

# conflict method &

## **Conflict and Method research node report on collaboration with Fredens Hus regarding the exhibition “Stitched Voices: Textile stories about political violence and resistance”, August 2018—April 2019**

### **Introduction**

This exhibition was a collaborative effort initiated by a member of the Stitched Voices exhibition team at Aberystwyth University, Berit Bliesemann de Guevara. Other parties involved in the initial planning include Roland Kostić, as the representatives of Conflict & Method node, Uppsala University, Camilla Winter Jarlgård of Fredens Hus, and Roberta Bacic and Breege Doherty of Conflict Textiles. The planning meeting took place on 4-5 March 2018 at the Hugo Valentin Centre at Uppsala University. In terms of ideas and structure, the exhibition was a continuation of the Stitched Voices series, which started at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Wales, March—May 2017, and after that was exhibited with a new Africa focus in Birmingham, November—December 2017.

In Uppsala, the exhibition, which lasted from 28 August 2018 to 21 April 2019, placed an additional focus on remembering the Holocaust. It was commissioned by the interdisciplinary research node on Conflict and Method at Uppsala University. Since the members of the node engage with different methods through which knowledge about peace, violence and insecurity is produced, the exhibition included, among others, a set of seminars with students during 2018 and 2019 on the topic of access to the field in fieldwork-based research, knowledge production on violence and peace, and transitional justice and trauma.

### **Student-related activities by the Node on Conflict & Method**

In cooperation with Fredens Hus, Conflict and Method members organized four student-focused seminars. Two seminars, one in October 2018 and the other in April 2019, were part of the Master's course *Transitional Justice: Retribution, Coexistence, Reconciliation*. Both visits to the exhibition took place in relation to the lecture on Gender and Transitional Justice. During the seminar, students visited and reflected upon the different pieces in the exhibition, watched the available documentaries with background information on *arpilleras* in Chile, and afterwards discussed the role of textiles as wordless testimonies of violence and persecution. In particular, the focus was on gendered violence

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and oppression of women's voices in transitional societies and the structural dominance of male norms within the mainstream mechanisms of transitional justice such as courts and truth commissions, which, until recently, have mostly excluded alternative ways of witnessing and remembering such as art and textiles narratives.

The third visit took place during master's course in the *Psychology of Violence*. The students engaged with the exhibition and, in the seminar discussion which was also a knitting round-table session, took up the topic of perpetrators, bystanders and rescuers. In particular, the conversation was focused on the profiles of those brave women who made *arpilleras* as a way of breaking the silence and, in so doing, refusing to be quiet bystanders. Instead, they challenged those in power and their official narrative even though it risked their safety.

The fourth visit was by the master's programme students at the Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography. Besides visiting the exhibition, the students engaged in a knitting workshop and discussed various alternative methods of knowing and learning about conflict and violence.

Overall, the Stitched Voices exhibition proved to be an excellent learning tool, as it helped students to bridge the gap between theoretical and empirical knowledge and stimulated their discussion beyond the theorising on specific topics of transitional justice. Furthermore, it exposed both the theoretical and empirical blind spots of the current research and findings on transitional justice mechanisms and their relevance for the victims of human rights abuses and mass violence.

## List of events:

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| 2 October 2018   | Visit by a group of students attending the course Transitional Justice: Retribution, Coexistence, Reconciliation, Hugo Valentin Center, Uppsala University |
| 28 February 2019 | Visit by a group of students attending the course Psychology of Violence, Hugo Valentin Center, Uppsala University   |
| 12 March 2019    | Visit by the Hugo Valentin Centre staff, Uppsala University  |

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5 April 2019

Visit by students from the Anthropology programme, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnography, Uppsala University

17 April 2019

Visit by a group of students attending the course Transitional Justice: Retribution, Coexistence, Reconciliation, Hugo Valentin Center, Uppsala University



Guided tour of the Stitched Voices exhibition by Roland Kostić for students of the seminar on Transitional Justice: Retribution, Coexistence, Reconciliation, 2 October 2018.