unsuspecting soldier, Sidnei Ferreira⁴

1. Na sarjeta/ é na sarjeta/ que escorre a dignidade/ do muleke mulato/ que mesmo inocente/ sofre a covardia/ do canalha fardado/ dizia os jornais/ no dia seguinte/ operação policial bem-sucedida/ 15 mortos, centenas de pessoas feridas.

2. Litteraly “hill”. The morros are the places where the favelas are located. In fact, favela is the name of a plant that grows in the hills. When, a long time ago, the inhabitants of Rio de Janeiro climbed the hills, looking for fruit and flowers to sell, they said they were coming back from the favelas, which is the origin of the name of these settlements.

3. The Erê is the intermediary between a person and his orisha (according to the candomblé, every persons is a son of orishas; this means, divinities, daughters of the unique God Olorun), it's the coming out of the inner child inside each person and resides in the exact point between the person's conscience and the orisha's unconsciousness.

4. Duas pistas, viela 2, antigo “Beco da Morte”/ Atravessa morros de lixos e esgoto a céu aberto/ Desvia dos cachorros e tenta atropelar os ratos/ Que para cada morador, setenta./ Não desanima, segue em frente/ Dizem que está melhor!!!/ Subprefeitura, “Trincou”, agora é “Rua Nova”/ Abriam uma trincheira podemos/ passar feito suínos entre o lixo./ Quase lá no topo estamos à esquerda/ pretos e pretas trocando com/ pretinhos e pretinhas./ Nosso armamento é pesado/ livros, literatura, spray, dança de rua,/ balé, violão, capoeira, contação/ brinquedoteca, percussão, ateliê e/ estúdio de gravação/ Revolução?/ Não, não, não.../ não é revolução./ Talvez!/ união, evolução, humanização.../ À Arte gratidão/ Aos Erês respeito, muito respeito/ na esperança que não sejam somente mais um.../ “ITALO” ou !!! *O militar despreparado*, Sidnei Ferreira

IN DEPTH

“Cuerpos Gramaticales”. Live sculptures in the ground

Sandra Milena Álvarez Ramírez

*Sociologist, Founder of the Agroarte Collective
and head of Cuerpos Gramaticales Bogotá*

Forced disappearance is a recent problem in Latin-American and Colombian history, for which the State and armed narco-paramilitary groups bear the main part of responsibility. Quoting one of the most horrendous events in Colombian history, on the 16th October 2002, Operation Orión took place in the San Javier area, commune 13 of the city of Medellín, clearly demonstrating that the State –with the support of the paramilitary- perpetrated random attacks on the defenceless civilian population over land and by air. Around 23 other similar operations, such as *Mariscal* (Marshall), *Otoño* (Fall), *Contrafuego* (Counterfire), *Potestad* (Authority) and *Antorcha* (Torch) were seen in the city of Medellín, highlighting the problem of forced disappearance in the context of the Colombian armed conflict.

Before, during and after these military operations, a mountain has been growing in this commune: the garbage dump, a place where normally the waste materials of the area are deposited, but which also constitutes the city’s biggest common grave, as it has been used to conceal and bury the bodies of over 300 persons in the context of the armed conflict the urban area has been going through.

Confronted with this situation, the organisations of victims, mainly managed by mothers, spouses, daughters and grandmothers, among others, started to go out to the public spaces to denounce, through collective actions, what was happening at the centre of the armed conflict. These organisations are born as platforms, demanding the truth around the events that took place in the context of human rights violations.

Each year, the missing persons are commemorated and honoured, with the objective of demanding a search of the garbage dump, clarification, complete justice and guarantees to assure that this chapter would never repeat itself, which is why the starting point should be the acknowledgement of the need to produce direct and symbolic acts of resistance to transform and forge the memories of the future.

“When we are moved by violence, we also start moving”

In this sense, the present article claims to reinterpret the process, developed by the collective Agroarte in Medellín’s commune 13, highlighting the collective actions undertaken and the re-signification of body, life and death in the context of the Colombian armed conflict, with the intention of giving visibility to potential political impact and to the claim for the rights of the victims of forced disappearance in Colombia.

The Agroarte collective

The Agroarte collective was born 15 years ago as an act of resistance against the garbage dump. Right next to this controversial location, women of the area started a project, combining seed planting with musical creations. Shortly after, as the conflict got deeper, the collective’s members received threats against their lives, which is why the action was moved to the lower part of San Javier, where now for the last 10 years, processes have been initiated, linked with memory, reconstruction of social tissue and communitarian empowerment, through the sowing of seeds and art. The forced displacement triggered the change towards new sowing methods in urban areas, on roadsides, on walls and in public spaces, from where scenes of fear and stigmatisation are reinterpreted. When we are moved by violence, we also start moving.

Moving the life and the activity of the Agroarte collective generated new learning processes in other spaces of the city and the country, through the organisation of practices, events and experiences related to sowing and art. The Agroarte methodology is built around the union of knowledge, looking for an expression of the person’s feeling for nature, not of the territory, captured in artistic displays which contribute to the

recovery of the collective memory, through the communities' day-to-day tasks. Stories from the fields, from the land, come together, as described by Aka, founder of the collective: "If hip-hop represents the streets, underneath the streets there is land, and the land contains our history, our memory and our struggle".

Art, body and territory

Of the many artistic events, promoted by Agroarte, there is one collective action which has maintained itself and become stronger through the years, holding a special interest due to its reflective and transforming potential for the communities. "*Cuerpos gramaticales*" (Grammatical bodies), besides being a collective action, projects itself as a methodology we can use to break through in urban public spaces. The performance action "*Cuerpos gramaticales*" saw the light on 16th October 2014 to commemorate 12 years of Operation Orión. This symbolic sowing of bodies represents the metaphor of life where, as soon as the seed grows, blossoms and produces fruits, it becomes part of the world's social structure. As one of the members expressed it, "*Cuerpos gramaticales*" is about finding our roots, not just the ones in the deep and heartfelt earth, but also with our own roots, which lay within the immensity of each single person.

The performance action is based on a series of activities trying to generate reflections on the territory, the understanding of history and achieving of collective catharsis. In these terms, the participants go through a training and preparation process which lasts four months, where they get ready, not just to be sown, but also to understand the pain and the actions undertaken in their own territory. The first phase in the training process aims at preparing the body and mobilising its emotions regarding matters like body-territory, body-memory and literature-body; in a second phase, the staging of the performance action is done, in a setting of encounters, visibilisation and protest, in which the different events in neighbourhoods, cities, countries and the world come together in order to be sown collectively, talking about their resistance, developments and utopias.

“The Agroarte methodology looks for an expression of the person’s feeling for nature, not of the territory, captured in artistic displays which contribute to the recovery of the collective memory”

This methodology of Agroarte has the purpose of denaturing the deaths, caused by the excesses of violence the territory has been suffering. This is done by creating spaces where the reconstruction of history is made possible by the voices that are resisting to oblivion, generating in return the rejection of armed conflicts of any dimension through actions which give new meaning to life and refuse to forget the crimes, committed against humanity.

The performance action “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” speaks about these bodies of social tissue which have been fragmented by violence and submitted to conditions of fear and historic silence for years; the action aims at mobilising the political, social and civilian groups with artistic exercises which reveal the struggles that are taking place in the territories. For Wilmar Botina, member of Agroarte and one of the promoters of the action, “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” not only supports the memory of the victims, it also enables encounters with collective struggles and actions in the territories.

In 2015, the second edition of “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” was organised, generating a training and preparation process with people from the territory and the city, interested in participating in the performance action with reflections around the political, social and territorial bodies, in which 25 national victims organisations joined. For the third edition in 2016, “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” was organised in three different locations in Colombia: in Bogotá, in the context of the international day of disappeared detainees; in Medellín, 14 years after the military operations, and in Tumaco, where visibility was given to the threats and forced displacement of young people. It was a commitment for the unification of Colombia’s history and to talk about memory as a form to dignify life and the people who gave their lives while building the country.

“Cuerpos gramaticales speaks about these bodies of social tissue which have been fragmented by violence and submitted to conditions of fear and historic silence for years”

This year, “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” was again organised in three locations in Colombia: Bogotá, in the context of the commemoration of the extra-judiciary executions or, ill-named “fake positives”; in the canyon of the river Cauca Antioquia, in the defence of the territories and a full search for all disappeared persons, and in Manizales, as a claim for the living memory of the victims’ organisations¹. Each edition of “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” has been an occasion to widen and give visibility to the impact of its claims, like the possibility of having a bigger social and political influence with respect to the relevance of forced disappearance as a problem that needs to be addressed.

We understand the need to initiate direct and symbolic actions of resistance in order to transform a society which has historically been hit by violence, silence and impunity. We understand death as a natural process in life, which has been denied to many through the loss of rituals and demonstrations of mourning, due to the lack of an existing body which reflects the truth of the events. People are claiming the person, not the bones, but therefore they need to follow the body’s tracks, which is the reason they organise events where human bodies are sown as live sculptures in the ground. Death is natural, but forced disappearance is not.

1. On 21st October 2017, Barcelona hosts the performance action “*Cuerpos gramaticales*” in the context of the project “Estratègies de Memòria, veritat i reconciliació de dones colombianes a l’exterior” (Strategies for Memory, truth and reconciliation of Colombian women abroad), organised by ICIP (International Catalan Institute for Peace), in collaboration with Agroarte and the support of the city of Barcelona.

INTERVIEW

Interview with Roberta Bacic, human rights researcher and collector of arpilleras

Eugènia Riera

International Catalan Institute for Peace

Roberta Bacic, born in Chile and resident of Northern Ireland, is the founder of [Conflict Textiles](#), an international collection of arpilleras very significant in the world. She holds a philosophy and English teaching degree and works as researcher in fields linked with human rights. During the period of Chilean dictatorship under Augusto Pinochet, Bacic dives into the world of arpilleras. The use of textile artisanship allows her to denounce the repression and violence from which the Chilean people, especially women, suffer. At a later stage, she will use her collection to export this language to other countries, also Catalonia.

Arpilleras constitute an artistic way of protest, political resistance, therapy, social participation... How and why are they created?

Arpilleras saw the light in Chile during the seventies as the result of a growing need for women who were direct victims of political repression to express themselves; women whose husbands, partners, children or parents had been arrested, had disappeared, been tortured, imprisoned or were living in exile. In this context, two phenomena emerged: on one hand, the need for these women to act against the events, to denounce, to be able to be the main character of their own story; and on the other hand, the need to survive, because they became the key person in the maintenance of their families. In fact, as of the year 73 –after the military coup- women who, until then, often stayed home to look after their children, had to fulfil a double role: that of a mother who had to provide, and that of a wife who was looking for her missing relatives. This is how the arpilleras workshops, the way we know them now, started.

Does this mean they didn't exist before?

Some textile works existed, like the ones of the famous Chilean folklorist Violeta Parra, but technically, they were completely different. Violeta Parra's arpilleras are bigger and embroidered, and deal with social issues, while the ones I collect are produced with bits of used material, like for example the cloth from these same women's skirts. Moreover, the embroidery is an additional element, used to join the pieces, but it is not the central one.

Your arpilleras focus on the protest against political repression?

The ones I produce, yes. But they also want to tell a story about daily life through political actions. For example, there is an arpillera called "*Corte de agua*" (Water cut) that demonstrates the women's ability to organise themselves when confronted with water cuts which are the result of political repression. In this situation, women represent their daily life and how the circumstances that surround him have changed it.

"Arpilleras saw the light in Chile as the result of a growing need for women who were direct victims of political repression to express themselves"

Has the arpillera technique also become an element of empowerment for women?

The arpilleras have been an instrument of empowerment, but also of protest, testimony and preservation of memory. It is not simply a technique, I prefer to talk about them as a language, because some arpilleras are made with very little technique, by women who hardly knew anything about stitching, but their art lies in how they manage to communicate what they want to tell. It is the language used to transmit these women's entire life, with its political and social load. As Primo Levi said, when someone goes through extreme situations, as there are the concentration camps, words are not enough to describe these experiences and new forms of communication need to be

found. And one of these forms is the textile artisanship, where a woman can continue working in her house, and while she sews, she is using the time bank: the reflection time and the clock time.

Is this language exclusively reserved for women?

I would say it is mainly used by women. Men have found other ways to testify of what they have gone through (for example, from inside prison) and in some –African- cultures, it is precisely men who produce textiles while women work on the land. But the big majority of Chilean arpilleras have been made by women, which is why they relate on how acts of violence have interrupted their daily life and show the pain from the loss or disappearance of their husbands, partners or children. This is how these women become the authors of their own story, claim authorship of their own life and become self-empowered to take up a dynamic and active role.

How did the first women organise their sewing activities?

During the Chilean military dictatorship, the majority of the workshops were supported and facilitated by the Chilean Catholic Church through the supply of physical space and material for the development of the workshops, after which the textiles were exported by the Fundación Solidaridad (Solidarity Foundation). This represented a massive export of arpilleras, thousands of them were shipped abroad in times of silence. At first, they were ignored, since they were considered simple textiles, made by women. But later, when their true value was discovered, the arpilleras were prohibited and considered subversive for many years.

“The arpilleras have been an instrument of empowerment, but also of protest, testimony and preservation of memory”

How did they evolve since then?

In many different ways. For example, nowadays, arpilleras are also used as a part of art-therapy, in order to process traumas, mostly for women who went through situations of domestic or sexual violence. They have also been used together with other objectives of protest than the political ones, they have been produced in schools and used as a technique to recover informal testimonies of unlawful acts.

The technique was born in Chile, but has also been applied in many other countries. Where did it get the biggest repercussion?

Most of the works that have been produced in other places were created based on exhibitions that we organised by *Conflict Textiles*. Other women have discovered the need to express themselves using this language. For example, in Northern Ireland, where I have been living and where conflict is alive and kicking, women have started to tell about what happened in their communities, using arpilleras. Also in Catalonia, where I first exhibited in 2008, the women of the Ateneu of Sant Roc, in Badalona, organise arpilleras workshops around the Spanish civil war, and precisely this autumn, you can visit the show "*Arpilleras en acció: Refugiats*" (Arpilleras in action: Refugees). Also in the Basque country, Argentina, England... arpilleras are being exhibit as a language and conversation form through textile material, and all of them constitute spaces where women can tell their own stories.

"It is the language used to transmit these women's daily life, with a political and social load"

How do you manage to direct the biggest collection of arpilleras in the world?

I am Chilean, I lived in Chile throughout the entire period of military dictatorship, and I have been around arpilleras since 1975. They have become an inherent part of

my life, but it has only been when I arrived in Northern Ireland that I was asked to find new methods to work with communities, opposed by conflict, which is when I started using arpilleras as a resource. At that moment, I rediscovered textiles I had bought and been given as a present, and I started a collection. More and more came in, also through donations, and now the collection *Conflict Textiles* contains more than 300 documented pieces. It is the completest existing archive worldwide, an archive I call “dialoguing”, because it is not just textile, it can also be used for exhibitions, conferences, book covers, etc. and it can interact with some associated activities.

Out of your extensive collection, there is one arpillera you feel especially connected with: the *Arpillera Peruana*, which illustrates the violence, experienced by the women affected by the conflict between the Peruvian government and the Shining Path organisation. What does it represent to you?

This arpillera, called “[Ayer y hoy. Las mujeres de Kuyanakuy](#)” (Yesterday and today. The women from Kuyanakuy), which now is kept in Peru’s memory museum (“Lugar de la Memoria, la Tolerancia y la Inclusión Social”) had a big impact on me since I used it to illustrate how the conflict in Northern Ireland could be addressed. I borrowed it from my colleague Gaby Franger, co-founder of Women in One World. It shows how women, affected by the conflict on both sides, have more things in common than they have differences. All women, on one side as well as the other, were poor, displaced, had lost husbands and children... they were more united than divided by the situation. It is a way of saying we need to look for what brings us together, because divisions only feed traumas.

This is a good example of how artistic expressions can contribute to the peacebuilding process.

Exactly, and this contribution is made by taking up a proactive role in the creation of spaces of empowerment where human rights violations are put on display. Peacebuilding is based on the ability to address the issues that interrupted our lives. For example, the arpilleras have helped women learning how to live with the pain they will never be able to forget. Someone who lost a child cannot forget. A truth commission is

important at the social level, but how can we strengthen the aspects of life that help us to move on? This is where community work and the reinforcement of community ties become important, because whatever happens to one person, also happens to others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Materials and resources recommended by the ICIP

Project. *Fanaka Arts Project*

With more than 700,000 inhabitants, the Mukuru suburb is one of the largest of Nairobi (Kenya). Just as in other places with a precarious housing plan and high levels of poverty, the Mukuru population has to face problems such as lack of sanitation, access to education, domestic violence, crime, drugs traffic and prostitution.

In this context of limited resources and lacking opportunities, a group of young people who grew up in the neighbourhood launched a communitarian movement in order to give support to children, young people as well as other residents of Mukuru and keep them away from delinquency and drug use. With this objective in mind, the Fanaka Arts Project saw the light, a program teaching the suburb's youngsters to perform acrobatics and choreographies which, later on, they can bring on stage in cultural centres abroad.

The project offers children and young people a pacific surrounding where they can develop their talent and reinforce their self-confidence. Acrobatics are a way for the artists to express themselves, and now, they can be part of a large team where everyone plays an active role and depends on the support and the motivations of his partners. In this training and learning environment, the youngest can find a mentor in the veterans while these, in return, realise they can become a positive reference for the community.

Project. *Proyecto 43-2 theatre company*

The theatre company *Proyecto 43-2* is an artistic initiative, born in 2011 in the setting of the end of ETA's violence in the Basque Country. The project, directed by the actress and journalist María San Miguel, surfaced with the intention of using theatre as a tool for coexistence, dialogue and to create bonds within the community. The name

of the company is not a coincidence: 43,313° - 2,680° are the geographic coordinates of the Gernika Tree, symbol of the Basque people's liberties.

The group works, looking from an artistic and pedagogic angle, on issues of social and political relevance through theatre productions, workshops and talks. Its main project is a trilogy on the conflict in the Basque Country, with two plays that have already been brought on stage, and another one in the production phase about to be released.

The first production, titled *Proyecto 43-2*, staged the meeting between a widow, her two sons and two friends, on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the father's killing during an ETA attack. While the characters gather around the table to share dinner, some light is shed on how the terrorist organisation's violence can break family bonds and how pain and the reconstruction of an identity are processed.

The second part of the trilogy is *La mirada del otro* ('The gaze of the other'), a play that reproduces gatherings between ETA's victims and victimisers in a mediation program, known as *Via Nanclares* (Nanclares Road), launched in the prison of Nanclares de la Oca, Alaba. Through the translation of a real event, the production shows a process of reflection and dialogue around the Basque conflict, with our gaze resting on pacific coexistence and the promotion of the peace culture.

Finally, the theatrical trilogy is closed with *Viaje al fin de la noche* ('Trip to the end of the night'), which addresses the relation between violence, identity and uprooting. The work is the result of the investigation, carried out by the company, around the ideas of uprooting, identity and motherland, defended by ETA as a justification for violence. It aims at demonstrating how the use of violence has impacted on society and at reflecting on whether the common identity, based on pain and suffering, has had an influence on the peacebuilding process.

Book. *Music and Conflict Transformation. Harmonies and Dissonances in Geopolitics*, Olivier Urbain (ed.)

This work, published by Olivier Urbain, researcher at the Toda Institute for Global Peace, addresses the power of music in the pacific and effective transformation of

conflicts, starting from the collection of articles, composed by researchers and professional musicians. The book combines the theoretical perspective of renowned academics, such as Johan Galtung, Cynthia Cohen and Karen Abi-Ezzi, with first-hand stories from musicians such as Pete Seeger and Yair Dalal, in order to explore the role of music and its use, ranging from politics to the promotion of peace.

Music and Conflict Transformation is divided in four sections, the first one offering a contextual framework and highlighting the connections between music and peace. In the second part, an analysis is offered of the impact of music on society and how it can be used in politics, with concrete examples from different places in the world, while the third section gives examples of the transforming power of music in prisons and in the context of conflict resolution. Finally, the last part collects experiences from professional musicians, interviews and anecdotes, to explain the impact of music through personal stories.

The objective of the book is getting the readers to grasp the power of music in the transformation of conflicts, and presenting the roads we can keep exploring, in order to discover its full potential in the improvement of coexistence, without forgetting the harmonies and dissonances of the present geopolitics.

Music and Conflict Transformation is [available on loan](#) in the ICIP Library.

Documentary. *La guerra dibujada*

La guerra dibujada (2006) is a documentary that captures the experience of children who went through the Spanish Civil War, at the hand of the drawings they made during this period. The film offers a new perspective, namely that of our small ones, to understand the horror of war and its effects on the daily life of the population who lived in republican territory.

The documentary, directed by Xavier Cortés and Amanda Gascó, is based on direct testimonies of children, elderly people at present, who elaborated their individual account of the conflict using nothing but paper and pencil. For most of them, it's the first reunion with their work which has been dispersed in archives all over the world and, in many cases, has been used to raise awareness, even beyond the Spanish borders, on

the cruelty of the Civil War and the children's situation during this conflict. Through the drawings, produced in the peace and quiet of youth camps on the Mediterranean coast and in the south of France, the film shows what reality represented for these children during the war: bombings, evacuations and separation from their parents. Moreover, experts in art therapy and in childhood and violence analyse the content of the works and their value as a tool to express feelings when facing traumatic events.

La guerra dibujada offers, in little more than 50 minutes of footage, a new perspective to grasp what the Civil War meant and to observe what happens when children are given the opportunity to explain what they went through. Besides being the first documented case where art is used as therapy in a massive and therapeutic manner, the drawings of the Civil War have become an important source of great documentary value and historical legacy.

Resources. ICIP exhibits

The activity of ICIP in matters of training and spreading of information concerning topics related to peacebuilding and peace culture are often linked with different forms of artistic expression. One of the institute's proper resources for promoting peace through art is the production of its own exhibit material, which are then made available to a wide range of organisations and municipalities.

The latest exhibits, set up by ICIP are [Món-tanca](#) ('World-fence', 2017), [Living on the Edge](#) (2015), [#efecteGEZI. El poder transformador de l'art](#) ('The transforming power of art', 2015) and [Paraules descalces. Dones fent pau](#) ('Barefoot words. Women making peace', 2011)

Networks. *Xabaca, international network against censorship of Arab female artists*

The [International Xabaca](#) network is an initiative that was born out of the collaboration between Novact, the Al Fanar foundation and the Jiwar association, to promote artistic creations made by Arab women as a source of social transformation and of human rights defence. The project saw the light in 2016 in order to give an answer to

the situation of censorship and repression the Arab female artists are suffering. They are facing a double oppression, due to the fact of being women, and because they are perceived by the authorities as a threat for the structures of power.

In order to give support to the creative spirits and give visibility to their public and political role, the project structure is based on two different areas, focussing on the artistic development and on the reinforcement of activism in favour of gender equality and fundamental rights, especially freedom of speech. During the first year of the network's existence, this objective has been materialised through the awarding of four grants to female artists from Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Palestine. The objective of the grant is, on one hand, to boost the artistic process of the beneficiaries, document it and spread their works, and on the other hand, reinforce the artists' role as agents of social change.

The Xabaca project wants to promote the creation of an international network which brings together organisations, working for human rights in Catalonia and in the artists' home countries. After participating in a capacity-building program, included in the project, the same women continued the process of empowerment and activism from within their respective countries, in order to reinforce the new nodes of the network.

Networks. *Cartooning for Peace*

One of the values of humoristic illustrations which can be found in the written press is their ability to transcend cultures and simplify political contexts. These graphic elements have become a tool, capable of creating intercultural dialogue, since they have always promoted the debate around topics such as freedom of speech, peace and tolerance. In the year 2006, well aware of this value, a group of graphic humourists founded the international network [Cartooning for Peace](#) in the seat of the United Nations, presided by the French cartoonist *Plantu* and under the sponsorship of the former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan. The project was born with the objective of defending fundamental rights and democracy in the middle of a tense climate, generated by the publication of some cartoons of Mohamed in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*

in September 2005, which led to protest from the Muslim community and acts of violence in several countries.

Cartooning for Peace has adopted a series of commitments which focus on three main axes: the promotion of journalistic illustrations as a way to defend human rights and freedom of speech; the use of the educational value of these cartoons to denounce whatever form of intolerance and raise awareness among young people on the main social problems through humour, and finally give support and visibility to cartoonists around the world who cannot work freely.

The network consists of a main association in Paris, a foundation in Geneva and a second association in Atlanta. At present, more than 160 cartoonists of nearly 60 countries have joined and count with the support of numerous NGOs and news media.

PLATFORM

Clues on Trump's future nuclear policy

Teresa de Fortuny and Xavier Bohigas

Centre Delàs d'Estudis per la Pau

The image we receive on the outside of Donald Trump is that of a volatile, unpredictable and impulsive person. Too often, his declarations –through news media or personal tweets– are unsuitable, inflammatory and very unfortunate. Also in the context of nuclear weapons, his statements provoke wariness and concern. Besides his personal declarations, Trump has made one concrete move regarding nuclear weapons: he has entrusted the Secretary of Defence with the preparation of a new Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which will define the nuclear policy and strategy, as well as the US' position on the use of nuclear weapons. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been three NPRs, the last one in 2010 during the Obama administration. The Pentagon has promised it would finish the new NPR by the end of the year. However, it is possible that part of its content will be made public sooner.

We need to consider that this NPR, just like the previous ones, will address two key aspects: the political angle and the nuclear arms capacity. The political angle will identify the presumed threats to the US security and set guidelines for the use of nuclear weapons. This is where, likely, we can expect the biggest changes with respect to the NPR of the Obama administration. And this is also where we have seen the biggest difference between the two previous NPRs (Bush and Obama). The Bush administration practically considered nuclear arms as extremely powerful conventional weapons. And he did not discard, by far, their use. The Obama NPR, however, stated that the USA would not use nuclear weapons against states which did not possess them and complied with their obligations in nuclear non-proliferation. The final text of Trump's Nuclear Posture Review (and not his declarations or tweets) will reveal the real US nuclear policy for the following years.

Regarding the aspect of nuclear capacity, experts believe that, in Trump's new NPR, it will be unlikely to find important changes. Basically due to the fact that the present

modernisation program, approved by the Obama Administration, is very ambitious. So ambitious that it foresees the renewal of almost the entire nuclear arsenal, as well as its launch vehicles (planes, submarines, missiles). At that point, Congress approved an expenditure of one trillion dollar over the next thirty years for this program. This initial budget has already been exceeded. According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the present modernisation plan of US' nuclear weapons will cost around 400 billion dollars in the period 2017-2026. This number already exceeds the previous estimation of the same CBO by 15%. Some of the next decade's programs consist in the replacement of the nuclear Ohio-class submarines; the design of the new B-21 bomber; the replacement of the present intercontinental ballistic missile Minuteman and the new Long Range Standoff cruise missile.

“No country can compete with the US, neither in magnitude and modernity of their nuclear arsenal, nor in budget spent on it”

This reality does not follow Trump's statements on the US nuclear capacity. Apparently, president Trump has demonstrated to be completely ignorant on this topic when saying, during an interview on 23rd February 2017, that the US “has fallen behind in nuclear weapon capacity”. Experts insist on the fact that no country can compete with the US, neither in magnitude and modernity of their nuclear arsenal, nor in budget spent on it. In the same interview, Trump said that he would like the US to be “at the top of the pack” in the matter of nuclear weapons and that “never again, the US would fall behind as a nuclear power.”

This interview had immediate consequences: Russian politicians showed reactions of alarm at Trump's comments. According to the president of the Committee for International Affairs of the Russian parliament, if Trump was to promote a strong increase of the nuclear arsenal to reach a position of supremacy, this could start a new arms race, as seen in the fifties and sixties. Paul K. Martin, Political Affairs director at Peace Action, states that expressions like “at the top of the pack” pass the message that the

US are still investing enormous amounts of money in its nuclear arsenal. He concludes that “declarations have consequences, as well as budgets have consequences.”

We already explained that, if novelties are likely to be found in the new NPR, it will probably be in its political angle. On one hand, it could be the reinforcement of nuclear dissuasion as basic pillar of the North American defence (thinking of Russia and China as real competitors). On the other hand, it is plausible to think that certain states will be marked as presumed threats to US security. Based on repeated declarations from the Trump administration, it is very likely that these states would be North Korea and Iran.

In July 2015, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, Russia, China, France and the United Kingdom) plus Germany (the so-called P5+1) signed an agreement with Iran, whose uranium enrichment program had been the cause of a long confrontation with the Western world, closing hereby the conflict. In various follow-up meetings of the agreement, the P5+1 commission stated that Iran has been scrupulously complying with the terms of the agreement. Even the US State Secretary admitted the correct compliance from Iran’s side. Nevertheless, Donald Trump has taken profit of the NATO summit in May, as well as the July G20 meeting, to push other states towards cutting business relations with Iran, despite the fact that the agreement prohibits “any policy specifically intended to directly and adversely affect the normalisation of trade and economic relations”. Moreover, the US government insists in broadening and extending the sanctions. This could weaken Iran’s influence in conflicts in which the US are indirectly involved (Syria, Yemen and Lebanon) and strengthen the US’ allies in the region, namely Saudi Arabia and Israel.

“It is very likely that the tensions with Iran and North Korea will be used to reinforce this nuclear policy”

Throughout recent years, the North Korean nuclear program has been identified as one of the great dangers that are threatening us. Even so, there is no need to exaggerate.

rate its dimension nor to forget the origin of the confrontation between the US and North Korea. Many insist in pointing out the danger the North Korean nuclear program represents, but its real capacity is often distorted. According to SIPRI, the US possesses some 6,800 nuclear weapons, of which 1,800 ready for immediate use. On the side of North Korea, estimations indicate that they have just enough plutonium to produce between ten and twenty nuclear bombs, and that their missile program is making rapid progress. Nevertheless, many experts doubt North Korea has the technology, necessary to miniaturise a nuclear warhead and place it on a missile.

Last summer, we witnessed how verbal threats between the US and North Korea escalated. This confrontation has a long history. Throughout the fifties, the US has installed nuclear weapons in South Korea, after which North Korea launched its own nuclear program, to which the US opposed in return. It seemed that, finally, the conflict between both countries was resolved when, in 1994, an agreement was signed between both parties, in which North Korea froze its nuclear program in exchange for US' help with its production of electrical power. In 2002, the Bush administration did not comply with its part of the agreement, claiming that North Korea did not comply either. Moreover, Bush defined North Korea as part of "the axis of evil", and in the 2002 NPR, North Korea was marked as one of the countries against which the US needed to be prepared to use nuclear weapons. In 2003, North Korea brought its military nuclear program back to life, which was then followed by continuous horse-trade. Over the last few years, North Korea has been carrying out underground nuclear tests. The US, on their side, has imposed economic sanctions on North Korea, carried out military manoeuvres in the area (some of them jointly with South Korea), maintains a considerable military presence (70,000 soldiers in South Korea, military bases in both Japan and South Korea, deployment of naval forces, etc.) and, recently, installed an antimissile shield in South Korea (triggering strong protest from China and Russia). In fact, the confrontation between the US and North Korea cannot be detached from the rivalry between the US and China over the control of the region.

Summarising, it is very likely that the future North American nuclear policy puts more emphasis on nuclear dissuasion and, as a consequence, is intended to justify the enormous cost of its nuclear arsenal. Also, it is very likely that the tensions with Iran and North Korea will be used to reinforce this nuclear policy. But, in fact, these tensions

are mainly used to justify the US exterior policy in the Middle East and the Pacific region, to the benefit of the North American geostrategic interests. On the other hand, Donald Trump's pejorative message on the New Start (nuclear arms reduction treaty between the US and Russia) makes us fear it will not be renewed when it finishes in 2021.

PLATFORM

Venezuela: Bad Signs?

Salvador Martí Puig

*Professor of Political Sciences at the University
of Girona and researcher at CIDOB*

After making the daily papers' headlines during the months of July and August 2017, the Venezuelan political events seem to have taken a step back. It's as if the street riots, the citizens' rallies to vote in favour of the government (electing the Constituent Assembly on 31st July) or against it (in the referendum, organised by the opposition to revoke the president on the 16th July), and the fiery speeches of the leaders of both sides, had signed a truce. However, we need to point out that this truce did not come as the result of an imminent solution to the problems and tensions, nor of a dialogue which had been established between the opposing factions, but was rather generated by the exhaustion of the opposition and of many citizens who, without therefore supporting the government, had decided to remain in their homes and spend their time and energy "solving" the infinite problems they were facing, going from buying food and medicines to watching over their personal safety. It is no coincidence that, in 2017, the exodus of Venezuelans has grown enormously, drawing our attention to the drastically increasing number of asylum seekers. People, as you could say, are issuing a headless vote.

In this context, we could state that the cost of social mobilisation against the regime during the first semester of the year has been very high –in material resources as well as in health and lives– and has not been rewarded with tangible results. Moreover, we have observed how the growing spiral of violence only gave wings to the extremes who were graphically symbolised by the opposition's encapuchados ('hooded men') on one hand and the government-sponsored paramilitary groups on the other. Without any doubt, this extreme violence has also alienated part of the factions which were pacifically protesting in the streets.

It is true that this dramatic episode cannot be understood without considering the intention of the late-chavist authorities to remove the democratic heart from the competitive electoral contests and their supporting institutions which existed in the presently suspended-constitution. And along with them, the despair of many sectors of the opposition, observing how their task of fighting for votes no longer made any sense, which left them with only one thing to do: to go out on the streets to raise their voice, denounce the regime's authoritarian retreat and put pressure on the international authorities to achieve reforms, so that their votes would recover their sense and rights and liberties would be more than just empty words.

“With the election of the new Constituent Assembly, an important segment of the population has sunk into despair; today, many people are exhausted, left without any expectations, and demobilised”

However, with the election of the new Constituent Assembly, which is setting up a semi-corporate Legislative Chamber, similar to those in real socialist regimes, an important segment of the population with little affinity with the regime has sunk into despair. We can state that, today, many people are exhausted, left without any expectations and, precisely therefore, also demobilised. This is exactly the objective Maduro's regime was pursuing: show that there is no way of changing it. It's along these lines that we need to understand the dissolution of the National Assembly, where the government party has a minority share, as well as the change in the rules of the political game.

With this manoeuvre, it now seems Maduro's government has even less willingness and incentives to reach an agreement with the opposition, other than setting up some round of negotiations of a tactical nature, in order to undermine the –already fragile– unity of the opposing platform MUD in view of the next electoral contests of 2018 –although it is not clear when they will take place, which offices need to be elected, nor under which institutional framework. Needless to say that the MUD is rather divided with regard to this issue: some minor parties want to negotiate with government in order to lift the

ban on their candidates, while others want to participate in the elections, but without negotiating, and some others openly plead for abstention and boycott.

The other question we need to raise is the cohesion of the governmental elites and their supporting bases, which are starting to make the distinction between chavism –which is already divided and has different subtleties– and madurism, which seems to be more in retreat and united at the idea of staying in power at no matter what cost. This situation supposes that, at this very moment, the military show themselves as the true referees in the political game, not just with their usual ability to negotiate benefits and privileges, but also to tip the scales when things start getting even uglier.

“The international community is neither united nor firm in its demand for the Venezuelan regime to take steps towards aperture and liberalisation”

At present, it is difficult to make predictions of any kind. If today, the social conditions, in which a big majority of the citizens are living, are much worse than those before the 1989 caracazo, unlike then, the government is presently alert –and on the defensive– for any type of mobilisation or social protest. Therefore, some people claim that there can only be substantial changes after a split in the military sector and, until now, we have only seen some isolated cases of uproar, easily neutralised, although they arose with the intention of emulating the 1958 military uprising which put an end to the regime of Marcos Pérez Jiménez. As examples, we can explain the episodes which occurred on the 27th June and the 6th August 2017. In the first case, police inspector Óscar Pérez, together with a group of brothers-in-arms, hijacked a helicopter which he used to launch grenades and open fire against the seats of the Supreme Tribunal of Justice and the Interior Ministry in Caracas; and in the second, a captain of the Bolivarian National Guard, Juan Caguaripano, initiated a “civic and military” action with the Valencia 41st Armoured Brigade which was launched from the Fuerte Paramacay military base, in

the state of Carabobo. But these two acts of uprising were easily crushed and, until today, even if many military have been sent off, no further signs of substantial division in the military ranks have been observed.

The books which address the transformation of authoritarian regimes towards democracies –very much in fashion three decades ago– pointed out that, in order to initiate a democratisation process, it is necessary to have a conjugation of, at least, five elements: a) the existence of discrepancies at the heart of the governing elite, b) the presence of dialogue and bonds of trust between a segment of government and the opposition, c) the opposition's capacity to call its bases to the streets to claim liberties and rights which were not established in the political order, d) the support of international powers in the regime's process of aperture and liberalisation and, finally, e) Armed Forces, re-treated in their quarters and without the intention of actively participating.

“The Venezuelan regime no longer fits in the category of “democracies with adjectives”, but does so more and more in that of “hybrid” or failed regimes”

When we try to see which is the prevailing reality in Venezuela, regarding the quoted elements, optimism is conspicuous by its absence, even if, in the vagueness of chaos, there is a dispersion of opinions and sensitivities, but everything seems to indicate that the governmental elites have closed ranks in the defence of their own interests, knowing that they are losing support and legitimacy, and that the only way of remaining in power is through an institutional blockage. With regard to the dialogues between the opposition and government, they are rare and lack credibility on both sides, due to the government's tacticism as well as to the constant internal conflicts at the heart of the opposition, which has a weak structure and too many open fronts. Regarding the opposition's capacity to call people to the streets, it has been effective, although it has also seen itself neutralised and having to face counter-mobilisations, organised by the regime, leading to the fact that, more than pushing for an aperture towards rights and liberties, the protests have produced social alarm and criminalisation due to the violence.

ce they generated. The international community, in turn, is neither united nor firm in its demand for the Venezuelan regime to take steps towards aperture and liberalisation, although, even if Venezuela has already been suspended from Mercosur and if Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the EU have shown themselves rather critical towards Maduro, there are still governments with affinity for the Bolivarian project. In the meantime, the threats, received from the side of the Trump administration, have generated more wariness than applause. Finally, with respect to the military institution, despite the two aforementioned incidents, the general idea remains that the Armed Forces are supporting the government and do not have –for the moment– any objection against leaving their quarters and defending it in the streets. From the above, we can conclude that the literature we need to explore is not the one which explains processes of democratisation and aperture, but rather the one which analyses involutions and reverse movements from democratic to undemocratic regimes, a process which occurred many times in the past and keeps occurring today.

We can now start looking for designations to define a regime which no longer fits in the category of “democracies with adjectives”, but does so more and more in that of “hybrid” or failed regimes. All this is happening in a country with an immense supply of a worldwide coveted resource and, as such, with many agents interested in fishing in troubled waters. I wish I was wrong –I often am– but the signs are not good.

Note from the author: I am grateful for the suggestions and observations, made by my colleagues Aníbal Pérez-Liñán (Pittsburgh University), Jorge Corrales (Amherst College) and Andreas Feldman (Illinois University in Chicago), although the responsibility of the above is exclusively attributable to my own person.

ABOUT ICIP

News, activities and publications about the ICIP

Arcadi Oliveres, Winner of the 2017 ICIP Peace in Progress Award

The ICIP Governing Board has decided to award the [2017 ICIP Peace in Progress Award](#) to Arcadi Oliveres for his tireless dedication and commitment in the promotion of peace, social justice, human rights and disarmament, from a universal perspective.

The ICIP Peace in Progress Award is granted annually and consists of public recognition, a sculpture created by Nobel Peace Prize winner, activist and artist Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, called Porta del Sol, and a financial prize of 4,000 euros.

[Previously granted](#)

ICIP announces the 2nd edition of its Hip-hop for Peace Contest

ICIP has publicly announced the [second edition of its Hip-hop for Peace Contest](#), once again with the objective of giving more visibility to the commitment and creativity of young people in the context of the culture of peace.

The contest contains two categories. In the first one, students of the Catalan compulsory secondary education, vocational education or high school level can sign up; in the second category, boys and girls between 12 and 25 years, linked to youth, cultural, civic or socio-educational centres and organisations can register. In both cases, to sign up for the contest, a group needs to consist of minimum three people.

Registration is open until 30th January 2018, which falls together with the School Day for Nonviolence and Peace (DENIP, *Dia Escolar de la Noviolència i la Pau*).

Check the regulations and the registration form [here](#).

ICIP approves a new framework of action for the next four years

The ICIP Governing Board approved the document “[Work focus for the 2022 ICIP. Peacebuilding and the development of coexistence](#)” which fixes the overall framework of action the institution will follow during the next four years. The document is based on numerous contributions, collected over the last months by various actors, from a wide range of degrees of reflection. Internal reflections at the heart of ICIP’s Governing Board and working team, and inquiries of an external nature with representatives of all parliamentary groups, private persons from the academic world, organisations from civil society and international institutions, such as SIPRI and the Flemish Peace Institute.

The work document fixes, as general action criteria, the creation of four main transversal programs, which need to include research; transfer of knowledge, training and public outreach; opinion forming; and support for concrete peace actions. These programs are:

- Program 1: Peacebuilding and the development of coexistence after violence.
- Program 2: Violence outside armed conflicts.
- Program 3: Peace and security in public policies.
- Program 4: Companies, conflicts and human rights.

Capsule #100 concludes the project “Càpsules de Pau”

At the occasion of the memorial for the International Peace Day, celebrated on the 21st September, ICIP published the [Peace Capsule #100](#), summarising the project that had been started in 2014 within ICIP’s course of action on the topic of raising awareness around peace.

Each capsule is a short reflection, lasting one minute, on what peace means, recorded on video with Catalan, Spanish and English subtitles. The testimonies can be found

on www.capsulesdepau.com, created by ICIP and the Col·lectiu Contrast, with the collaboration of Digital Dosis. With the last extension, the project has 99 reflections to show for, coming from peace researchers, activists and people who have lived through a conflict, coming from 37 different countries.

Among the latest testimonies, we highlight the contribution from personalities such as Arcadi Oliveres, economist and peace activist, recently awarded with the 2017 ICIP Peace in Progress Award; Brigitte Vasallo, feminist and antiracist writer, and Ahmed Galai, member of the Tunisian Peace Dialogue Quartet, 2015 Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The *Capsules de Pau* project was born with the objective of showing the wide range of angles and expectations that are being projected on the word Peace. Persons from all around the world, with different roles, answer the question: What does peace mean to you?, linking it with the experience people went through in countries in conflict or with their commitment against war and in favour of peacebuilding.

Last publications

Achievements and challenges in the peace process of the Basque Country, ICIP Policy Paper by Pedro Ibarra Güell.

La gestión de las crisis sociopolíticas ¿Prevención y/o cambio estructural?, by Vicenç Fisas. Published by ICIP and Bellaterra Edicions (in Spanish).

Introducció a la noviolència, by Ramin Jahanbegloo. Published by ICIP and Pagès editors (in Catalan).

El cor pensant dels barracons. Cartes des d'Amsterdam i el camp de Westerbork, by Etty Hillessum. Published by ICIP and Angle Editorial (in Catalan).

Buscadors de la veritat. Veus per la pau i la no violència (Ed. David Cortright). Published by ICIP and Angle Editorial (in Catalan).

CREDITS

ICIP's president-in-office:

Xavier Masllorens

ICIP's director:

Tica Font

Number coordinator:

Elena Grau

Electronic magazine coordinator:

Eugènia Riera

Participants involved in this number:

Sandra Álvarez Ramírez, Roberta Bacic, Xavier Bohigas, Alex Carrascosa, Cynthia Cohen, Sidnei Ferreira, Teresa de Fortuny, Roser Fortuny, Elena Grau, Marián López Fernández Cao, Salvador Martí, Ramon Parramon, Valdênia Paulino and Eugènia Riera.

Digital design and development:

Digital Dosis