Peacebuilding from Multiple Voices: Understanding the Potential of Education

in the Transformation of Colombian Society

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Abstract

Peace has been envisaged as a possibility in Colombia since the signing of the peace accord in 2016 between the Government and the armed group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia), which sought to put an end to a 50-year intractable conflict rooted in social and political issues. Much has since been said about the role of education in peacebuilding. Initiatives such as the teaching of peace-related content at schools is seen as a contribution to the project of a peaceful society. However, diverse practices in education settings can provide insights on how to consolidate solid plans leaning towards sustainable peace. This research explores conceptualisations and practices of peace by education agents in formal and informal settings in La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia, a former conflict zone. First, I used a multi-sited ethnographic approach (Marcus, 1995) that allowed me to examine three locales: Schools, local library, and women's associations, and collect data from thirty participants across the sites. Second, this research was framed under a critical approach (Soyini, 2002); I view the issue of emancipatory knowledges and discourses on social justice and their material impact as vital to widen our understanding of peacebuilding from local contexts (Canian, 1993; Freire, 2011; Soyini, 2002). The findings show how conceptualizations of peace constructed and enacted in education settings and often mobilised outside the institutions and groups' boundaries. Relational spaces provide the opportunities to enact ideas of peace and invite members of the community to use their voice, recognise their dignity and co-create non-violent modalities of change. Finally, this poses challenges on education policy in terms of support for varied forms of education in rural areas and continuity beyond political discontinuities and temporary leadership and political participation of the communities historically marginalised and affected by the armed conflict and state neglect.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Colombian Government and the armed group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia) signed a Peace Agreement on November 24th, 2016. Not only did this mark the end of a 50-year armed conflict, but also opened the door for 'a process of collective construction of conditions to reassure a better future for Colombia' (Rueda, Alvarado, and Gentilli, 2016, p. 11). Nevertheless, the peace process was obscured by political strategies which misinformed the public about the implications and conditions of the treatise (Gómez, 2016; Miranda, 2016); this caused the victory of 'No' in the peace referendum held in October 2016 and plenty of lessons to learn about the pedagogy of the peace process. Thus, it was evident that the Colombian society was divided; on the one hand a sector of the population settled in urban areas have an idea of the conflict mainly portrayed by the media as alien to the cities (Valencia, 2014). On the other, rural areas have experienced the conflict and the profound influence thereof.

Authors and public discourses have spoken of a post-conflict (Ciurlizza, 2016; Juvinao, 2016; DNP, 2017) to make sense of the new historical moment and its challenges. Others, instead, express their scepticism in so far as there is still another armed group (ELN –National Liberation Army) and FARC factions, and organised crime persist. Furthermore, one of the biggest issues in Colombia, social inequality, goes beyond the existence of armed conflict (McDermott, 2016). Such an issue takes different forms: land ownership, access to education and health, employment, and the possibility of self and political expression without fear of retaliation – be it by the state or by armed actors. This, nevertheless, has always been a persistent problem in the country, and political violence finds its origins in the beginning of the republic era with confrontations between liberals and conservatives (Guarin, 2016).

Together with political violence, another social phenomenon started to occur in the country. Underpinned by economic theories of development, during the government of Mariano Ospina Perez (1946-1950), the World Bank sent Lauchlin Currie to advise on economic matters (Archivo BNC, n.d.). A consequence of this was the rapid urbanisation of

the country at the expense of the countryside because, according to Lauchlin, there was too much rural population and people were needed to work in industries in big cities (Hanson, 1987). The preoccupation of governments would be to increase wealth in the cities, whereas rural areas would be neglected, which, together with violence, brought about discontent and triggered the consolidation of revolutionary groups. In 1948 a liberal political leader, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, is killed, which would form angry mobs and violence in the capital. This event known as *El Bogotazo* left most of the city centre destroyed and reached other cities and regions of the country, which marked a period of violence between the liberal and the conservative parties known as *La Violencia*. During this period, internal migration increased dramatically since the countryside became a place with no opportunities or social guarantees.

However, not only is political violence at play here, but also violence stemming from the social and economic voids that would pave the way for a history of armed conflict and violence that was already in the making. It is during this period that the first conservative paramilitary groups appeared and liberal guerrillas – some purely liberal and others from a communist orientation – responded to the abuse, aggression and neglect perpetrated by the political elites. During this convoluted period, Colombia experienced a coup d'état in 1953 as an attempt to stop the dominating bipartisan violence. Amnesty is granted to some armed groups and the first guerrilla member to sign a demobilisation process was Guadalupe Salcedo in 1956. Four years after signing peace, he would be killed in Bogotá by the police (Espinosa-Moreno, 2020; Guarin, 2016). This would prefigure non-compliance and the lack of implementation of agreements and promises on the part of the state, which still happens up to this date. What comes along is a period called 'National Front' (1958-1974) in which the Liberal and Conservative parties rotate the power for a period of four presidential terms (16 years), which was signed in an accord attempting to stop the dictatorship and emergence of a third political party (Duque Daza, 2019).

In the last presidential election of what is known as the National Front, accusations of fraud would open the door to the consolidation of an armed group called M-19. Tragic events like the Dominican Republic Embassy siege in 1980 and the Justice Palace siege in 1985 are among the most memorable and violent events committed by this armed group (Perez, 2015). They would demobilise following twenty years of armed confrontation in a partially successful

peace agreement that guaranteed political participation and amnesty. However, Carlos Pizarro, an ex-combatant was killed, which was evidence of the risks of the rest of members demobilised (PARES, 2017). Furthermore, in 1964 two armed groups start confrontations: the Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), whose ideology was underpinned by communist ideology of Marxist-Leninism principles and liberation theory in the case of the latter. The 1980s and 1990s see the emergence of illicit drugs which will subject the country to an epoch of atrocious violence and intensified conflict as paramilitary groups spread over the country. This is an episode whose consequences still prevail in the political, social, and economic spheres of the society up to this date.

What comes next is the exacerbation of political violence evidenced in the extermination of a political party – Patriotic Union –, the killing and kidnapping of journalists, politicians, and activists. Big cities suffer from bombs and terrorist attacks, while the countryside experienced conflict more vividly as the population got trapped in the middle of confrontations between guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and the military/police. Rural areas were devastated and neglected, and most of their inhabitants had no choice but to migrate to big cities in pursuit of opportunities. Furthermore, since 1982 there have been more than seven negotiations with different armed groups such as guerrillas and paramilitary, but few of them have been successful. In the meantime, this intractable conflict has affected more than eight million people directly and a whole nation throughout (Unidad de Víctimas, 2016).

The failure of some of those peace talks resides in the lack of consensus on the part of the government and the armed groups, but perhaps more importantly, the lack of involvement of the population and an unclear vision of society in which everybody has opportunities irrespective of their beliefs or socio-economic conditions. It is here where the Peace Agreement of 2016 is an important milestone in achieving some consensus towards peace. The negotiations with the FARC initially involved some social sectors of the society and included visions of peace/justice beyond the claims of the political elites from both sides. However, such inclusion has also been the result of women's organisations who demanded more direct participation in the peace talks and reparation of crimes committed against women which have previously been unacknowledged in both impact and scale (Chibambo, 2015).

This demand reveals the great efforts of social movements to defend their dignity and rights in the face of adversity. A closer look at local experiences shows that schools, libraries, women's associations, and other social groups have persevered and come up with visions of peace that vindicate their dignity even in times of more intensified conflict. Knowledge production, artistic expression, activism, and play are among the many creative initiatives that emerged and still do up to this date. And even so, in 2016 a bare majority decided not to approve of the Peace Agreement – 49,22% voted yes and 50,78 % voted no (Álvarez-Vanegas, Garzón, and Bernal, 2016). Whether for political manipulation or not, the peace was weak from the beginning since hegemonic views on peace connected to state-building and security have prevailed in the last two decades. Beyond any criticism of the interests to explore local contexts, normally sustained by western and liberal discourses on peace (Richmond, 2006), peace manifests itself in the everyday experience of peoples and in their needs and struggles. The politicised atmosphere is underpinned by warlike mindsets and private interests of a few, which obscures the richness that needs to be explored, so that the country can move towards an understanding of their history and therefore reconcile its past and present and construct sustainable modalities of peace that encompass the needs, views, and experience of the whole nation. The Colombian Historian Diana Uribe states that 'peace is a task for the whole society,' but learning is a human experience that compels us to listen and grow out of what is shared with us. Therefore, the experience of the oppressed and marginalised by war is undoubtedly an opportunity to make sense of a nation and transition towards a better society with better conflicts (Zuleta, 2011).

1.1. Tracing my Research Journey

Despite the lack of legitimacy, the peace accords were amended and enacted against the odds. This certainly opened the door to possibilities of peace from various fronts. For instance, academic and political discourses have advocated the key role of education in peace building (Insuasty and Borja Bedoya, 2016; MEN, 2015 Reisz, 2017; Pinzon-Salcedo, and Torres-Cuello, 2017; Colín, Vera-Hernández, and Miranda-Medina, 2018, amongst others). This is evident, for instance, in the creation of *Cátedra para la Paz*, the teaching of peace-related content from a transversal perspective that, given the new government, has moved

towards a more socio-emotional approach (See Lit. Review: Peace Education). Thus, education is seen as a tool to promote peace; it is a 'space' where social change and humanity can be worked at, rehearsed and (re)imagined, but it can also be a 'space' of ideological contestation where inequalities and conflict are uncritically sustained (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Novelli, 2017).

That education can contribute to peacebuilding is the starting point of my research. But this needs a broader understanding of education that embraces alternative forms of learning, particularly in the face of conflict. I developed my interest in peace after 10 years of teaching in which I witnessed the power of forms of education – formal, non-formal and informal. However, my master's gave me the opportunity to explore the scope of forms of social movements and their efforts to overcome violence, imposed forms of development, and oppression – be it by the state or armed groups. This put me in touch with a broader comprehension of education: First, formal education (educational institutions such as schools, universities); second, incidental learning (embedded in everyday life, as we live); third, informal education (resulting from social interactions in workplaces, families, communities, and social movements); finally, non-formal education (alternative/complement to formal education) (Cf. Foley 1999; Jara, 1989 cited in Novelli, 2010; See also Lit. Review: Education and Peace).

Likewise, a part of my initial exploration had to do with peace and its ontological fluidity. Notions of peace from hegemonic discourses understood peace in terms of state-building, conflict resolution, conflict management and liberal democracy, but they seemed to fail to capture the experiences of people affected by intractable conflicts (Cf. Bell, 2003; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Visoka and Richmond, 2016; Richmond, 2006; 2010; 2013; 2014; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012; kjelsbæk and Smith, 2001). Other notions, instead, advocated bottom-up approaches in which communities had a voice to express their views and needs. Those approaches valorised the experience of the oppressed and respected their dignity.

In Colombia I grew up hearing stories about kidnappings, bombs in the city, and war in the countryside. The television used to show images of soldiers in captivity, and when I visited my grandparents in the countryside, the radio would forecast mothers, wives and

children sending messages to their relatives kidnapped in the jungle. I also remember the empty chair during the negotiations in 1998, where President Andrés Pastrana awaited Manuel Marulanda Velez, leader of the FARC guerrilla who never arrived (Cf. Cardona and Gonzalez, 2016). As I became an adult I understood more about the implications of a country in war and lived the fear and apprehension that permeate the society. Then, when the PhD opportunity arrived, I had already done some readings on peace education and post-development that illustrated effects to subvert structures of oppression and propose reflective and critical approaches to the challenges of social life.

I wanted to explore a local context in Colombia that had experienced the conflict first-hand: La Hormiga, Putumayo. This town has been historically subjected to the conflict – armed groups, illicit drugs, and state neglect – and the stigma still prevails in the rest of the country. Putumayo is a word that resonates in my memories since it appeared on television many times to report news of conflict, massacres, and natural and ecological disasters. This is a province located in the southwestern part of the country. It shares its borders with Ecuador and Peru. Most of its territory is part of the Amazon jungle, but for political and economic reasons, it is not considered entirely as such at least in terms of policy and planning by the central government. The population of Putumayo is estimated to be 341.513 (Gobernación del Putumayo, 2015). It has 12 ethnic groups, and their territory is 24.885 km^2 (Bello and Cancimance, 2011). The ethnic makeup of Putumayo is varied; besides indigenous groups, there are afro descendants and people from other regions of the country (colonos) who have migrated to this region to settle down and set up businesses.

The history of conflict in this region can be traced back to the beginning of the 1900s, where some expeditions took place to extract natural resources, particularly cinchona and rubber. This activity was extended to the whole amazon region and caused the killing of indigenous groups, displacement, changes in the ethnic composition in the entire region, and interstate disputes (Bello and Cancimance, 2011; Perez, 2016). Entire indigenous communities were subjected to work and exploit rubber and their traditions and social organisation – clearly detached from 'civilisation' in western terms. The German ethnographer Theodor Konrad Preuss, for instance, witnessed the HUITOTOS' social organisation. They lived in communal houses or 'malocas,' practiced hunting, fishing, and

burn agriculture. They were nomads and their rituals were central to their lifestyle: worked to dance (Pineda, 2003).

The indigenous communities in this region were forced to work and trapped under the domination of powerful families. In 1912, H. E. Hardenburg published a book titled 'The Putumayo: the devil's paradise', where he exposed the atrocities to which indigenous communities were subject. Pictures of people chained forced to work as rubber gatherers. The pictures illustrate and perhaps anticipate the destine of the indigenous communities that were free before the rubber fever. After the war between Colombia and Peru in 1932 and 1933, the Amazonian region – which includes Putumayo – is going to be a territory for exploitation to support the starting industrialisation of Colombia. On the other hand, religious missions arrived at these territories to educate and impart the gospel (Bello and Cancimance, 2011).

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Fig. 1. Putumayo

In the mid-nineteenth century, a process of colonisation started to take place because of a turbulent moment in the history of Colombia known as 'La violencia'. Political rigidities had exacerbated, and the country was deeply divided between liberals and conservatives as Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, a liberal political figure and presidential candidate, was assassinated (Cartagena, 2016). This caused internal migration mainly to big cities – a process or rapid urbanisation at the expense of rural areas, but also distant regions where colonos (people from other regions of the country) saw an opportunity to settle down.

In the 1960s, the fever for oil exploitation redefined some of the social dynamics of Putumayo. The Texas Petroleum Company and the Colombian Gulf Company were given 940,000 hectares for oil exploitation (Bello and Cancimance, 2011). This brought about the creation of new urban settlements and practices detrimental to the environment. Many of the inhabitants of Putumayo have never benefitted from oil exploitation or any substantial help from the state. In the 1970s oil production was in crisis and coca crops became an option for the peasants of the region. Likewise, the first guerrilla groups (EPL, M-19, ELN, FARC) arrived to control the territories, particularly the guerrilla FARC. Finally, the first generation of paramilitary groups associated with illegal drug dealing arrived in the late 1980s, which constituted a dramatic and violent change in the communities (See Bello and Cancimance, 2011).

There was an exponential growth of coca production and proliferation of violence perpetuated by the guerrilla and the paramilitary. The government of Alvaro Uribe Velez promoted the idea of democratic security (Seguridad democrática) and projects of fumigation and strict control were put in place. International aid came through the project Plan Colombia, seeking to provide alternatives for people to opt out illegal crops. However, this programme and its two phases failed to understand the needs of the people, the local economic and agricultural activities, and the need for infrastructure and education to guarantee any success (Rojas, 2007). The massacres and armed confrontations together with environmental catastrophes (oil pipes bombarded, rivers and soil contaminated with glyphosate or oil) disintegrated the social fabric and the ecological damages are still prevalent in some parts of Putumayo.

The educational situation was also precarious. There are no universities in Putumayo and most of the schools do not have resources or an adequate infrastructure. Despite being a region that contributes to the national budget, this has been a department traditionally neglected by the state. Higher education opportunities, for example, are provide by distance educational programmes or universities in near departments, which means people must move to other cities.

However, I was aware of some initiatives that have been carried away from within education – both formal and informal – since the conflict escalated up to this date (See Peace as Spaces). It is in this context that I asked the following research questions:

1. What understandings of peace are evident in local discourses in La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia?
2. How can education contribute to peacebuilding?
3. What challenges/opportunities does this pose on education/ education policy for sustainable peace?

Research of this nature intends to explore the varied educational experience in a (post)conflict zone. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) documented some of the goals of peace-building education and illustrated with case studies how those goals are achieved, but also the risks of a negative face of education that perpetuates conflict and exclusion – this in the case of ethnic conflicts. Thus, I will (re)inform the goals of peacebuilding education based on the educational experience of Putumayo, a context of conflict that goes beyond discrepancies based on ethnicity. Here the intricacies of the conflict will reveal sociohistorical, economic, environmental, and political factors, and how forms of education mitigate the effects of the conflict and propose alternative non-violent modalities. This is valuable in that conceptualisations, actions, and initiatives of peace enwiden our understanding of the historical and social processes, but also the views that bring about change usually invisible because of the dominance of global and national discourses on peace, but also views on society disconnected from the local experience and struggle.

Likewise, this research will inform about challenges/opportunities for policy with an educational aspect to contribute to sustainable forms of peace. The stories and the lessons contained in the experience of education agents in this research will portray some of the most critical aspects pertaining the educational reality, but also the social aspects that need to be properly addressed if peace is sought after. This research, then, will propose some possible trajectories in terms of policy implementation that might benefit conflict-affected regions, particularly Putumayo. Issues connected to policy making, implementation, and political participation will be explored.

I am aware of the limitations of my study. As an ethnography much of my experience and 'data' are dependent on the choices I have made. I have relied on some key participants whose experience has come across as relevant and whose insights have been of importance for my research. I am aware that in my ethnographic work and my choices and explorations I have gained depth, but the scope and comprehensiveness might be limited. In this sense, I do not intend to generalise, but rather illustrate how education constitutes a powerful tool to contribute to peace-building processes. Likewise, my access to social movements was limited. Due to their activities and my commitment to the other locale, it was difficult to set times to meet sometimes. I recognise this is part and parcel of the ethnographic work, so I respected this methodological approach and persevered in my research. However, I managed to have informal conversations, attend public events, and then schedule activities together, although it would have been more fruitful if I had had more time with these groups. Although they were very generous with their answers, I recognise more time would have been of help to get more in-depth insight.

1.2. Organisation of the thesis

The second chapter – referred to as Lit. Review in the document – presents the theoretical considerations of the study. It addresses 3 main sections: first, I present the main hegemonic conceptualisations on peace and their theoretical and methodological implications. I reflect on how those global discourses in terms of their influence and limitations on peace work. In doing so, I intend to establish a dialogue between the global, international, and national discourses on peace and the more local/hybrid approaches, which will be the focus of this study. The second section addresses the role of education in peacebuilding. To do so, I analyse the potential of education to contribute to peacebuilding, but also present a critical perspective of how education, conversely, can be instrumentalised to perpetuate conflict, oppression, and indoctrination. Finally, I present some considerations on the spatialising of peacebuilding education, which is connected to the idea of spaces in the findings. I have decided to write this final section as it has been suggested by my participants

during the fieldwork. The idea of 'space' resonated with many images portrayed in my participants' stories, which led me to explore space conceptually in relation to peacebuilding.

The third chapter presents the methodological considerations of the study. I present some considerations on the ethnographic approach I used. In this sense, two methodological stances were used: multi-sited ethnography and critical ethnography. I intended to capture the richness of the discursive practices, actions carried out, and material impact within both formal and informal education settings, so three main locales are researched here: (rural and urban) school, local library, and women's associations. Likewise, I present the methods I used, my participants and the main ethical issues emerging during my fieldwork. A central element in my methodology is the notion of learner-researcher, which guided me throughout my research and allowed me listen to people rather than study them and to establish a positive rapport with my participants.

The fourth chapter is called 'Making Sense of the Experience' and presents the findings of the study. It is divided into four main sections called 'spaces.' As it is explained in the methodology of this study, *space* is a metaphor that frequently emerged from my participants' stories of peace. They would often 'spatilise' their experiences, actions and thinking. Thus, this chapter is divided into four sections: *Spaces of Childhood*, *Spaces of Adulthood*, *Spaces of Gender*, and *Spaces of Future*. Spaces of Childhood contains stories in which children are the protagonists; arts, literacy, dialogue, and awareness are some of the strategies that schools, social movements, and the local library achieve some sort of repatriation of childhood in a context where violent modes are available and unquestioned. Spaces of Adulthood, in turn, speak of the ways in which adults – and young people – could restore relations of trust and mutual respect promoted by education settings. Such is the power of those initiatives that often an activity promoted by a school could stop killings of people. There are also stories of spaces where intergenerational communication was possible in communities where silence was the imperative of logics of war. Spaces of Gender intends to address the tensions inside some of those groups in relation to the role of women in peacebuilding. I do not intend to fall into stereotypes of women as being pacifist vs men being warlike. Instead, I explore people's views on the apparent disposition of women to peace. This section offers considerations about peace as being feminine and proposes instead the

notion of peace as being human. Finally, a thought-provoking section of how both formal and informal education open up spaces where multiple future(s) are imagined and aspired to, while seeking to overcome the present difficulties and the effects of the war.

The fifth chapter presents the discussions of the study. I answer the research questions and explore some notions of peace that emerged in the conversations and activities with my participants. These conceptualisations of peace are connected to ideas of voice, human dignity, emancipatory action, and material factors. Those ideas are explored and expanded in light of my theoretical considerations alongside my participants' insight. Such ideas of peace, nevertheless, are evident in the previous chapter on spaces, where education agents and their communities have made sense of their realities and come up with alternatives in the middle of difficult times. Likewise, some potential contributions of education to peace are presented, starting from the recognition of human dignity, the capacity to aspire, and future-oriented pedagogies. The sixth chapter presents the conclusions of the study. To bring this journey to a close, I briefly return to the notions of peace found in my study and link them to three now goals of peacebuilding education with which I intend to contribute to the theoretical debate (Bush and Salterelli, 2000). I address some of the most relevant aspects of the research and propose some areas for future research. Then, I reflect on some of the lessons I have learned at a personal and academic level. Finally, I present some of the limitations of study and reflect on what is to come for future research projects.

2. THEORETICAL ORIENTATION OF THE STUDY

2.1. Introduction

The present study is concerned with peacebuilding initiatives in local contexts, particularly those emerging from formal and informal education in Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo, Colombia. The importance of this phenomenon lies in the multiplicity of understandings of peace and, therefore, their varied actualisations. Colombia has signed a peace agreement in 2016 that marked the 'end' of a 50-year-old conflict, brought about multiple works around peace and provided visibility to existing initiatives. Traditionally, peacebuilding education is framed within conflict and post-conflict contexts, but the connections and continuations of those processes provide valuable lessons that nurture our understandings of peace. Thus, both formal and informal education settings constitute dynamic spaces where peace is creatively and critically thought of, imagined and enacted.

This theoretical review presents 3 main sections. First, I begin by reflecting on the conceptualisation and dominant discourses on peace and peacebuilding, and how such discourses dialogue with different social layers (international, national, and local). Second, I reflect on the role education from a two-face perspective: negative impacts of education in contexts of conflict and its potential to contribute to peace/peacebuilding. Here I follow the conceptualisation offered by Bush and Saltarelli (2000) on the negative and positive face of education. Then, I make the distinction between peace education and its main strands and peacebuilding education. Finally, I present some considerations on the spatialising of peacebuilding education.

2.2. Peace

Peace is not, at first glance, an easy concept to understand. It is indeed immersed in the terrain of abstraction and its ontological fluidity – for others fragility (Cf. Richmond, 2007) – makes it difficult to grasp with certainty. It has been often evoked to struggle for justice and the cease of violence, but it has also been utilised to promote political agendas and justify, paradoxically, the use of violence and coercion. However, beyond any instrumentalization of

peace, it is worth noting that any definitional attempt will often take a shortcut and define, in the first place, its opposite(s). Violence, war, and conflict, although differing in meaning, seem to be a point of departure to approach the concept of peace; peace could be seen as the absence of violence, but there are more nuances to it, and more elements are needed to define peace (Galtung, 1969; Richmond, 2007). What is more, history – as is often said – is written by the winners; this is partly true about peace: it is mainly associated with dominant discourses, leaving aside the considerations of peoples whose lives have been marked by war or violence of any kind. Even so, those marginalised discourses on peace do exist and are actualised in local communities hit by the stark realities of war.

Two aspects are play here: a dialectical relation between peace and conflict/Violence and a social dimension given by consensus – if not by all, at least by most of the parties involved. The former explains the emergence of peace as a goal: good and evil are the dyad that depicts the dynamic of conflict where 'the victory of one is based on the defeat of the other' (Brand-Jacobsen, 2002), but again, these two opposing concepts have a lot of discursive baggage, and such a depiction is unsatisfactory for a definition of peace. However, evil is not always an actor, it is often the absence of that which is needed by people to have a dignified life (Galtung, 2011). Understanding peace means understanding violence and its causes, unresolved issues and claims by people in unequal relations of power within a system and its structures (Byung-Chul, 2018; Galtung, 1969). It seems, nonetheless, that defining violence is an easier task; it is widely defined and classified socio-historically and its ramifications and types are well-known (Cf. Borovej, M. 2008; Byung-Chul, 2018; Galtung, 1969, 1990; Galtung and Jacobsen, 2002; Richmond, 2014; Zizek, 2009). According to Galtung (1977) violence is an *event* (direct violence), a *process* (structural violence), an *invariant* and a 'permanence' (cultural violence). Thus, violence can permeate all the spheres of social life to a greater or lesser extent.

Regarding the latter, it is here where many peacebuilding attempts fail as this dimension presupposes dialogue and consensus by the involved parties. Traditionally, ideas of war and peace were understood in the context of international conflict, which has contributed to such dialectics and the excessive attention to war (Richmond, 2007). In this sense, Richmond (2007) points out that International Relations (IR), for instance, has addressed the question

of peace/war by reducing it to problem-solving approaches in an attempt to understand the 'international'. The problem here, notes the author, is the dehumanisation of the subjects in conflict and disregard of strategies and approaches that differ from dominant views, particularly at a micro-level (mediation, negotiation, conflict resolution, management, peacebuilding or prevention). Then, Galtung's (1969) definition of peace makes the distinction between negative peace (absence of direct and structural violence) and positive peace (vertical development, structural integration, peace by peaceful means, egalitarian distributions of power and resources). Here I explain some conceptualisations of peace and peace agendas from an international perspective and their impact on national and local spheres, particularly in the context of Colombia.

2.2.1. Peace and the Global

Peace is not a concept that can be fully encompassed by any definitional attempt. Understandings of peace, and therefore their actualisations, depend on the context, strategies, and actors involved. However, institutions and norms of international discourses on peace, mainly liberal democratic peace, seem to be predominant, and often fail to capture the experience of those peoples impacted by conflict and their needs (Richmond, 2006; 2013; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012). Those various understandings have been addressed by disciplines such as human rights, development, and gender, amongst many others, which implies different methodological, theoretical, and practical approaches (Bell, 2003; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Richmond, 2010; Skjelsbæk and Smith, 2001).

'Negative peace' has gained more popularity in approaches to peace from an IR perspective and from mainstream academic discourses. This is particularly because, as Richmond (2006) notes, positive peace has been assumed as idealistic in nature and somewhat impossible to attain. Likewise, different theoretical debates have contributed to conceptualise peace in the realm of IR, but they have also impacted peace work on different scales: first, *Realism*, in which a hegemonic actor imposes (spatio-temporal bounded) peace normally by using of military force; second, *Idealism and utopianism* addresses the idea of socio-political and economic harmony reaching the international and national spheres, often construed as ideal and almost impossible to achieve; third, *Liberalism*, the dominant

approach, has taken place in different forms, conceives peace in terms of individual and social liberties, socio-political and economic rights, and responsibilities. From this perspective, (external or in power) actors enforce and implement normative frameworks against terrorism, guerrilla warfare and other forms of opposition that threaten those norms. Finally, *Post-modernism/structuralism and critical theory* advocate a form of peace (be it universal peace – Critical theory – or multiple states of peace – post-modernism) based on emancipatory action that includes forms of social and economic justice, representation of marginalised groups and environmental issues (Richmond, 2006; 2010; 2013; 2014).

Four generations of theory and practice of peace are outlined by Richmond (2010): Conflict Management, Conflict Resolution, Liberal Peacebuilding or Statebuilding, and Liberal-Local Hybridity. Here I summarise these agendas and illustrate some of the implications of such theoretical and methodological approaches to peace as well as some of the emerging themes thereof:

Conflict Management (CM) is based on the premise that conflict is biological, i.e., that is part of human nature. Conflict is viewed to be mainly between two actors such as nation-states, non-state actors (e.g., guerrillas, terrorist groups) and the presence of a third party seems to be vital in achieving violence termination, control, or prevention (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2007; Richmond, 2005; 2010). Third parties are to claim neutrality, so that conflict is externally managed. Likewise, frameworks on socio-political and economic dimensions are to be established – political realism. There is no clear definition of peace in this approach, and the task is rather to aim at negative peace limited by state-centric discourses. Richmond (2005; 2010) points out the main concerns of this approach as the UN states:

> The parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice (Art 33, para 1-2).

Here peacebuilding and peacekeeping are a task of states, institutions, individuals and organisations present in the international sphere, although local discourses are excluded. However, unilateral, and joint efforts to manage conflict can occur before external management. The focus of CM is to preserve the nation state and its boundaries and relations by means of traditional strategies and interventions, e.g., UN peacekeeping, (often coercive) diplomacy, mediation, negotiation (e.g., reassurance) and so on (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2007; Richmond, 2010). The role of the international community is crucial since they are to demand that negotiations take place to resolve conflicts, but it may fail as negotiations get lost between Conflict Management and Conflict Resolution (CR), let alone the fact that it is the elites who come at the forefront of negotiations, not the population and their concerns. This is the case of the failed negotiation attempts between Israel and Palestine in Madrid (1991) and Oslo (1993), which is still a latent conflict up to this date (Ben-Artzi, Cristal and Kopelman 2015; Hsiu-Ping, 2018), or a first attempt of peace negotiations with the guerrilla FARC in Colombia between 1982 and 1986 (PARES, 2019).

Conflict Resolution emerged in the 1950s as a disciplinary and practical field. Its scope is wider than CM and engages with a notion of conflict that includes psychological and sociobiological factors. In the political realm, socio-economic and political structures are viewed to hamper or deny human needs (Isard, 1992; Richmond, 2010; Bercovitch, Kremenyuk, and Zartman, 2009), and there is a shift in focus from state-centric related views of conflict to one that includes the perspective of individuals, groups, and societies. From this standpoint, conflict emerges as human needs are suppressed, which is connected to social and psychological dimensions. Thus, two theories nurture this debate; first, relative deprivation theory states how one ingroup perceives themselves as disadvantaged, which creates a sense of injustice and resentment (Smith, H. and Pettigrew, T, 2015). Second, human needs theory argues that human needs are ontological, i.e., that constitute the essence of individuals. Thus, institutions – be it political, social, cultural, or economic – need to clearly address those needs in order to resolve or prevent conflict (Avruch and Mitchell, 2013).

This approach has been important because other perspectives and roots of conflict have been considered beyond security and the nation-state. Likewise, this enables other discourses and the participation of non-state actors in peace work (e.g., NGOs). In the terrain

of peace, as human needs (e.g., values and identity) and peoples' (whether individuals or groups) deprivation and lack of representation were taken into account. Other conceptual elements were included when addressing peace and peace work. For instance, peace and development were conceived to be related. Although international organisations and states were still central, a divergent understanding advocated the work of civil societies and the idea that peace could be built from a bottom-up approach (Avruch and Mitchell, 2013; Richmond, 2010).

Liberal peace as a concept gained political and international dominance after the Cold War as a response to the emerging conflicts thereafter. This approach was based on the explicit involvement of international organisations such as UN, IFIs, and NGOs leaning towards state-building initiatives (Richmond, 2005; 2013). There is a convergence of different agendas and peace research and work that includes conflict resolution, conflict management based on a combination of peace, democracy, and free markets. Thus, liberal peace is actualised by the intervention of international organisations, donors and state institutions aiming at democratisation, human rights and economic development leaning towards 'vibrant societies' (Richmond, 2006; 2010). Under this framework, economic globalisation and neo-liberal initiatives are seen to be necessary elements for attaining peace.

A pivotal element of liberal peace is the democratization of 'failed' states. State-building is viewed to be the main target of any peace initiative. Such approach also includes the attainment of security and militarization in order to gain/maintain social order. In this sense, peace agreements and negotiations seek to build a strong sense of security and military presence that guarantees law and order. Pre-negotiation, substantive and renegotiation agreements are put in place with the assistance of third parties to carry out negotiations that end up in an agreed upon agenda (Bell, 2006; Mitchell, 1981). However, although this approach recognises the importance of civil society and their needs, the work around peace – negotiations, agreements, and other initiatives – usually are dominated by the political and social elites despite the participation of local actors:

> Liberal peacebuilding's key problem has been the juxtaposition of its normative and
> cosmopolitan goals with its inability to recognise difference and redistribute a peace

dividend at the grassroots level. Power and the peace dividend has instead generally stayed in the hands of elites. Any improvements in development for the general population are set into harsh relief by escalating inequality, which is perhaps the result of the liberal-peace model being heavily influenced by neoliberal versions of capitalism (Badie, 2000 cited in Richmond, 2014).

An example of this is the peace process in Guatemala where different negotiations took place over the course of a decade, from 1983 to 1996, initially promoted by Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela. This internal conflict was rooted in issues of inequality such as discrimination of indigenous peoples – almost half the population, land ownership, unequal agricultural system, and a military coup under the auspices of the CIA in the context of the Cold War (Blum, 2003). The result of such negotiations touched on aspects as identity and rights of indigenous people (AIRIP, 1995), social-economic aspects of agriculture (ASEAAS 1996), and education as a central element that included no discrimination of gender or race, equal access, intercultural and bilingual education, and participatory curricular transformation sustained by an educational reform (Poppema, 2009).

However, people's concerns and participation were dismissed by the implementation phase. For instance, there was a dual agenda on the part of state agents where self-managed schools were promoted as opposed to public schools and the educational debate on multiculturalism and identity was polarized. Finally, the dominant discourses of state-building and vibrant democracy have been reinforced by the implementation of economic policies that affected the economy, education, and perpetuated and sustained inequality even up to this date (Poppema, 2006; Sanchez, Scott, and Lopez, 2015). A liberal peace approach has failed to address the causes of conflict rooted in a lack of recognition of the multicultural diversity of the population, their needs and participation in the social and economic life of the country.

2.2.2. Peace and the National: Colombia

Colombia has experienced a 50-year armed intractable conflict deeply rooted in social and political issues. Land ownership, political participation and economic inequality have been at the heart of the internal conflict. The state has failed to provide avenues of socio-

economic development for people, particularly in rural areas. In contrast, the scope of political violence has reached all the corners of the country and, together with illegal activities such as drug dealing, worsened the social and economic situation mainly in rural areas. Such a failure has been capitalised by armed and illegal groups who have imposed economic activities to the communities, but also external logics of war that have impacted the lives of thousands of citizens (e.g., internal displacement) and caused 262.197 deaths (Shultz, et al., 2013; Romero, 2018).

Only until 2016, and after several attempts (See INTRODUCTION), did the Colombian Government and the armed group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Force of Colombia) sign a peace accord in Cartagena, Colombia. The negotiations and singing of this substantive agreement took place in Havana since 2012 and sought to end the armed conflict with the FARC and provide avenues for their political participation. Cuba and Norway served as mediators during the negotiations and Chile and Venezuela as external third parties. The agreement deals on aspects such as rural development, political participation, and illegal drugs. Likewise, a third point, and perhaps the most important achievement of the agreement, deals on victims, which included a special jurisdiction for peace, initiatives of reparation and non-repetition (Cf. Acuerdo Final, 2016). Finally, a ceasefire and reincorporation were treated in the last stage of the peace dialogues. However, there is still another armed group, National Liberation Army (ELN in Spanish) and a ferocious fight against crime, drug trafficking and rapid deforestation now intensified by the absence of the guerrilla FARC in the territories (Goenada, 2017).

The Peace agreement has 6 points that attempt to address the main issues behind the conflict. The 3 core groups of the agreement are as follows: first, Ideological (comprehensive rural development, point 1; political participation, point 2; and illicit drugs, point 4); on these points, both the government and the guerrilla offered their views on the 'world' and some agreement – albeit difficult – was necessary and finally achieved. Here the emphasis was to help rural regions achieve some development in terms of housing, access to education, health, and water, among others. Visions of state-building and liberal democracy are at play here (See Richmond, 2007: 2010): there is a commitment to help people legalise landownership and be part of a tax system. To do so, the State assumes the commitment to

putting in place mechanisms to help peasants have access to private property and access financial support (See Acuerdo Final, point 1). Likewise, political participation was an important aspect that enabled the opposition statute, which was contained in the 1991 constitution, but not enacted until then. This allowed for a more open democratic exercise in that opposition political parties have access to political activity in the congress. Finally, a fundamental aspect discussed was the participation of victims in forms of 16 seats in the congress, who are to be democratic elected, but whose seats are guaranteed (this has not happened yet as it has met huge resistance by traditional political sectors).

The second core discussion of the agreements is Justice, point 5, where victims and their rights are at the heart of the negotiations. This point creates the mechanisms to promote transitional justice, truth, and reparation: The Truth Commission, which aims at contributing to an understanding of the conflict, its victims – children, adolescents, and gender-related victims – and multiple (See Acuerdo Final, point 5). The Search Unit for Missing Persons, a 'high-level unit' in charge of locating and identifying missing persons, or their remains and return them to their families. This includes collection, organisation, and analysis of information for searching people and the creation of a national record (See Acuerdo Final, point 5; Guarin, 2016; UBPD, n.d.). Third, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace, which is to judge crimes committed within the Colombian territory and the timeframe of the conflict (Morales, 2021).

These set of agreements give account of various visions of peace: first, Human Rights discourses are present in the agreements recognises victims, their rights to know the truth and reparation. Second, conflict resolution views are play since the agreement, and by extension both parties, that conflict has its roots in 'political, economic, and social structures' (Izard, 1992; Richmond, 2007: 2010). A liberal conception of peace is at play here too, since the agreement aims to strengthen a vision of that state and its presence in rural areas where people are expected to have access to basic services, including housing and landownership, and at the same time, a more robust tax system is sought to be put in place (See Acuerdo Final, point 1). All these coexistence of discourses around peace recognises the 'multidimensional and multilevel range of actors' involved (Richmond, 2010). However, some tensions emerged during the process and the promise of an inclusive peace process was not

initially fulfilled. For instance, the presence of women and victims of sexual violence did not happen until a year after the peace talks began (Chibambo, 2015). However, women mobilised and achieved their presence in the talks, which gives account of the powerful organisation of women in the country, but also the tendency of governments to conduct negotiations from at top-down approach in which the interests of the male elites prevail.

This so-called post-conflict (Ciurlizza, 2016; Juvinao, 2016; DNP, 2017) – perhaps more accurately to say post-agreement – has encountered huge resistance in the society, particularly in big cities, and by the traditional and more conservative political parties. Furthermore, the government in office after the agreement have done little to guarantee compliance with the agreement. In the first stage of transition from war to peace a country is most fragile (Murphy, Pettis, and Wray, 2016). In the meantime, the struggle for compliance and vindication of victims proceeds at a snail's pace. Some political individuals, civil society and institutions do their best to strengthen the initiatives and agreements contained in the treatise. However, the roots of the conflict (e.g., land ownership, political participation, security, agricultural sector) almost remain untouched, and the efforts to keep the agreement afloat are not sufficient.

2.2.3. Peace and the Local: Advocating Hybridity

The peace accord has opened the door for exploring possibilities of change and transformation, although initiatives have taken place in the middle – and despite – the conflict. The work of the communities affected by the armed conflict is vital insofar as they provide authentic accounts of the effects of the conflict and self-sustaining conceptions of peace (Richmond, 2006). What tends to be the case, particularly in liberal approaches to peace, is the provision/impositions of notions of peace sustained externally by state or international actors. Here the concept of civil society is of pivotal importance since their work and struggles aim at sustainable forms of peace (more than just notions):

'The civil peace often arises from localized organizations and their campaigns, which are normally connected transnationally to other similar movements around the world. Civil

society develops as local organizations, communities, and political actors coalesce around the various dynamics and requirements of social justice' (Richmond, 2008).

Peoples' struggles to overcome war and vindicate themselves are framed withing emancipatory forms of peace. Their mobilisations and organisations are motivated by issues of representation, sovereignty, opposition to conflict, western development projects and other neoliberal agendas that go beyond their boundaries and touch on state and non-state actors (Escobar, 2010; Novelli, 2010; Richmond, 2010). From a post-structuralist perspective, a universal emancipatory project is underpinned by local agency, resistance, and autonomy. Thus, both critical and post-structuralist approaches view the importance of a shift from installation of hegemonic forms of peace to everyday notions of peace in tune with the regional, national, and global outreach (Richmond, 2010). This is evident in the consolidation of social movements of different kinds who have appropriated forms of resistance anchored to cultural expressions and political action:

> Social movements, too, seem to shift their focus from class, race, and other more traditional political issues toward the cultural ground. In the past twenty years emerging social conflicts in advanced societies have not expressed themselves through political action, but rather have raised cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices. The crucial dimensions of daily life (time, space, interpersonal relations, individual and group identity) have been involved in these conflicts, and new actors have laid claim to their autonomy in making sense of their lives (Melucci, 1995)

A good example of social movements and their work on peacebuilding is *Ruta Pacífica*. This movement started in 1996, in the Cauca region. This movement is feminist in nature and seeks to vindicate women's rights and stop violence against women in the frame of the conflict, where rape and violence have become a symbol of power and domination (Montejo, 2003). Thus, their political activism advocates non-violent action and dialogue nationwide, which aims at recognition of difference underpinned by principles of justice, equity, and autonomy (Rutapacifica, n.d.). Here the political merges with the cultural in the pursuit of sustainable and non-violent modalities for the peoples. Furthermore, their work connects with different women – peasants, indigenous, and women in urban areas – and extends to

international organisations creating – e.g., Peace Women Across the Globe. All of this contributes to the creations of cultural, social, and political programmes where women oppose to war and propose alternatives to dismantle structural and political violence (See Spaces of Gender).

In relation to the peace accords, the influence of women and their political activism was fundamental in their inclusion in the peace talks (Chibambo, 2015). Furthermore, motherhood constitutes a political nature in the context of Colombia – and Latin America – where the state has historically perpetrated crimes against the populations for political reasons – in Colombia this has happened from within the military, the police or with the paramilitary – (CINEP, 2019; See also Gonzalez and Varney, 2013 on Truth Commissions from below). A point in case is Madres de Soacha who are mothers of approximately 6400 young men killed by the military and reported as members of the guerrilla between 2002 and 2010 (ODHDH, 2012). *Madres de Soacha* have mobilised culturally and politically to demand truth and reparation and, together with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), it has been possible to know more about this episode in the history of conflict (Calle Aguirre, 2021). Likewise, cultural projects such as memory work and photography have contributed to seeking truths and raising awareness both at a national and international level (See Sanchez, 2017).

Some local communities have created their own mechanisms – organisations like councils – to organise their social life. In this sense, the presence of armed actors and development projects have changed their social and economic organisations drastically. Thus, community councils have been a mechanism to declare themselves neutral in the middle of the conflict, which has somehow shielded them from ideological rigidities and retaliations (Molano, 2006). Their learning and how they make sense of their world happen in their struggle for dignity and respect, and it has been effective to a certain extent; in this sense, the presence of social organisations and the Church has been vital in their fight for justice (Baquero, 2007; Molano, 2006). Another characteristic of these councils is the respect for diversity as this region is inhabited by Afro, indigenous and mestizo (mixed race) population, where ancestral knowledges are valorised and preserved despite western agendas of development.

Local libraries are centres that have managed to remain open despite the armed conflict (Cancimance, 2019). Thus, communities have found non-violent alternatives based on cultural activities, literacy and play offered to people irrespective of age, gender, or ethnicity (See Spaces of Childhood and Spaces of Adulthood). Here there is often work with the communities, social movements, some NGOs, and State institutions (e.g., programmes of the Ministry of Culture). Such dynamism extends its scope to remote areas of the community and is possible thanks to the flux of people, ideas, and resources – although often not enough (RNBP Colombia, 2018). Nevertheless, notions of peace rooted in the experience of marginalised communities are connected to possibilities of education and recreation and connects to other organisations to assist isolated communities (See What understandings of peace are evident in local discourses in Colombia? Question 1).

2.2.4. Everyday peace

The local cannot be understood exclusively in terms of networks of groups working around peace. There is a micro level worth exploring so that new understandings and conceptualisations of peace can be brought to the forefront. The local, then, is also and primarily constituted by actions that take place daily. It is immersed in the everyday of people's lives and leans towards the configuration of new non-violent modalities while navigating life (See Mac Ginty, 2021). While there are schoolteachers, volunteers in local libraries, women partaking in social movements, there is a set of spaces where these people – and everybody – navigate the social world. Beyond any political, social, or educational organisation, there is a continuum of actions, events, thought process, decisions, and encounters that configure modes of being. It is here in the porous limits between the public and the private where notions, logics, and practices emerge and strengthen visions of peace.

Such interaction between the public and private is nevertheless multifaceted. Whereas some people in villages live their lives within the geographical limits of their region and operate in relation to their neighbours, other persons configure modes of existing and re-existing seeking for more substantial changes normally associated with the knowing of truth and reparation in the face of conflict. An example of this is the political struggle of Madres of Soacha in Colombia, Madres de la plaza de Mayo in Argentina, or the struggle for

memory in Colombia and Mexico, where the state has tried to erase their responsibility in the killings of civilians and the perpetuation of inequalities in conflict (CNMH, nd.; Bosco, 2006; Castillejo, 2006); their everyday is deeply political and emancipatory. Both cases of everyday existence and struggle are equally powerful even if their outreach is apparently uneven. What is more, they contribute to an expansion of the – ontologically and epistemologically fluid – notions of peace (Mac Ginty, 2021).

This is evident, for instance, in the micro spheres of education where classrooms, class breaks, teachers' conversations, students' activities, pedagogies, and the relation student-teacher prefigure – when done well – forms of conscientisation and change leaning towards understanding the complexity of the socio-historical makeup of the conflict and non-violent alternatives. Here dialogue is crucial and better forms of conflict are preferred and rehearsed (Nieto, 2020, Sanchez-Meertens, 2017, Zuleta, 2017 on better conflicts). Again, the distinctions between peace education and peacebuilding education are porous. The practices and dialogues that constitute the practice of education can somehow be understood in the terrain of the quotidian. The experience of the conflict, although different in cities and the country site, contribute to the interweaving of small changes in language, thinking, and action. All these could be seen as isolated and irrelevant activities situated in the quotidian, but their scope relates to the immediate context and larger socio-political and economic spaces (Mac Ginty, 2021). For instance, people get education or undertake entrepreneurial and cultural activities that motivate and benefit their communities, but their actions and thought processes affect the political and social makeup on a larger scale (e.g., democratic elections and economic activities or a generational change of mindset). It is, as Lie (2016) notes, spaces where individuals exercise their agency and display actions of subversion, resistance, and creation of alternatives.

Another aspect of everyday peace has to do with the concept of circuitry proposed by Mac Ginty (2021). It describes the connections of apparently isolated and unimportant actions that influence socio-political matters. In this sense, local libraries, for instance, embody a particular ethos that embraces dialogue and non-discrimination, which ramifies in the relations established with members of the outside community – be it children, young people, or adults – and with members of a broader regional, national, and sometimes – as has been

the case – international community (See spaces of Adulthood). Radio programmes and other social media have become a vehicle to express a dissenting voice against violence, but also to know/learn about the struggles of other peoples and the most concerning issues at a global scale, e.g., the environmental crisis. Not only does this imply a sense of connection and networking at larger scales – sometimes unknowingly, but it also fosters a sense of cosmopolitanism from below where dynamics of solidarity, identification with others, and human fellowship grow (Ingram, 2016).

Such networks and connectivities nurture people's own understanding of their struggle and their claims and aspirations, expand notions of peace, and influence larger spheres of political, economic, and social power (Mac Ginty, 2021). What is more, when approaching everyday peace and its workings, the notion of circuity helps us to situate ourselves and the actors and persons engaged in those daily process at a horizontal level and supersede the micro-geographies in which our lives are confined (Mac Ginty, 2021; Molano, 2001; see Making sense of the experience). This perspective is innovative insofar as it demystifies the conception of the expert and allows us to establish relations of understanding of the imbrications of networks, actors, and assemblings that facilitate the interaction of the human and non-human and bring about social change (Cooler and Frost, 2010; Escobar, 2018). Here, then, the notion of the everyday provide the lenses to observe that everything and everywhere is political (Demetriou, 2016).

The scope of such localised actions can be expanded horizontally (scaled out) or formalised at different levels. Thus, Mac Ginty (2021) notes that scaling out everyday peace initiatives might be more effective as it escapes the rigidities of bureaucratisation. In Colombia, everyday actions of communities, which includes forms of organisation, declaring neutrality in the middle of armed conflict has been taken as an example on similar localities (Baquero, 2014). Likewise, the good practice of libraries in conflict zones has been spread in other libraries throughout the creation of networks amongst librarians, volunteers, and other agents that have facilitated channels to communicate and exchange practices (RNBP, 2018). Sometimes, the institutional side is important here as it provides mechanisms of dissemination, but other times social media, networks, and the good intervention of NGOs or other agents make such connections and expansions possible.

2.4.   Education and Peace

Before exploring the relationship between education and peace, it is necessary to clarify what is intended by education. Foley (1999) describes education operating in four avenues. First, formal education that takes place in educational institutions such as schools, universities; second, incidental learning that is embedded in everyday life, as we live; third, informal education that occurs as a result of social interactions in workplaces, families, communities and social movements where learning takes place from one another. Finally, non-formal education occurs as an alternative/complement to formal education through systematic teaching and learning. However, some forms of education such as popular education have assumed a more active role in challenging structures of domination; this is the case of Latin America where popular education in the form of unions and social movements has emerged to defend the interests of the poor (Jara, 1989 cited in Novelli, 2010).

This section presents some considerations on the role education in peacebuilding. First, following the proposal by Bush and Saltarelli (2000), which is an important debate up to this date. I analyse how education has a negative side in which inequalities are not addressed and often sustained. Then, I reflect on the potential of education in peacebuilding. At the end of the study, I intend to offer some other contributions in terms of the potential of education to peacebuilding (See DISCUSSION).

2.4.1.   When Education does not Equal Peace

Much has been said about the potential of education for peacebuilding (Cf. Harris, 2004; Sumida, 2011; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Murphy, Pettis and Warry, 2016; Insuasty and Borja, 2016; Foley, 1999). Nevertheless, this specialised relationship between education and peace and justice does not remain unquestioned. What emerges here is a two-face perspective; on the one hand, a face of education that contributes to peace from many fronts. On the other, a negative face that shows little work on dismantling discrimination and contributing to alleviating conflict. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) expose some of the scenarios in which education

does not contribute to alleviate injustice; on the contrary, it becomes an instrument to maintain it. Such cases are summarised here in three main categories: uneven distribution of access to education, cultural repression and political manipulation, and sustained inequalities explained in the context of Colombia.

First, education has often been a platform accessible to some social groups and, at the same time, denied to others (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Such discrimination has been traditionally based on ethnicity or social status. An example of this is found in most Latin American countries including Colombia; indigenous groups and some other economically disadvantaged groups have been deprived of education opportunities, human rights, land ownership, and access to other material goods, which frustrates people 'useful participation in social life' (Young, 1990). Despite the increase of education access to people – school access in Colombia is now 72% (Santa María, 2020; Radinger, et al., 2018), social stratification is still a determining factor in producing 'selection, exclusion, bias, and dropouts' (Peña-Rodriguez, 2013). This condition stands for nothing else than marginalisation of various degrees, paving the way for hostile relationships with dominant norms and groups (Appadurai, 2013). That is to say, school and university choice determine to a large extent people's possibility to fully participate in social and economic spheres of society.

Second, education has also been instrumentalised to sustain cultural repression and political manipulation. The Guerrilla FARC in Colombia and their instructional system is a case in point. During more than five decades this armed group configured a sort of 'encyclopaedic project' in which their ideological apparatus was strengthened and passed on to subalterns (Mejía, 2018). Lizarazo (2019) distinguishes a set of six types of learning imparted: life skills, armed confrontation, moral structure, political and ideological doctrine, history and rules, and technical knowledge. Literacy and numeracy were connected to the quotidian of war and the phrase said by children when learning to read *'mi mama me ama'* (my mother loves me) was transformed into a doctrinaire and paternalistic statement: *'Manuel ama al pueblo'* (Manuel – the founder of the guerrilla FARC – loves people) (Mejía, 2018). Commanders were exalted and positioned as the only role models available. Thus, people's experience of the world is co-opted by the dynamics of the conflict and its ideological rigidity and conforms to the precarity of the space between state neglect and armed conflict.

Thus, the state has failed to provide education and social assistance to its citizens, particularly in rural areas, which has created a socio-economic vacuum that the armed conflict has capitalised on. Therefore, the alternatives for people are reduced to illegal activities and whether military or – often forced – guerrilla recruitment. The absence of diverse forms of education and cultural resources is a strong form of marginalization that perpetuates inequality, violence, and deprivation. Not only is it shelter and food – which is also absent – that configures this landscape of inequality, but also the lack of opportunities for people to exercise their citizenship with dignity (Young, 1990). Although the peace agreement has provided more access to projects and education initiatives, there is still a lot to do to help those communities historically neglected by the state (Radinger, *et. al.*,2018). The instruction imparted inside the militia has been sustained as allegedly anchored in principles of freedom and liberation. But neither freedom nor liberation are actualised in the educational practices inside the armed group. On the contrary, its ethos and content privileged their ideology and discard other forms of thinking, for example, materialist philosophy was viewed as a unique form of philosophy, depicting other forms of philosophical thinking as delirium (Mejía, 2018), or put it otherwise, education has been a weapon to repress freedom of thinking and development of people's pursuit of self-expression.

Third, in Colombia there has been a discursive creation between the 'civilised' and the 'savages' inherited from the colonisation and reproduced in the republic (Law 89 of 1890). Likewise, educational provision was put in the hands of the Catholic Church in the Concordat of 1887 (Cf. Art 12 of Concordat 1887), which has been all but an imposition for Afro and Indigenous communities – when given education; what emerges here is cultural imperialism and the undervaluing of their ancestral knowledges, cultural heritage, and identity, which has been intensified during five decades of conflict (Bolaños, 2018; Tuirán, 2016; Young, 1990). Over the course of two hundred years, however, such conditions have not changed significantly. Although school coverage has improved considerably, Afro and Indigenous communities remain marginalised, and their cultures depreciated.

Furthermore, some regions have been historically neglected and exploited by a centralist governmental approach. Regions that possess natural resources and the main port

of the country have been subjected to extraction and neglect by the state and discrimination based on race and culture background. Thus, peoples from La Guajira to the north, Embera katío to the northwest, Buenaventura (where the main port is located), and the amazon to the south, to mention a few, have been deprived not only education that aligns with their ancestral knowledges and cultural heritage, but also with opportunities to make decisions regarding their economic and social development and preserve their territories (Birds of Passage, 2018; CEJIL, 2018; Tuirán, 2016; Rodríguez-Garavito, 2017). This is problematic insofar economic and education deprivation have contributed to lowered esteem, stereotyping and powerlessness (Young, 1990). Taylor (1992) notes how dialogical relations facilitate the construction of self-image and authenticity. However, while education has the potential to provide opportunities for dialogue and recognition of cultural diversity leaning towards a more open participation in society (Novelli, Lopes-Cardoso and Smith, 2017), its absence has hindered the communities from the construction of a positive image of themselves and the cultivation of their dignity, which in turn has created animosity capitalised by illegal and armed actors. In other words, the absence of education has brought about segregation, discrimination, and disrespect for these communities, which has even openly portrayed in political discourses and inaction (Alvarez, 2012).

2.4.2. Peace Education

Peace education emerges with the aim of studying the causes of war and its prevention, and soon evolves to the study of violence and its manifestations. It seeks to reflect on ways to counteract violence that reaches structural and international levels (Ardizzoni, 2003; UNESCO, 1945). The premise that education is a potential tool to prevent conflict and addresses the roots and forms of violence and alternatives to it within a context is reflected in the teaching of (Groff, 2002; Harris, 2004). The fact that peace means different things for different people presupposes a multiplicity of teaching practices contingent upon socio-cultural aspects and teachers' creativity (Bar-Tal, 2002), which is also evident in various forms of teaching and content under the framework of peace education.

The world war I and II paved the way to the teaching of peace-related content that would somehow prevent war against foreigners. Here peace is viewed as attainable through

universally shared knowledge based on the work of Moravian peace educator Comenius (Harris, 2004). From the international sphere, peace education has seen as an important element in preventing conflict. The UNESCO constitution states that 'wars begin in the minds of men, and it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed' (1945), although this fails to capture the complexities of many conflicts in which war is the result of inequalities, injustice, or external interventions that affect people's lives. It also assumes men are prompt to war and overlooks structural violence, which renders people's struggle for peace invisible. Education and the arts and culture were viewed as potential tools to counteract violence and develop people's creativity, which would promote peace (Read, 1949; Montessori; 1974). Likewise, the war in Vietnam and the increasing nuclear menace contributed to the increasing of teaching of peace in university campuses and schools in the united stated and Europe (Harris, 2004). A wave of peace education was concerned with planetary consciousness, international awareness and global citizenship that would open up possibilities to change structures and patterns of violence (Heater, 1984; Reardon, 1988).

Another strand of peace education stems from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Peace educators here are concerned with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote a sense of equality, dignity and respect for oneself and others. Here, too, the aim is learning about global institutions, treaties, international courts, and mechanisms that promote economic, social, and political justice. This type of peace education is somewhat anchored in the work of *perpetual peace* by the philosopher Emmanuel Kant (first published in 1795) that sustains that all human beings hold equal membership of the universal community of humanity. Furthermore, this type of education has translated into the creation of rights respecting schools and university courses. However, *human rights education* and culture have superseded the boundaries of formal schooling and extended to activism and grassroots at a local and cross-regional scope (Cardenas, 2005).

Likewise, a form of *critical peace education* is concerned with the development of human potential and the possibility of a non-violent coexistence connected to the overcoming of structures of oppression and structural violence (Shapiro, 2015). Brantmeier (2011) proposes 5 key elements in the pursuit of peaceful change processes within education: (1) raising consciousness through dialogue; (2) imagining non-violent alternatives; (3) providing

specific modes of empowerment; (4) transformative action; (5) reflection and re-engagement (p. 56). This form of peace education seeks to inform both (un)official curriculum activities and structure and teachers' ethos (Verma, 2017). Thus, educators are compelled to move from models of education that dehumanise learners towards more reflective ways of learning that open up possibilities of freedom and liberation (Freire, 2017, first published in 1968).

Here, too, values of justice, equality, shared values, and freedom that nurture a democratic society are pivotal in the pedagogic action taking place in schools, but also outside the boundaries of formal education (Giroux, 2011). For example, some schools have come up with creative ways to establish relationships with the communities; sports, cultural events – theatre, radio programmes, storytelling, and others – or ecological activities become part of the actions outside the standard curriculum. Likewise, other forms of education – informal – participate in the creating of alternatives that promote sustainable and non-violent forms of living in the communities. An example of this is the many activities of libraries in Colombia, where actions have (re)configured forms of being part of a community beyond the ideological rigidities of the conflict and, at the same time, constitute emancipatory actions that oppose to war (See Spaces of Childhood and Spaces of Adulthood). The aforementioned examples also fit in the category of peacebuilding education, which is the focus of this study. However, sometimes the boundaries between peace education and peacebuilding education are porous. peace education, particularly in conflict-affected societies, has a peacebuilding dimension. Some regions might experience conflict to certain degree, e.g., rural versus urban areas. The urban experience of conflict can be significantly less intense, but peace education can reorientate perceptions and understandings of conflicts from a reflective and critical manner, which in turn might educate citizens in tune with the realities of war and with alternatives to it (Sanchez-Meertens, 2017).

The preoccupation with the environment has also become latent in education settings since projects of development and economic globalisation have had dire consequences for nature and entire peoples. This has also been the cause of conflicts in different parts of the world (Cf. Castro and Nielsen, 2003; Gritten, 2008; OCHA, 2021). Therefore, an environmental approach to peace seeks to reconcile the human and non-human, natural world, and reflects on issues of power and oppression emerging from the mis(use) of natural resources and

ecological places, which is vital to achieve sustainable peace (Brantmeier, 2013). Conservation and environmental literacy are the focus of environmental education leaning towards peace, and social change goes hand in hand with human needs both material and non-material (Ahearn, 1994; Harris, 2004; Orr, 1992; See DISCUSSION).

Conflict resolution education is based on the need to learn to deal with conflict through dialogue and cooperation. Under this framework, students need to develop a sense of community and self-worth that, together with an openness to dialogue and problem-solving, brings about creative solutions to conflict (Harris, 2004). Schools and curricula seek to promote environments of peaceful relationships by developing and nurturing communication skills, mediation, and freedom (Akgun, and Araz, 2014; Hakvoort, 2010; Jones, 2007; Trinder, *et. al.*, 2010; Smith, 2006). This approach has been widely embraced in schools as is the case of USA, where approximately 10% have implemented this type of education (Sandy, 2001). In some countries like Colombia, Mexico, and El Salvador, education policy has implemented strategies such as school and peer-mediation to mitigate forms of aggression and discrimination (Cf. Colombian Law 1620, 2013; Romero, Alamilla and Garcia, 2017; UNICEF, 2018).

The understanding of peace in terms of conflict resolution has extended to the creation of an industry of peace. Private institutions and philanthropy offer courses, coaching and diverse forms of certified training – including levels – that seek to teach people to prevent and manage conflict in the workplace or education institutions. (Cf. NVC Resolutions UK, n.d.; Align Mediation, UK, n.d.). The focus of conflict resolution initiatives, and peace education in general, addresses impulse control, negotiation skills, emotional awareness, and problem solving amongst others (Harris, 2004). Although these programmes and approaches are important and contribute to reducing expressions of violence and motivate non-violent attitudes, it does not reach to address the deeper causes of violence and its structures (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000), which would provide more elements for peace work.

In Colombia, visions on peace education are deeply permeated and sustained by the political. Law 1732 of 2014 and Decree 1038 of 2015 establish 'Cátedra para la Paz' teaching

of peace-related content at schools. The spirit and the letter of the law intended to promote peace culture and the involvement of areas such as social sciences, history, geography, and democracy (art 3). In this sense, peace education is understood as the development of skills for peaceful coexistence and democratic participation, where human rights are an important theoretical component (art. 2, b). The problem, however, and despite the transversality of the initiative, is the issue of political transitions. Whereas the decree outlines a plan of action concerning human rights, sustainable development and natural resources, conflict resolution, prevention of bullying, diversity and plurality political participation, and historical memory, amongst others (art 4, a-h). Nowadays, schools have some practices that address issues of violence and bullying as part of the display of actions leaning towards conflict resolution and prevention, e.g., school mediation (Cf. Law 1038 of 2015; Law 1620 of 2013).

However, the subsequent government and the policies/ political action have focused on the development of socio-emotional skills as an alternative – and often inconsistent – view on peace given the context of Colombia. The material provided offers learning units leaning towards to treatment of socio-emotional that promote 'peaceful coexistence' rather than an approach that opens possibilities for debate and critical thinking as Decree 1038 intended (Cf. Directiva 5, marzo 5 de 2020). It seems, for example, that any mention of criticality in official discourses – education policy – is sanctioned. Furthermore, the official government has parallel discourses; on the one hand, there is some sort of work on peace education addressing the school system, on the other, there is a clear negation of the conflict and a lack of political will to contribute to the implementation of the peace agreement (Calle Aguirre, 2020).

2.4.3. Peacebuilding Education

The terrain of peacebuilding education offers the possibility to explore and address the causes of violence and injustice that peace education cannot reach – the scope of the latter is different, albeit complementary. Formal, informal, and non-formal educations are avenues in which actions, initiatives, and teaching leaning towards the dismantling of violence and inequities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Foley, 1999; Novelli, 2010):

> Peacebuilding education – like peacebuilding itself – would be a bottom-up rather than top-down process driven by war-torn communities themselves, founded on their experiences and capacities. It would be firmly rooted in immediate realities, not in abstract ideas or theories. It would be applied, immediate, and relevant, which means that it cannot be restricted to the classroom (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, p. 23)

Peacebuilding education takes place in light of the realities of war and its challenges. Thus, prefigurative, transformative and challenging actions take place in and mainly outside the classroom. Peacebuilding is dynamic in nature: the boundaries of the school, for instance, blur and reach other corners of those communities affected by conflict; social movements organise and create networks that configure knowledge and action seeking social change. In this sense, arts, science, religious practices, child and adult-centred approaches and other initiatives articulate modes of counteracting the logics and actions of war (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Richmond, 2010).

Bush and Saltarelli (2000) assert that education in peacebuilding combines forms of instruction, formation and other educational activities leaning towards the articulation and accommodation of differences between and within groups (p. 23). Furthermore, it also provides avenues for people to overcome oppression and structures of inequality in contexts of ethnic and political conflicts, normally informed by more critical approaches to peace (Richmond, 2013). This is often, although not exclusively, achieved by the work of local communities in conjunction with external actors such as NGOs, institutions, other social movements, unions, etc. – although the role of NGOs has been deeply criticised as their involvement can often – given different political or economic interests – do little to solve the conflict (Abiew and Keating, 1999; 2000). Postman (1996) points out at the importance of share narratives and exclusion of narratives seeking alienation in the pursuit of education systems aiming at peace (cited in Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). However, the authors note, this is possible in contexts where democratic institutions are more solid, whereas societies in which ethnic or political conflict require stronger connections between formal education and other forms of education where peace is aimed at. Thus, peacebuilding education goals are: 'demilitarisation of the mind, problematisation, articulation of alternatives, changing the

rules of the game, delegitimization of violence, re-membering and re-weaving the social and anthropological fabric, and nurturing non-violent and sustainable modalities of change' (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000, p. 27-31). I will follow these goals in order to explore the terrain of peacebuilding education in Colombia through concrete examples of social movements and other educational initiatives.

Demilitarisation of the mind is a fundamental aspect of peacebuilding education. While peace education promotes positive attitudes towards others and skills to approach conflicts in creative ways (Harris, 2006), peacebuilding initiatives start in the communities affected by conflicts aims to dismantle the predisposition to violence installed by logics of war. This starts from a recognition of the other as an equally human despite ideological, ethnic or any other difference. Thus, the image of the other and the self is provided with a sense of dignity and authenticity leaning towards more peaceful communities (Taylor, 1992). Thus, communities move towards better conflicts, recognise them, and embrace. Thus, this constitutes a 'productive and intelligent manner' of living not despite conflicts, but in them (Zuleta, 2011).

Critical orientations towards peace entail greater awareness of the implication of violence and conflict. It is often difficult to work based on critical stances on peace in the middle of armed conflicts. An example in Colombia is the work of women who have opposed to the war and gender inequalities. They mobilise to exercise political advocacy and create alternatives for women to break cycles of violence and discrimination (Tejedoras de vida, n.d.; Badillo, 2011). Peacebuilding here includes articulation of alternatives concerning not only sustainable economic options for women and their families (which also includes men), but also the education of communities (e.g., memory work) that is linked to and nurtured by regional, national, and international networks. A sense of cosmopolitanism from below is present in the work of women who seek to create social awareness, better managed conflicts, and a sense of respect for people regardless of race, gender, or social background (Badillo, 2011; Tovar, 2006; Saldarriaga, 2008). Their work epitomises the appropriation of universal values and struggle against forms of oppression, domination, and exclusion from below, not from national or global elites (Ingram, 2016).

Schools have a constructive role in the dismantling of de-humanised identities (Bush and Saltatrelli, 2000). Different alternatives are offered at all times – during and after the conflict. The role of the school goes beyond instruction and includes creative curricular strategies anchored in dialogue (Freire, 2017; Zuleta, 2011). Here too schools serve as agents of (re)socialisation that often goes beyond the boundaries of the institution and reaches the communities, which in turn facilitates the restoration of social bonds, although this is dependent on the creativity and motivation of particular teachers – or it also can be a decision made as an institution (See Spaces of Childhood) – rather than state design. For instance, the work in Mingas[1] provides opportunities to foster collaboration in amongst members of the school communities and their neighbours. Such community-building strategy has been beneficial as it provides resources, labour, and nurtures a sense of mutual respect and trust (Cf. Spaces of Adulhood; Valenzuela, 2018). Likewise, sports, in and outside school, constitute a powerful means of positive socialization in which the other is no longer the enemy. Discrepancies are thrown to the terrain of play and the social fabric is restored (Cárdenas, 2017; Juajibioy, 2017).

Some schools articulate alternative curricula that make room for ancestral and indigenous knowledges – sometimes on a par with western forms of knowledge. This is a response to the claims of indigenous and Afro communities that have been historically marginalised or imposed forms of knowledge at the expense of their own cultural and ancestral background and views of the world (Teleantioquia, 2014). This is a valuable approach since it vindicates people living in disadvantage and social exclusion through community-based education leaning towards social cohesion and participation in society (Morata, 2014). Furthermore, sometimes there are networks of indigenous and Afro communities that establish a relationship of co-responsibility in the preservation of the environment and their ancestral knowledges (Teleantioquia, 2014). This resonates with decolonial pedagogies that investigate ways of vindicating oppressed peoples, their identities and ancestral knowledges bringing about epistemic justice and a radical dialogue that value forms of existing and re-existing despite oppression (Walsh, 2013).

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[1] Minga is a tradition of cooperation amongst members of a community in order to obtain a common goal, be it something material or an activity that benefits everyone. This initiative is widely used in South America and its origin is indigenous. It is a mobilisation of indigenous movements demanding their rights, usually organised in demonstrations.

Other articulation of alternatives emerges as a response to both armed conflict and neoliberal development agendas. For instance, some communities from Atrato Medio have been deeply affected by the conflict and the absence of the state (Oslender, 2008). Furthermore, some corporate interventions have taken place in those territories. The result is the proliferation of illegal activities and armed confrontation targeting civilians. Therefore, the communities have established councils to declare their 'neutrality' in the armed conflict and step aside the conflict (Baquero, 2014). There has also been a gradual transition towards recognition and consolidation of community councils, which allows political participation and dialogue as part of new democratic practices at a local level, which differs from the normative approach to democracy (Sen, 2009, cited in Baquero 2014). Here too forms of knowledge are produced that aim to counteract violence and perverse their cultural backgrounds and forms to relate to the environment.

The work of peace education connected to the environment has also been a preoccupation and a struggle of native peoples in Latin America. They have a long tradition in the defence of their territories and the construction of thinking towards peace that engages with ecological concerns. For instance, there are indigenous communities that have built their own educational institutions like schools and universities. This responds to the challenges and repressions that most of the times come from the state, but also from armed groups and corporate interests as is the case of Colombia (Escobar, 2010; Universidad de Antioquia, 2010; Universidad del Cauca, 2021).

Unions have also made part of social struggle in the face on neoliberal projects in the name of development. I include some of their movements as part of peacebuilding and education as they have often proposed non-violent alternatives and modalities of change in the face of political violence, which normally includes alliances at a local, national, and international level. Furthermore, the work of unions constitutes 'strategic learning spaces' both in formal and informal education (Novelli, 2010a). Strategies of knowledge production also aim to foster the bonds with the communities and raise awareness of alternatives to neoliberal agendas and political repression. Finally, this type of peacebuilding work is anchored in principles of transnational spaces of solidarity (Novelli, 2010b).

2.5.   Spatializing of Peacebuilding Education

This section approaches peacebuilding education in its spatio-temporal relations and dimensions. I will explore the concept of space and establish a tentative mapping of the constitutive elements of peacebuilding initiatives following primarily the conceptualisation offered by Harvey (2006) and Lefebvre (1991), particularly the tripartite schema proposed by Harvey (2006) that configures a mode of analysis of space that intersects both theoretical perspectives. Through this critical lens I will aim to understand and reflect on aspects such as power, projects, politics, tensions, and conflicts that make part of the peacebuilding spaces on an internal and external level (Massey, 2005; Soja,1989). I do not intend to establish a normative framework that encapsulates peacebuilding; however, I seek to provide a helpful conceptualisation – although limited – that allows a better understanding of the spatio-temporal relations of peacebuilding education that makes room for the multiplicity of factors thereof.

The importance of bringing together theories of space and peacebuilding education stems from the fact that multiple elements coexist and interact superseding physical and temporal boundaries. Both formal and informal education are influenced by and respond to interactions, ideas, policies, political agendas, and state and non-state external actors (Escobar, 2010; Novelli, 2010). Likewise, their initiatives are not fixed in physical places necessarily, they are mobilised and reached places, communities, digital spaces, and travel across time. It is therefore pertinent to spatialise peacebuilding and recognise the elements and dimensions thereof. This is not, however, an attempt to establish a fixed matrix that gives account of peacebuilding education; instead, it is a theoretical exercise that opens up debates and come nuanced understandings of peacebuilding education from a critical perspective.

2.5.1. Space: Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

The spatial vocabulary has been used to study social phenomena, for example, the classroom as a place and communities of practice (Robertson, 2010). Likewise, space and related concepts have been used to study violence and its effects in relation to territory – e.g.,

issues of displacement and struggle for autonomy in ancestral territories – and resistance – geographies of terror (Oslender, 2006). The latter has been a useful conceptual tool to explore the intricacies of war in relation to territories, their dispossession and recovery. It is here that a spatial approach to peacebuilding education is necessary to understand the spatial elements that transcend physical boundaries and constraints and provide an account of spatio-temporal dimensions at play.

Studies addressing peace education, peacebuilding education, policies, among many other approaches and disciplines have provided rich accounts of the multiple elements at play and have shown possible research routes (e.g., Harris, 2006; Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo, 2017; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). However, here attention is drawn to the spatiality of peacebuilding as it has the potential to provide a more complete view of the elements involved from a spatial and temporal perspective, particularly in its relational dimension. Harvey (2006) points out that our understandings and actions depend on spatio-temporal frames within which we are situated. Thus, I intend to offer a conceptual tool to study the multiple elements such as type of actors, actions, and their scope within the realm of peacebuilding.

To provide a definition of space, I use lexicon for a critical socio-spatial approach to space, which includes Lefebrve (1991), Harvey (2006), Soja (1989) and Massey (1994). A first conceptual approach that is pertinent here, and radically different from previous work before Lefebrve and Harvey, is the notion that ontologically 'space is social and real; that spaces are social relations stretched out; and that space is socially produced' (Robertson, 2010). From an epistemological perspective, to know space is a task that includes various ways in which imagination, sense and experiences come into play (Robertson, 2010). We relate to space from emotional, psychological, and social perspectives that bestow meaning to our experience of space. In this sense, Lefebrve points out that:

> 'The fields we are concerned with are, first, the physical -nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions, and, thirdly, the social. In other words, we are concerned with logic-epistemological space, ass the space of social practice, the space occupied by the sensory phenomena, including

products of the imagination such as projections, symbols and utopias' (Lefebrve, 1991, pp. 11-12).

Lefebrve (1991) offers three categories through which space can be known, that is, space can be 'perceived', 'conceived', and 'lived', which constitutes a shift from understanding space in geometrical/mathematical terms to a more critical related view that encompasses the social, real, and produced socially constitutive (Robertson, 2010). On the other hand, Harvey (2006) offers another perspective in which is 'absolute', 'relative', and 'relational'. If spaces are socially produced and contained in social relations, then its nature is overlapping and changing and takes place in geometries of power (Massey, 1994; Robertson, 2010):

'Socially-produced space is a created structure comparable to other social constructions resulting from the transformation of giving conditions inherent to being alive, in much the same way that human history represents a social transformation of time' (Soja, 1989, p. 80).

From then on, conceptualisations of space overcome the dyad materialism vs dualism and a third space provides a radical openness. On the other hand, Harvey's (2006) epistemological approach differs from Lefebrve's, although the definition of a material space is present in both works, Harvey defines it as absolute space ('perceived' space in Lefebrve's work). Thus, two concepts are introduced: 'relative' and 'relational' space:

'I propose, therefore, a speculative leap in which we place the threefold division of absolute, relative and relational space-time up against the tripartite division of experienced, conceptualized and lived space identified by Lefebvre. The result is a three-by-three matrix within which points of intersection suggest different modalities of understanding the meanings of space and space-time' (Harvey, 2006, p. 281).

The second concept presented by Harvey is 'relative space', which is as he notes, relative in the double sense: 'that there are multiple geometries from which to choose and that the spatial frame depends crucially upon what it is that is being relativized and by whom'

(Harvey, 2006, p. 272). For instance, differing maps of relative locations can be created depending on networks and topological relations, where frictions that enable movement and different logics are at play (Robertson, 2010). Similarly, in the social world, a relative space is given by the actors, conceptualisations, frictions, and circumstances that interfere in the absolute place (e.g., a school creates a curriculum influenced by policies and ideologies, but the type of school, the particular relations and actors will determine its conceptualisation). Finally, the notion of 'relational space' claims that events (or a thing at a point in space) have internal relations and that 'external influences get internalized in specific processes or things through time' (Harvey, 2006, p. 273-274). For instance, the school curriculum is to have internal processes, relations, and (dis)agreements, which will determine its implementation and success (or not).

2.5.2. Spatialising Peacebuilding Education

In this section, I intend to make a spatio-temporal approach to peacebuilding education. As a critical perspective, I am aware of the importance of issues of power when using this conceptual tool. However, special attention is drawn to the relational aspect of peacebuilding education, which captures a multiplicity of elements and opens possibilities (See Peace as Spaces and DISCUSSION). It might appear that a matrix as a mode of presentation is indeed a conceptual tool that restricts possibilities (Harvey, 2006). However, this approach seeks to offer a starting point in the conceptualisation of spatio-temporality of peacebuilding education.

Before my attempt of spatialising peacebuilding, I will follow Robertson's (2010) work on spatialising the sociology of education. Her work is helpful to understand spatial stratification and spatial governance in education, mainly in the case of schools. I intend to move towards a conceptualisation of the spatio-temporal dimensions of peacebuilding as a phenomenon in education in connection to both formal, informal settings, but other individuals, groups, (global, national, and local) discourses – e.g., policy, and contextual elements in play:

Spatiality and temporality, human geography, and human history, intersect in a complex social process which creates a constantly evolving historical sequence of spatialities, a spatio-temporal structuration of social life which gives form not only to the grand movements of societal development but also to the recursive practices of day-to-day activity (Soja, 1985).

Likewise, some propositions in relation to peacebuilding and education: Social processes and relations lots of metaphors

1. Social relations are *latent in space* and reproduced through systems such as education. Peacebuilding is not exclusively *produced* in education spaces, but its contribution is vital;

2. Peacebuilding education spaces are *produced*;

3. Peacebuilding education spaces are *polymorphic*; it occurs in several different forms and it is undertaking by different actors in both formal and informal education. it is also mobilised to areas where forms of organisation are absent or inefficient (See Peace as Spaces); and

4. There are dynamic geometries of power and social relations in peacebuilding education. There are tensions inside the groups – as it is natural in human organisation, but there are also laten tensions between local groups and national and global discourses that fail to understand the views and needs of the local contexts, which has been discussed in this theoretical chapter.

Table 1. Spatialising peacebuilding education

	Material space [experienced space]	Representations of space [conceptualized spaced]	Spaces of representation [lived space]
Absolute space	Schools, universities, social organisations, communities, NGOs, physical spaces, open spaces (urban and rural areas), nature	(Education) Policy, Institutions, Organisations, foundations, and local projects, groups	Dialogue, dissensus, arts, resistance, mobilisation, educational activities, activism
Relative Space	Circulation of people, knowledge, policy implementation, curricula,	Curricula, Memory, Reconciliation processes, entrepreneurships,	Cultural activities, memory (written, oral) dissemination

	activities, entrepreneurial initiatives, social groups	ecological visions/actions of peace	
Relational Space	Resistance movements, emancipatory action, exchange of ideas, synergy (hybridity), political action, knowledge production, circulation of information/ideas/themes of peace, conflict*	metaphors of peace, conceptualizations/accounts of war, knowledge production	Voice, aspirations, transition towards better conflicts, pedagogies, capacity to aspire, dialectical tensions (e.g. hope vs hopelessness), local projects, networks

For instance, absolute and perceived (conceptualised) space for peacebuilding education is composed on a set of elements, e.g., infrastructure and venues both in rural and urban areas; however, there are also NGOs, organisations and communities that make sense of policies and other processes within those physical boundaries, and then ideas, projects and groups are enacted and/or mobilised to other spheres of society. An example of this is the work of local libraries that, despite times of conflict, work around ideas of peace connected to literacy, cultural activities, and games (See Peace as Spaces). Once those conceptualisations are activated (i.e., once people in the local library get together and decide to work collectively with/for the community), creative forms of dialogue, self-expression, critical awareness, and non-violent alternatives are articulated in the activities that take place – lived space – (e.g., literacy, games, and reading activities among others).

However, relative space gives account of other processes at play. Given the space-time conditions and individuals, there is circulation of ideas, proposals, (education) policies, entrepreneurial, and/or ecological ideas take place. For instance, ruralities – here the idea of a unique type of rurality is insufficient, therefore the plural – have a strong tendency to make sense of ecological visions as nature makes part of their everyday experience in relation to urban areas. Thus, places like schools and social movements make sense of their conditions and interpret their challenges in varied and creative forms, which include different type of curricula, the need to work on memory – the means to express this depend on the context and people and processes of negotiation, contestation, and cultural production (See Spaces of Gender; Paulson, et al., 2020; Sanchez, 2017).

The relational space and its dimensions provide an account of the work on peacebuilding. It is in the realm of relations – the relational – where people negotiate their identities and their common views, but also become aware of their dignity and their potential (Honneth, 2014; Taylor, 1990). Furthermore, cultural habits are then interrogated and transformed into new ways of being that defy oppression (See DISCUSSION; Young, 1999). I situate here, in relational spaces, emancipatory movements and knowledge production. Relational spaces make people, places and contexts come up with ways of resistance, knowledge production, and mobilisations. For instance, Novelli (2010) gives account of a process of resistance towards privatisation in Cali, Colombia, where unions, academics, and the community worked in knowledge laboratories, demonstrations, and international networking as part of an anti-privatisation struggle where neoliberal agendas and state violence were the opposing forces.

Knowledge production is present in both the real and the perceived spaces. Individuals, groups have their experience of the world and their oppression or conditions that need changing (Freire, 2017). This is then articulated through forms of interaction and collaborative group and new forms of understanding the world, their struggles and what needs to be done for better forms of living are put in place. Despite the tensions and difficulties that such processes presuppose, many-voiced practices take place and aspirations are activated and rehearsed in transformative practices that range from pedagogies, arts, pay, social organisation, mobilisation, and dissemination, among others (See Peace as Spaces).

The chief aim of this chapter has been to trace the connections between global and local discourses on peace and peacebuilding, and their outreach at an international, national, and local level. Likewise, it has explored the roots of peace education and the importance of understanding the potential of education in promoting sustainable forms of peace as well as a critical reflection on how education can also sustain inequalities. Peace education has been discussed together with peacebuilding education, and its 'at times' porous boundaries explored (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Everyday peace is a concept that allows to understand the dynamic power of out-of-the-radar actions that constitute insight forms of promoting peace locally and its potential to be scaled up and out (Mac Ginty, 2021). Finally, spatialisation

of peacebuilding education was presented to explore the multiple elements and actors involved across space and time.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

My research aims at collecting multiple understandings of peace from a local perspective in various educational settings in *Valle del Guamuez*, Putumayo, Colombia. This population has experienced armed conflict for more than three decades. In this sense, Some alternative projects to the armed conflict within education spaces have emerged; this is the starting point of my research. I understand the fluidity of peace as a concept and therefore the malleability of its practices; in other words, conceptualizations of peace are linked to how education agents – and the communities in general – put such understandings into action.

In this chapter I outline the ethnographic approaches that I utilised. First, I present the research questions that orientate my research followed by an overview of the main methodological stances I worked on critical and multi-sited ethnography in three locales: School, local library, and women's association. Subsequently, I describe the methods I used: Participant observation, interviewing and focus groups. Then, I provide a description of my participants. Finally, I present the ethical considerations that guided me through the research process and some final considerations.

3.2. Research Questions

My research questions were as follows:

What understandings of peace are evident in local discourses in La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia?

There exist multiple discourses on peace connected to state-building, security, liberal democracy, conflict resolution among others (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2007; Bell, 2003; Richmond, 2005; 2007; 2010; Skjelsbæk and Smith, 2001. *See also* Lit. review). However, those dominant discourses fail to capture the experience, practices, and views of local contexts. I want to

explore conceptions of peace, its metaphors, and practices in the context of Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo.

How can education contribute to peace building?

My research understands education in a broader sense: formal education (schools, universities), non-formal education (systematic teaching and learning), and informal education (social interactions in workplaces, families, communities) (Foley, 1999; Novelli, 2010). I want to understand the contributions to peacebuilding from within these forms of education. The places where such initiatives take place are the school, the library, and social movements (women's organisations), but they mobilise their practices outside their groups and work with and for the communities.

What challenges/opportunities does this pose on education/ education policy for sustainable peace?

The local experience offers a rich account of the social processes and the needs of those communities that are often neglected from a top-down approach. Through this question I intend to explore the lessons and opportunties in light of the experience of education settings, their work on peacebuilding, conceptualisations and struggles. As the Colombian sociologist Alfredo Molano (2001) put it, 'it is necessary to listen to people, not to study them.' I wanted to listen to people's experiences and learn from their views and struggles. In doing so, I want to propose some challenges and actions that might be considered by education policy to contribute to peacebuilding in conflict-affected regions.

3.3. Research Design

This methodology opens up for observing, but most importantly, listening to people. Listening here is connected to dialogue in order to understand how others experience reality (Cf. Molano, 2001); in this sense, Escobar (2018) points out how it has become legitimate to conceive of reality as a compound of networks, actors-nets, assemblings, where the human and non-human interact in intricate and ever-changing ways in the sociocultural arena (See

also Cooler and Frost, 2010). Thus, given the connection between language and social practices (Lakoff and Johnson, 1986; Tendhal, 2009; Kövecses, 2010), I aim to explore conceptualisations of peace embedded in language and action within education contexts.

It is here where the 'local' experience becomes significant. In Colombia urban and rural territories have experienced conflict – and thought of peace – differently. In the political realm, discourses of peace are global, whereas local needs and contributions remain marginalised (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017; Richmond, 2007; 2010). However, while somehow interacting with discourses of peace on a macro level, local discourses of peace enable practices and social dynamics that make the conceptualisation of peace ontologically fluid and varied. My methodology intends to comprehend that hybridity of peace in local contexts while interacting with discourses on upper levels (See also Lit. review), but I intend to explore that richness of the local and its practices and understandings of peace.

3.3.1. Critical Ethnography

Before entering the conceptual terrain of Critical ethnography, it is necessary to define *Ethnography.* A standard definition seems to be problematic and even more so when it comes to ethnography in education (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Harmersley, 2006). However, some elements are common to most positioned definitional attempts: ethnography is usually seen as a methodology involving participation of the researcher in a locale (a given geographical context). There is a sense of embodiment insofar as the researcher is seeing, listening, and asking questions while doing (activities) with their participants in order to make sense of the human actions and institutional practices in the place. All of this is carried out through a relatively unstructured data collection process during a given period of time (Clifford, 1986; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Conquergood, 2003; Hammersley 2017; Rabinow, 1985).

Social research should be humanising in essence; it is, above all, a human encounter that shows the complexities of human and social phenomena. It is no longer enough – and

has never been – to describe social realities and their complexities from a detached academic perspective. The task is rather to learn from those living realities of oppression and contribute to some possible extent; research on peacebuilding practices in conflict zones demands a commitment to understanding power dynamics and oppression, listening actively to persons, and acting with respect. This is particularly relevant in the context of this research since I encountered situations of violence, trauma and hope altogether, which compelled me listen and honour people's trust and time (See ethics section).

The critical dimension of ethnography implies addressing situations of unfairness as well as a commitment to contributing. However, such contribution should be understood as a human process of mutual growth, where nobody liberates nobody, but rather one learns from the other (Freire, 2017; Molano, 2001). As a researcher, I am aware that I am an outsider. I share the same nationality and speak the same language, but my context and background is different as is my experience of the conflict. Big cities have lived the armed conflict in a rather radically different way, mainly through the media (Valencia, 2014). Therefore, I was compelled to adopt ethical commitments in order to respect the integrity of my participants and their experiences and views. I refer here to ethical commitments in my research insofar as 'methodological, epistemological, and ethical dimensions are intertwined' (Ortega, 2005; Lester and Anders, 2018).

The first ethical commitment is a disposition to move from 'what is' to 'what could be' (Carspecken, 1996; Denzin, 2001; Nobllit, Flores, and Murillo, 2004; Soyini, 2009; Thomas, 1993), which implies understanding people and their contexts, suffering, struggles and efforts, and working dialogically together in order to think of other possible worlds or discover their work towards other – *better* – possible worlds (Escobar, 2018; Levitas, 2013). I looked for and encountered situations in which I was able to participate in people's activities and dialogically make sense of their actions:

> We are having a reading club at the library in La Hormiga. (Primary)
> schoolteachers were reading short stories by Gabriel García Márquez. All of a
> sudden during the session, the discussion moved towards how to read with
> students. I noticed the audience expected an answer from me. I listened to the

teachers; they recounted what they do in class and their main concerns. After that, I used their own examples and we worked on the idea of reading as an exercise of free choice, imagination, creativity, and multiple pedagogical possibilities. We talked about (Freire, p. 12) the role of teachers as readers and users of language from a pedagogical perspective. Language is an instrument of communication, but also liberation (Field note).

The second ethical commitment is activism. The critical ethnographer takes a clear position in front of hegemonic practices and marginalisation. It is then the ethnographer's commitment to contribute to emancipatory knowledge and discourses of social justice (Soyini, 2009). This means that the role of the researcher is to 'expose the inequalities of the status quo,' without romanticising the efforts and actions of the 'oppressed' (Canian, 1993). However, It is necessary here to acknowledge the 'oppressed' possess their own knowledge and views, which is what this research aims to understand and communicate. On the other hand, in the fieldwork, I participated in different actions and felt compelled to contribute with some workshops and activities that might be of help:

> During an interview, a member of the library told me that she was studying social work online. Many times, she had assignments and went to the library hoping to find books and academic material online. She never found any books that might help, nor did she enjoy good internet connection in the library to do her research tasks. This made me think of my privilege coming from the capital city, where there are libraries, bookshops, and good internet connection. A couple of days later I asked her and the librarian if they supported the idea of a campaign to collect academic material and children's books for the library. They supported the idea and we started working together on a video to promote book donations in Bogotá.

Finally, the third ethical commitment is a commitment to learning. I have decidedly identified as a learner-researcher, which implies a shift from the researcher who studies people/phenomena to the researcher who learns with people about the phenomena (Molano, 2001). I feel comfortable with the idea of assuming my role primarily as a learner, which has been a way to get closer to people and be open to their teachings. Although this

seems to be a logical assumption, the explicitness of this consideration should be present in the researcher's reflection:

> Critical ethnography is always a meeting of multiple sides in an encounter with and among others, one in which there is negotiation and dialogue toward substantial and viable meanings that make a difference in others' worlds (Soyini, 2009).

New worlds open up in front of the researcher, which requires leaving prejudices and assumptions aside, astonishment ability, and inquiry. As Thomas (1993) put it, '(...) it is here on the ground of others that the researcher encounters social conditions that become the point of departure for research.' Furthermore, such dialogue(s) ought to take the form of action. Freire (1970) sees the word – the constitutive element of dialogue as a human phenomenon – as working in two dimensions: action and reflection, which is known as praxis; here the word seeks to transform the world. Therein resides my research aspiration and aims. I will develop this section more in the ethics section.

3.3.2. Multi-sited Ethnography

In my search for a methodology to explore peace practices and understandings in different educational settings, I chose multi-sited ethnography since it allowed me to place them in the 'same frame of study' (Marcus, 1995), which facilitates an understanding of 'complex relationships between scales and interrogates multi-scalar relationships' (Novelli, 2017). I understand the communities are heterogeneous and have their own potential for collective and involved action (Soyini, 2012). I do not intend to homogenise these three communities. On the contrary, I explored their particularities and saw how they work on peace based on their understandings and experiences, which enriched the findings.

I am aware of some methodological anxieties in relation to the use of multi-sited ethnography. In this sense, Marcus (1995) identifies three main concerns: limits of ethnography, attenuation of knowledges and focus upon subjects. I explain here how I intended to face such possible limitations:

The first concern is about the limits of ethnography, which has traditionally drawn its attention to the everyday experience and gain of knowledge of face-to-face communities (Marcus, 1995). Here I do not intend to portray holistic representations of understandings of peace in the three locales. Instead, my intention is to understand representations of peace and its practices beyond the conventional single-site ethnographic approach. The value of this resides in the richness of varied experiences and efforts undertaken in education settings that illuminate the understanding(s) of peace and the actions that shape such conceptions. Furthermore, this gave me the opportunity to explore themes emerging from across sites and interrogate some ideas, e.g., the concept of peace as having 'a female face', which is deeply rooted in women's organisations; I used this theme to explore the perceptions of schoolteachers and people at the local library regarding this and other themes. This was useful for focus groups as I could ask my participants about ideas from other sites (See <u>Spaces of Gender</u>).

The second concern is related to the attenuation of the kinds of knowledges and competencies expected from the fieldwork (Marcus, 1995). Marcus (1995) argues that most standard ethnographic works already cross potential sites of work but remain within the principles of ethnography as they evolve. Moreover, the intensities and qualities vary from site to site depending upon the purposes and dynamics of the ethnographic work. Here the aim is to establish connections through translation and tracings among different discourses and practices from site to site, even if they are dissonant. This methodological approach is pertinent to this research because education and peacebuilding are affected from both within and outside the sector (Novelli, 2017). For this reason, it is necessary a multi-sited approach that valorises education beyond institutions and understands policy making, systems, programs and practices taking place in the local, national, and global spheres (Dale, 2005; Dale and Robertson, 2009; Robertosn and Dale, 2014 cited in Novelli, 2017). For instance, I could visit distant communities and participate in activities carried out by the local library and women's associations, which gave me a more in-depth perspective of the scope of both formal and informal education in relation to peacebuilding.

Finally, the third concern is related to the loss of focuses upon subjects positioned by systemic domination (Marcus, 1995), where, it is argued, the strategy of 'following' may lead

everywhere and nowhere at once (Van Duijn, 2020). In this respect, multi-sited ethnography does not add peripheral perspectives to that of the subaltern. Instead, it challenges the traditionally positioning of ethnography by considering not only the subaltern, but also other domains of cultural production, that is, social movements, development approaches, and policy practices, amongst others (Escobar, 1994; Marcus, 1995). This is particularly relevant in the context of this research because I could witness how both formal and informal education groups mobilised and worked with the communities at different times, e.g., artistic groups from schools and the local library and cultural events led by women. I was always following (and participating in) human relations, work around wellbeing for the community which was motivated by the need to overcome the effects of the armed conflict.

3.4. Entering the Field

My fieldwork consisted of joining three educational sites in Valle del Guamuez Putumayo, in Colombia. I was motivated by the increasing interest and work on the role of education in peacebuilding – although mainly peace education (Cf. Insuasty and Borja Bedoya, 2016; MEN, 2017; Reisz, 2017; Pinzon-Salcedo, and Torres-Cuello, 2017; Martínez, 2017; Colín, Vera-Hernández, and Miranda-Medina, 2018, amongst others). I also had some conversations with a member of the NGO 'Corporación Opción Legal' during the time I wrote my research proposal and since then I started planning my fieldwork in La Hormiga, a municipality located in Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo.

In December 2018 I had some meetings with the director of 'Corporación Opción' legal and I presented my research proposal to them. They showed interest in my research and provided me with initial contacts in La Hormiga. I had two presentation letters for the head teachers of a rural and urban schools. Furthermore, they shared a document/report with the history of the armed conflict in Putumayo and the work they have been doing in the region (mainly teacher training on mediation as a strategy to mitigate school conflict). I knew that these first two places would be a bridge for me to get to know about more initiatives related to peacebuilding. The work done by Corporación Opción Legal is highly appreciated by schools, which opened the doors for me in the institutions. They had access to my research

proposal in English and Spanish and there was a couple of emails during my fieldwork in which I thanked them for their help.

I spent three months in La Hormiga. I observed some school activities and participated in activities with students and teachers. Additionally, I contacted another school that was known to have a particular experience during the conflict and, more importantly, come up with peaceful alternatives amid the conflict that benefitted the community. I did workshops for students and had conversation with teachers in the three schools. I also participated in teachers' meetings and did a workshop for teachers. I was initially enthusiastic about finding metaphors of peace. However, although I kept thinking about metaphors, the research journey led me to consider other avenues, e.g., the idea of space and gender in relation to peace (See Making sense of the experience). Such a change occurred gradually as I had conversations with people, and we did activities together.

The schools were a bridge that allowed me to connect to other education settings: the library and women's movements. I visited the local library and participated in workshops, visits to distant places of the municipality and meetings with other members of the community. Library members and I organised a campaign to collect books for the library that were donated by Universidad Nacional de Colombia and individual persons. I also visited indigenous communities since some members of the library work in social projects financed by the government.

The local library is a dynamic place that serves as a connection with NGOs and individuals who are interested in making positive contributions to the community. This is how I met women's associations. They work sometimes hand in hand during workshops and cultural activities. I had the opportunity to visit some of the groups of women who work in cultural and entrepreneurial projects. These two sites were of particular importance for me as I had a first-hand experience on the value of informal education that I had known only from my academic formation.

In all these locales I worked around my research questions through participant observation, unstructured interviews, and focus groups.

3.4.1. Participants

During my fieldwork I collected data from three locales: schools, the library and women's associations. I worked with three schools since together they provided a more complete depiction of schools in the region due to their location (two schools were urban and one was rural). I first approached the schools and then moved to the other locales guided by members of the schools who suggested and provided links in the community. I could build up trust and respect inside the locals, which made my participation and data collection possible. I also perceived how enthusiastic these communities are about receiving training and learning experiences from outside. This compelled me to make an effort to make a contribution alongside with my fieldwork without any further expectation. In fact, I explained the reasons that brought me to La Hormiga and my interest in learning from their practices and experiences, which created an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

I collected data from a sample of 30 participants. I interviewed 22 people, 12 teachers at schools, 5 people from the local library, and 5 members of women's association. I also conducted focus groups in the three locales with groups: 3 focus groups of 4 participants each in schools, 4 participants in the library and 3 participants of women's associations. I had conversations with other members of these communities but the number of people in interviews and focus groups were reduced due to availability and willingness of some participants.

3.4.2. Participant Observation

Observation and participation were varied and intertwined throughout my fieldwork. It varied depending on the situation, although I was welcome to participate from the beginning. I understand the value of participant observation as it offers the possibility of active looking, improving memory and obtaining insightful guide on the interviewing process through involvement in the daily activities of the participants (Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999; DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002). Kawulich (2005) recounts how she conducted her ethnographic fieldwork adopting an attitude of openness to learn. Likewise, I assumed the

role of a learner and displayed an attitude of openness to listen and to talk, but also to do things with my participants.

A question that arises in the first place is what to observe and the research questions were determinant in this respect. Having a clear purpose was fundamental in order to know what to observe and the nature of my participation. An element that I wanted to observe was how the relational dimension took place at school, the library, and the women's associations, i.e., I wanted to witness their work, their conversations, and views on their realities and how they coped with the everyday difficulties and projects. My participants knew I was there to see how they did work around peace, so they were also willing to tell me their stories of the conflict and how they had managed to overcome or propose alternatives in the middle of the war and now. For instance, they suggested events and people that could give me some insights on my research:

> 'Listen, there is a school. The headteacher has an interesting experience with a cultural pageant she created in order to protect members of the community from being killed by armed groups. You can go and she will surely tell you about it. Tell her I referred you to her' (Fernanda, Schoolteacher).

I was first welcome in two schools (La Hormiga and El Tigre). Part of that success is since 'Corporación Opción Legal' provided me with a letter of presentation that briefly explained my motivations to be in the community. Furthermore, I introduced myself as someone who wanted to learn from them and, in return, was willing to participate and contribute as much as I could. This commitment to reciprocity was fundamental in the schools. I also found reticence on the part of some school teachers. In this sense, I opted for having conversations about them and what they wanted to tell me whether it was related to my project, and at the moment they wanted to talk -mainly occasionally, but I always showed respect and interest in them and their experience-. I also understand part of my responsibility was to establish rapport beyond my research aims, which proved to be effective as I illustrate in this note:

I am in the main square. It is a bright evening and I bump into them, two women having a conversation, the Spanish language, and social studies teachers. They wave at me and I feel welcome to join the conversation. It is a bit unusual since one of them has always been evasive at school. We talk about my workshop the week before about leadership; students and teachers seem to have liked it and that is rewarding. They ask me about me not being at school that week and I explain I have been to other places. All of a sudden, we end up talking about their stories as teachers and habitants of this town. It is an extraordinary account on more than twenty years. I am surprised by their spontaneity and openness since the school has not been a space that provided such confidence (February 20th, 2019)

The two schools welcomed me immediately and expressed their willingness to allow me to participate in school activities and talk to the teachers. Here there was an element of serendipity that provided me with other contacts beyond schools. First, some teachers told me about a rural school that had a particular experience during the conflict and whose example could illuminate my research. Second, they referred me to the local library, which consequently helped me get in touch with women's movements. Furthermore, it was remarkable to find close connections between the library, volunteers, psychologists and other professionals and the schools. In other words, schools have educated people who contribute to the community from different sectors. This is relevant insofar as there is a tendency to move to urban localities in pursue of job opportunities and better living standards.

In the schools I observed activities such as school election, teachers' meetings, and informal conversation inside and outside school. This was an initial approached that helped me have an idea of how they work -and have worked- during the years of armed conflict. During some of the meetings they explained to me some of the regulations that attempt to mitigate conflict in schools such as 'school mediation'. I ran some workshops on leadership for last year students and a workshop for teachers on teaching and learning in community (the latter only in one school). This was not part of my research, but rather my commitment and desire to make part of the school communities and make a contribution. I also did some training for English language teachers and helped some teachers with their research projects

(projects run with the help of some NGOs). The school communities were really open to me and offered me the possibility of interacting with a lot of members in the institutions.

There was a third school I visited. This school was suggested by teachers who told me about how the headteacher had done activities that promoted the idea of community as a way to resist violence exerted by armed groups. This was a different type of school that offered me a more dramatic vision of the effects of armed conflict: deprivation, violence, indigenous population neglected by the state, drug issues, environmental issues fuelled by the armed conflict, and even confrontation with other schools (for recognition and resources provided by the state and NGOs). The headteacher was very open to talk to me and tell me about the history of conflict and how the school had been involved since its foundation. I also run some language workshops to students and had informal conversations with teachers that helped me do more specific and relevant in interviews:

> I was told there is a 'vereda' (distant local unit) and a school that had a particular experience of the conflict. I went there one morning. I had to take a car to the next town (although it is still La Hormiga, there are some administrative divisions). There are motorcyclists who take people to other distant locations such the place where the school is. While I am on my way, I notice the road is in poor conditions and cargo trucks pass through every now and then. There are no houses around, and there are signs warning that there are minefields. Beauty exceeds imagination and green has a thousand shades. When I get to the school, I see a place under construction, which is a surprise as the school has been there for twenty years. I met the headteacher and we start a conversation after I introduced myself. She is very open to tell me about her experience. I take some notes and ask her if it is ok to go back to some of these ideas in an interview. I noticed there is a desire to be listened (Field note).

I also attended some activities related to commemoration of massacres and cultural activities linked to the school such as a student theatre group. I knew of these activities since social movements and school headteachers, teachers and groups work in networks and communicate their activities to one another. This is how I heard about the local library, which is also known to be the best library in the country, which led me to visit the place and get to know more about it.

The library is a very dynamic space since it is open to all the members of the community, NGOs, and private individuals. I had conversations with members of the library: the librarian, volunteers, and members of a group called friends of the library (GAP: amigos de la biblioteca). I participated in informal conversations, reading groups, film discussions, workshops run by NGOs, and informal visits to remote areas of La Hormiga (e.g. a memory museum in EL Placer, a local municipal unit outside the town). Furthermore, I visited an indigenous community and social programmes run by the government.

Finally, I met some members of a movement called weavers of life (*Tejedoras de vida*). This movement operates in the entire Putumayo region. It was easy to meet members of this group in public events such as commemorations and fairs. They do different activities such as workshops, conferences, public events, and entrepreneurial activities. They serve as a bridge between NGOs and the communities, which translates into educational activities and training not only for the members of the movement, but also for other members of the communities. In the last stage of my fieldwork, I could contact a group of women in a workshop run by an NGO in the library. They (the women) attended the workshop and provided nourishment for the audience. I was particularly interested in how they talked about the importance of the environment and used reusable cutlery, which reinforces their discourse. I finally talked to two women in EL Placer, a remote area of La Hormiga where I spent two weekends and had the opportunity to visit their houses, a memory museum, and the whole town, which has suffered the consequences of armed conflict and still struggles to recover. I also shared time with other women who run their own business and work with other members of the community.

3.4.3. Unstructured Interviews

Interviews here are synonyms with conversations. Such dialogues took place in educational settings and outside. Informality of tone in this case was helpful since it was the ingredient to establish rapport and build up relationships of confidence and mutual respect. In this sense, I presented myself as a learner who was interested in their work and experiences, which facilitated the creation of bonds of trust and respect (Burgess, 1984;

Zhang and Wildemuth, 2009). Rather than following a formula for interviewing, I started with the understanding of interviews as many-voiced conversations, where no one is suppressed or silenced (Conquergood, 1982). This required a profound disposition to listen carefully and the understanding that my participants are persons with agency, history, and their own command of their stories (Molano, 2001; Soyini, 2012).

For Conquergood (1989), listening is as a way for the researcher to gain a meaningful connection, displacing the primacy of gazing. Thus, sharing the same language, it was easy to maintain communication and resort to conversations in order to explore my participants' views and experiences. This helped me come up with questions that allowed me to gain understanding of their histories, experiences, practices, and needs. In fact, conversations and interviews made evident the need of books for the library and therefore we could work on the book collection campaign. In other worlds, the interviewing process helps the researcher move from the position of a detached observer to involvement and engagement of coactivity (Soyini, 2012). I also had the possibility to explore themes and ideas emerging from conversations:

> **Yesid:** I remember you told me the other day, 'We thought people did not listen to us.' How did you know you people were listening?
>
> **Gloria:** First, our relatives reprimanded us for the music we played, so we thought, 'they are attentive, but what about other people?' So, suddenly a phone call in the radio station saying, 'send my regards and tell them the music was nice.' But they never said who they were. Then, when we started going to the villages, people told us, 'Did you speak on the radio? That was a nice message or a good story, I liked the music. what's the song title? Who's the author?' They also asked to expand the topics we talked about in the radio.

This interviewing process was informed by 1) my theoretical and methodological design, and 2) my own participants' stories and conversations that guided the interviewing process. I saw unstructured interview as a useful method to explore my participants' views. In the spirit of a critical ethnographic work, where horizontal relations are sought after, unstructured interviews seem more appropriate and equitable. It provides greater freedom

for the participants to introduce ideas that are important to them. However, by 'unstructured' I do not mean interviewing without any foundations. Indeed, the conversations and participation in different activities were fundamental in the making up of the questions during the interviews. In order to nurture the interviewing process, I kept a reflective journal in which I wrote about my participation in activities was well as some of the conversations and their insights with my participants; as Glesne (1999) put it, 'what is seen, heard, and experienced in the field, these are 'the nuggets around which you construct your questions':

> 'This first interview started with a bit of anxiety. I had a lot of thoughts about how to do interview beyond a set of questions and that was big pressure at first. I have read about the idea of interviewing in ethnography as part of a co-construction of meaning, memory, and experience and the ethical implications of doing so. This encountered turned into a conversation in which my participant had the command of the story, and I was attentive to learn, but also to remind them of our previous conversations and some cues in order to shape our interview' (Field note).

Atkinson et al. (2001) explain that assuming interviewees as informants and reporters goes beyond traditional conceptions of ethnographic interview. This leads the researcher, they say, to listen carefully and respectfully to the interviewee during and after the interview – when transcription takes place. Interviews had the atmosphere of a conversation with some sort of continuity because of previous encounters. I usually talked to my participants and took notes, or we did activities and I recorded elements that I considered to be relevant (e.g., a radio programme in a rural school had sections. I took notes and then it was easy to talk to the teacher about the programme and its purpose). In keeping track of our conversations and activities, it was easy to recall and bring up experiences and thoughts my participants shared with me before the interviews:

> **Yesid:** You told me about a sort of pageant which helped people not to be killed. How was that?
>
> **Headteacher:** Oh, yeah, in the times of Paramilitary action, people had to know their ID number backwards and forwards. Also, they shouldn't have marks on their bodies and it was a must to know your neighbours. If your neighbour was stuck in a checkpoint, they (the paramilitary) asked, 'Who knows this person?' and if nobody

knew them, that person sadly had to stay there (and die). So, it was like an obligation to know each other, and that is when we came up with the big idea of the pageant, because it is big and we do it once a year (…) (Rural school).

Librarian: (…) And we looked at them [and said], 'Well, in the library, we don't like war either in play or in reality. Therefore, erm, I am going to seize this toy gun. If your parent comes for it, I will return it. Alternatively, I could read a story for you, I could give you a sweet or teach you a game in exchange for that toy gun.
Yesid: How did children react?
Librarian: Some children got upset. [I said] 'So, go home and leave your toy gun and come back. So, if you come here, we set the rules.' It was like saying, 'here we are the grownups, we set the rules and we have ours [beliefs], which was sort of wrong, but we did it that way. [We said,] 'So, leave your toy gun at home as it is ok there, but we do not accept it in the library.' Some children used to hide their toy, some others didn't. [Some children] gave it to me. Children always came back because children are not resentful (Local Library).

During the fieldwork, I wanted to identify spontaneous images of peace coming from their everyday activities and conversations, not a definition. In fact, I used those 'images' in the focus groups expecting to explore them in depth. I swapped those images/ideas about peace and asked them to express their opinion. During the fieldwork, I initiated to identify some images related to peace such as *'peace has a female face,' 'peace is writing and reading,' 'peace is roads, hospitals, and schools,'* which emerged from the conversations with my participants. I did not want to ask people directly to define peace. Instead, we had conversations about what they did, how they worked with others and the reasons behind that. Most of them wanted to tell me stories of the conflict and how they managed to navigate social life in the middle of the conflict. Some of those stories led me to visit places and talk to other people, e.g., a schoolteacher told me about the library and the many activities they did with the communities:

Freddy: perhaps not directly, it is a rather concealed face. And why? They have been struggling, invisible, for so long. Liberalism arrived with ideas of equal rights. So, women emerged and have been there (struggling). It is a concealed face.

Epifania: What does that mean? Is it because we (women) are tender? Is it so? Not all of us. I think that women at the end of the day –men are the biggest loss in war– have that responsibility when men are gone. Women, mothers have to raise their children alone, particularly at this date when the mindset is so different.

Nubia: Maybe it is what women represent in society. They are mothers and always ready for dialogue. Women are generally less aggressive.

Yesid: So, peace does not have a male face?

Wilson: it is a bit contradictory, normally it is men who fight and suffer from a war more. More men than women died in this war, men are the sacrificed. Men, not women, died in the massacre of this town. And women were affected by this, so maybe that is why they say peace has a female face (Focus group, rural school).

There were times in which interviews did not come about as expected. Sometimes those interviews were interrupted as they took place in people's workplaces and in the middle of activities – particularly because it is difficult to set a time to meet outside schools or work. For example, when conducting the focus group with a group of women, there were various interruptions as they were doing their daily activities, so we had to stop a couple of times and restart the conversation. However, they were generous with their time and made room for our conversations.

3.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

During the phase of analysis and interpretation, I started to transcribe the interviews by using a software called AnyTune. Initially, I wanted to work on metaphors of peace as I come from a linguistic background. As I transcribed the interviews, I realised the data was taking me in different directions, not necessarily towards a work on metaphors in the sense I initially planned. I realised there was a common trend in people's response – at least more often than I captured in the fieldwork: the idea of space (See also 'Making Sense of the Experience'):

'**Librarian:** When we started with all this we thought about how to talk about peace, and to give the **youth spaces** for a community experience, play, good use of free time. We saw this as a chance to think about peace. So, we invited them (children

and young people) to come to the library and see a film here or at the park and then have a conversation. We offered ***alternative spaces*** for the youth and whoever was around.'

'**Leidy (Volunteer at the library)**: Once there, we do the welcome activity like icebreakers and we all integrate, that is, children, young people, adults and the elderly… this is an ***intergenerational space***. We laugh a bit and then we read the book or books we bring aloud. Sometimes the community chooses the books.'

'**Schoolteacher:** That is it. In the school garden you learn about children's background and their parents, so we tried to involve (children and parents) with the academic element, and we all learned a lot. We learned from each other, and we started to build up those ***spaces*** of tolerance, ***specific spaces*** where one speaks and the others listen.'

'**Antonio (Schoolteacher):** So, we invented stories and used theatre to teach our lessons, and invented games. So, there we go despite the moves up and down… with good things, too, like having met Unidad de victimas that works on collective reparation and opened up ***spaces unimaginable*** for us. That is a godsent, there is no other explanation. We performed in ***national venues***, taking the guys to perform our plays in ***venues*** such as the Theatre Festival in Manizales, National Theatre Festival, Cali Theatre Festival, and all over our department with our message.

NB: 'Espacios' is translated as venue in this fragment.

The idea of space appeared repeatedly in the conversations. There was a constant mention of spaces, creation of spaces, new or better spaces when they gave account of their activities leaning towards peace as opposed to what the conflict represents, i.e., fear, silence, violence, cultural oppression, etc (See Discussion Chapter). I also identified some themes that were recurrent across sites: children, adults, gender, and future; my participants talked about their initiatives as sort of spaces that open up possibilities for people – children, young and adults – to relate to others based on respect, trust, and dialogue. Thus, I decided to create four main themes and explore those initiatives as spaces. Then, I started to trace fragments in the interviews that were connected to spaces in which the protagonists were children,

adults, gender issues – particularly the idea of women being pacifist – and visions connected to the future.

I considered conducting thematic analysis initially. After some reading on the method, I felt I needed to find another method to analyse the conversations that coincided with the nature of my research. I read about narrative analysis and found that approach was more appropriate for a number of reasons. First, people told me their stories, which had in themselves an educational value (Webster and Mertova, 2007). I wanted to show the power of people's stories and what they offer to understand peacebuilding education. Second, such learning is connected here to social struggle and responds to and proposes alternative to war and violent conflict (Foley, 1999). In this sense, a thematic analysis failed, in my view, to capture the intensity of those narratives, their honesty, and generosity. Third, there is a link between narrative and a search for meaning in the context of this research, which includes critical approaches in educational practices, i.e., a pedagogical act that shows self-reflection and search for alternatives to oppression (Freire, 2017; Gill, 2014; Giroux, 2011). Finally, I was aware of the importance of the relational dimension of education, so a narrative approach to make sense of my research experience would give account of those relational process and show their dialogicality in more detail.

A narrative approach is, according to Dewey, a tool that opens up avenues to explore human consciousness and its complexities (Webster and Mertova, 2007). The value of storytelling here resides in its connection to the social, the economic, and the political as well as in the moral lessons thereof, which is connected to ethnographic writing (Clifford, 1986). Communication and action are portrayed in narratives and allow the construction of thought and intent (Britton, 1970; Rosen, 1985, Hardy, 1977, MacIntyre, 1981). In this sense, what is demanded of a narrative approach is to represent actions and their claims, which implies understanding the dynamics and occurrences of the milieux (Webster and Mertova, 2007). There is also an element of evocation in the writing process of the ethnography, in which scene, plot, character and (critical) events are to draw the narrative (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). I felt compelled to craft my stories – in the form of spaces – with all these considerations in mind:

There are two bridges at the entrance of El Tigre. The older one is a pedestrian bridge; the pavement's decor is colourful, which alludes to the flora and fauna from the region. There is an outstanding tiger painted on the floor as a reference to the town's name. Two wooden canoes used as planters stand on both sides of the bridge. There is a striking juxtaposition of the brightness of the pavement and the grey sky. Members of the community gather to commemorate the massacre that took place in 1999, from which they still struggle to recover. That bridge was the place where the paramilitary killed 30 men for being suspected members of the guerrilla. Stories of what happened that day mix with the current news of people, introductions, and greetings. Members of the police and the military forces participate in the event. There are children, young people, men, and women. A procession leads to a public school where there is a religious celebration preceded by speeches. A group of local women proclaim themselves as 'violets of peace'. Every woman is paired with 'a godmother' and both commit to working together in some sort of 'friendship' that aims to help and nurture their work towards peace initiatives. Women give most of the speeches reinterpreting the events and encouraging the community to work towards peace. In one of the speeches, a woman says, *'We used to be the invisible women from El Tigre'* (See Spaces of Gender).

Once I had transcribed the interviews and focus groups, I kept reading my notes and revisiting some of the pictures. I am aware of the evocative element of ethnographic writing process and wanted to be able make sense of the information I had from different angles. I revisited the interviews and translated the fragments that were connected to the 4 spaces I had outlined (See Making sense of the experience). Sometimes the translation process made me go back to the recording as the texts often contained semantic nuances that escaped the written word. I collected the excerpts and grouped them before I started the formal writing of the spaces. To do the writing, I followed some considerations pertaining the crafting of the text:

'Ethnographic writing is determined in at least six ways: (1) contextually (it draws from and creates meaningful social milieux); (2) rhetorically (it uses and is used by

expressive conventions); (3) institutionally (one writes within, and against, specific traditions, disciplines, audiences); (4) generically (an ethnography is usually distinguishable from a novel or a travel account); (5) politically (the authority to represent cultural realities is unequally shared and at time contested); (6) historically (all the above conventions and constraints are changing)' (Clifford, 1986, p. 6).

This and other readings helped me consider the allegorical nature of ethnographic writing. I wanted to capture and portray the 'realness' of the events and the moral and ideological statements contained in the actions, words and silence of the experiences during my fieldwork (Clifford, 1986). As Clifford notes, content and form are part of the allegorical dimension of ethnographic writing, so I was aware of my responsibility when writing the stories. Then, I explored the idea of a story in a literary sense, so that I could start crafting my stories, which would be many-voiced and full of complexities:

'A story consists of a sequence of actions that occur when a sympathetic character encounters a complicating situation that s/he confronts and solves' (Hart, 2011).

Hart (2011) offers a good set of elements to craft nonfiction narratives that helped me organise my themes (spaces). I explored elements such as structure – in the Aristotelian sense, e.g., narrative arc and events –, character, voice, and style. I wanted to pay attention to aesthetic elements of the story and combine the poetic with the political, following Clifford's idea that 'ethnography is hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines' (1986). Likewise, Clifford reminds the ethnographer that 'ethnography texts are inescapably allegorical,' therefore, I needed to find the way to tell something about the human experience of my participants in terms of their peacebuilding efforts, views, and practices.

Another element that came into play is 'presentation vs representation.' As a learner-researcher, evocation – assisted by my field notes, photographs, recordings, and memories – was a vital part of the writing process, but the element of partiality of truth in the ethnographic texts depends on many variables:

'The writing and reading of ethnography are over determined by forces ultimately beyond the control of either an author or an interpretive community. These contingencies – of language, rhetoric, power, and history – must now be openly confronted in the process of writing' (Clifford, 1986).

'A post-modern ethnography is a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of the discourse intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer and emergent fantasy of a possible world of common-sense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect' (Tyler, 1986).

More than a concern about literal truth in a strict sense (as opposed to truthfulness), I wanted to be able to tell the stories, many-voiced narratives together that portrayed a critical dimension in which a quest for meaning and change taking place in the face of war (Cf. Gill, 2014). Thus, polyphony was an aim of my writing, which is the essence of my study: multiple voices talking – breaking silence – about peace, non-violent modalities of change. The polyphonic element is also connected to breaking ideas of power between the one who represents and the one who is represented (Tyler, 1986). Gill points out that 'people tell stories that render them meaningful' (2014); I was tracing and evoking those moments, activities and memories that showed that meaning, that disruption and critical action in the face of conflict, but in the voices of the people who work on peacebuilding on a daily basis. I was informed about the high expectations some political and social sectors in Colombia – and global discourses – posit on education to overcome conflicts, and my research journey was the confirmation of the potential of both informal and formal education in peacebuilding.

The first 3 spaces were relatively easy to construct: childhood, adulthood and gender were themes that emerged and the excerpts sort of presented themselves. However, I felt there was something missing. I had read about the capacity to aspire by Appadurai (2013) and felt that there could be a link missing in the portrayal of spaces. I revisited my interviews and notes and found some interesting reflections about how some of the initiatives were anchored to the future – or futures –, and I started to trace those references across sites. During the writing process, I found a conversation – interview – with a schoolteacher who has

worked on initiatives such as radio, storytelling, and theatre. I contacted him and asked him if he could write a piece of text in which he described the future based on what he does in his teaching practice. In fact, it was interesting to see a level of coherence in his depiction, which was similar to a conversation we had months before he wrote his text (See <u>Future-oriented spaces</u>):

'Welcome to Valle del Guamuez. This is the year 2040. We are in the eco-touristic farm (called) 'Eco Tigre'. This was an idea thought of by young people. We lived through an environmental and social crisis that compelled us to reinvent our way of living, our conception of 'quality of life', and we included 'peace', coexistence and spirituality as principles. We abandoned the predominant view of favouring economics over life. We embraced equity, solidarity and common wellbeing. More than just the academic aspect, our education system has focused on the social and has helped learners to create their own entrepreneurships. Our town now has legal options that provide a good living. Eco-touristic farms are sustainable and provide people with an income, which fosters community progress. An education based on the social helped us set free from coca. The eternal win-lose game with governments ended because all of us would lose. We stopped normalising illegality and violence. We learned to value art as a mechanism to repair and rebuild our community. We understood the cosmovision of our indigenous communities regarding human beings and our planet. This is becoming a part of us' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

And:

'You have to be persistent and never give up. You have to face a lot. I mean, you have to rethink the concept of 'classroom' and some people have done it already. (…) being persistent is the key. The other aspect is creativity, and students help you with that, particularly children; they are good at it. So, it is about preparing a topic, how to do it differently, which is innovation. Sometimes it works and sometimes it just doesn't, but you need to be persistent. And you have a lot of tools, so innovation is about using the tools you have videos created by students. For example, 11 grade students are making a video, it is an Eco touristic strategy about the region. They are making this video with images of the region and [creating] an Eco touristic plan to sell – but this is a mock exercise. I told them I would come with 15 people from Bogota. People say El Tigre is a dangerous town, but other people

say it has a lot of flora and fauna to explore. So, the plan is for four days and we need to collect the people at the airport in Puerto Asís. That is their job. [I say,] 'Go ahead!' Let's see what they come up with. Teachers have to be creative and motivate students. It is not only the academic aspect, but students are also developing other skills, for example, communication, self-expression, and they are overcoming shyness and discovering things about themselves' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

The stories were full of meaning and I found myself including the same fragment in two spaces or even in the discussion. I wanted to find connections between my participants' stories – that contain actions, efforts, views –, wider literature, and the research process. My research questions were always a referent. During the writing of the spaces, I constantly checked my questions to see if there was internal continuity – an early suggestion by my supervisors. That helped me think of how to move to the cultural translation, to 'make the familiar strange and the exotic quotidian' (Clifford, 1986). Such a process orientated me in terms of identification of understandings of peace that were not conventional, although revealed by my participants and their experiences (e.g., peace connected to human dignity instead of human rights; see Discussion chapter).

3.6. Ethical Considerations

It occurred to a fisherman who was with me. He said, 'Look, we do believe we act with the heart, but we also use the head. And when we combine the two of them, we are like this: sentipensante (sensing/thinking)' (Fals Borda, 2008).

Fals Boda's sociological thinking is permeated by this principle: being 'sentipensate' (Sensing/thinking). It comes to light in an open dialogue with fishermen from Mompox, a northeast city in Colombia. This is a leading principle for them that implies knowledge and skills to do their daily tasks, but also a profound connection with their humanity that dictates their actions and interactions with others and the world. I chose this ethical stance for two reasons: first, beyond the 'do no harm' of the manuals on ethic procedures, there ought to be a disposition to act combining reason and an openness for humanity that involves respect for humankind, but also a commitment to action. Second, such natural disposition takes place in the form of dialogue.

Understanding other worlds entails a profound respect and willingness to learn from the other(s). It is here where I find my place as a learner-researcher. This point of departure is, in effect, an ethical commitment that goes beyond a mere understanding of others in a broad sense; it is the opening of an ontological dimension that seeks to learn from the experiences and knowledges of marginalized and subaltern social groups: knowing other worlds (Escobar, 2018), which emerges from listening to people, not from studying them (Molano, 2001). Furthermore, such a quest for understanding and connecting the dots of multiple histories and narratives also constitutes an epistemological exploration (Gill, 2014).

Before encountering the persons who would become my participants, there was a lot of anxiety. I had conversations with people in Colombia about my fieldwork in La Hormiga, Putumayo; most of the times they reacted with surprise and fear: there is a association of Putumayo with its past of violence, massacres, drug dealing and armed groups and with an uncertain present. I also had in mind a piece of news on TV about a landslide in Mocoa, the capital city of Putumayo in 2017, which was a tragedy in which data about casualties is still unclear – for political reasons – and whose aftermath is still evident, perhaps more due to political corruption (Colprensa, 2021). However, I was also aware of great efforts to overcome violence within education settings as I had had conversations with a friend, member of 'Corporación Opción Legal' since the writing of my research proposal. It is in our conversations that my interest in that region sparked.

Such complexity is compelling to a critical ethical stance. A reflection that follows is, as Bergum (1998) put it, what should I do now (from reason and the heart '*sentipensante*')? Instead of 'This is what I should do now' (Cited in Ellis, 2007). As a learner-researcher I understand the importance of recognition, mutual respect, dignity and connectedness between the researcher and the persons who are researched, and between the researchers and the communities in which they live (Brooks, 2006; Ellis, 2007; Lincoln, 1995; Reason, 1993; Tierney, 1993). This became evident very soon as I illustrate here:

> Some of my participants and people in the community have asked me why I decided
> to come to La Hormiga. If it is people from the community, I tell them I am a teacher

and that I am here to do some work with schools. however, I notice some people ask me if I was afraid of coming here, or if my family or friends tried to talk me out of coming. They say they know people from other places regard them as violent people or people living in a dangerous place. I respond that people from outside do not know much about this community and that I am learning in order to tell them about what they do here, which I regard as hard work worth learning from (Field note).

Ellis (2007) points out the importance of reflecting critically on the ethical choices during research as ethnographic research is emergent in nature. My choice in this case is for recognition that opens up spaces of dialogue and confidence, this is not only an ethical choice, but also a constitutive element of my research: recognition that allows for dialogue and self-expression (See Discussion chapter). In fact, I always told the communities (Schools, library and women's association) that my main interest was learning from them while I conducted my research. I also said I have heard and talked to people about their efforts to overcome violence and that my interest lay in those practices. However, I also found reticence on the part of some individuals in the community, particularly at school. I assumed that was part of the process and tried to approach them whenever possible and respect their desire to remain distant.

As part of my desire to make a contribution, I offered some time to run some workshops with the language teachers. In one of the schools a meeting was scheduled and only one (out of three) teacher attended. I worked with her a couple of times, suggested some online material, and talked about the results of our conversations. The other teachers never talked to me (Field note).

I noticed a desire to be listened. This was immediately manifested in people's willingness to show me what they do, how they work and what they have experienced. Some of the participants shared stories of violence, rape, and destruction that they suffer or witnessed during the armed conflict, whereas others remained distant and opted for not talking with me. Conquergood (1985) states that the stories participants tell make claims on the researcher. He also proposes 'dialogical performance' as a commitment to genuine conversation in which the researcher speaks to and with persons researched. However, such

a stance is, as Soyini (2006) notes, 'charged by a desire for a generative and embodied reciprocity, sometimes with pleasure and sometimes with pain.'

This disposition to share stories with me during my fieldwork demanded a clear position in which I constantly reminded my participants of my research work. Openness and transparency about the purpose of my study was fundamental and was the key to consent. This did not take the form of a written piece since the nature of the topics under discussion required a different dynamic, one based on confidence and respect. Written consent in this context would be problematic insofar as it would be perceived as an obligation or an official commitment. In fact, I reassured participants' free will to make part of the research project before and during the interviews as well as during our conversations (Ellis, 2007; Etherington, 2005; Grafanaki, 1996; Gordon, 2000). This built up a relationship of mutual respect and dignity that made room for sensing and thinking around the everyday issues experienced by my participants, issues from the past and present that open up for reflection:

> A teacher said to me, 'Sometimes things happened, things that we did not understand. This refers to how the military –he said- were distinctively hostile with the communities. He told me that sometimes the guerrilla walked around the areas and then the military did too. Surprisingly, only when the military walked around the places did some bombs appear and kill civilians. Stories like this are what the community did not understand. "There was more cruelty in the military" (Field note).

Furthermore, there were times when my participants talked about sensitive experiences. This was extremely significant since our conversations entered into the terrain of intimacy, which requires a great deal of confidence and respect. Moreover, as Conquergood (1986) experienced, his participants' stories made claims on the 'fellow human being/researcher.' Although the author describes himself as a researcher, I prefer the idea of a human being in the first place, a human being that experiences sadness, astonishment, anger, and compassion. Here the ethnographic process unfolds and displays an amalgam of possibilities that go beyond the conceptual and methodological and traverses the human, although this poses big challenges:

[…] The first woman came first for interview. We had an interesting conversation; when we finished, she said to me that she had forgotten telling me about women who had been sexually abused. There were some people with us, so she got closer and whispered. She said that that had been her story and she told me about how it happened (who the perpetrator was and what came afterwards: telling the story for reparation purposes and how painful it was every time she had to talk about it). I did not know what to say and certainly felt empty and incomplete. I just said that I recognised the wonderful work she and her friends were doing for the community and that nobody ever would take her value and bravery away. Our conversation finished and we joined the group. I was left with a sensation of not being enough in this particular situation. Then I understood I could not do anything else, and that listening was the best thing to do (Field note).

How can I respond to such intimacy that combines sensing and thinking? Heart and mind are required to act together (Bergum, 1998; Ellis, 2007), but it is necessary to consider some limitations. An intuitive character should dictate when to draw back in order to respect people's suffering; also, the researcher ought to read the situation and identify what to ask or not to ask. It is true that researchers might find themselves in unaccustomed roles, which is difficult and perhaps painful. However, from the limitations of the researcher the response should be an ethics of liberation. This is particularly relevant in the Latin American context, where methodologies require an emancipatory dimension that addresses oppression. During a conversation with one of my participants, he shared with me some ideas by Enrique Dussel, who works around the idea of ethics of liberation. According to Dussel (2007), ethics should gravitate towards life, but also addressing the situation of victims, subjugated and marginalised. Then, the author says, it is possible to move to a critical standpoint. Based on these considerations, listening becomes the first response to the suffering of my participants, but also respect for silences, for suffering unspoken and for their fears. I have opted for recognising their humanity and celebrate their efforts, their option for life as an ethical and emancipatory disposition that contributes to peacebuilding.

This research journey has taught me lessons on many levels. First, I have been able to see the potential of both formal and informal education in contexts of conflict; I could move

from the theoretical reflections to multiple encounters in which I witnessed the efforts of people to bring about social change. This has motivated me to learn more about these processes, share my research experience with diverse audiences, and explore more critical approaches in my teaching and research practice. Second, I explored avenues to contribute to my participant efforts; I worked with the local library on a campaign to collect books, which was an interesting and enriching process on a personal level. I also had the challenge to talk to teachers and mediate in some tensions, I learned it was vital to listen to people, but also to recognise their efforts and experience. Third, I could establish relations of trust with my participants; the fact that I introduced myself as a learner – often they saw me as another teacher – rather than a researcher was helpful in constructing equalising relations. This is what helped me be part of activities in the library and the schools, where I run workshops for students and teachers – a teachers' development day. Finally, and perhaps more importantly, I could go back to my supervisor's recommendation when writing my ethics form: 'show your human side.' This research journey has helped me reconnect with a fresh human view of life.

3.6.1. Ethics of Representation

Another question that emerged during this process was representation. Once I finished the data collection and was back in my desk making sense of the experience, I started to search for a suitable method to present my findings (See <u>data analysis and interpretation</u>). I saw a great value in using narrative analysis and found that my participants' voice could have a place at the forefront, rather than use a stringent way in which data are cleaned up and used in chunks to thematise findings. I was greatly interested in the pedagogical value of stories, so I pondered the question of representation for a while since the starting point of writing up somehow uncertain:

> What does it mean to present findings authentically when presenting speech authentically? What does it mean to represent your participants authentically when you seek to evoke a sense of being there, or prioritise effective or cognitive engagement at the expense of literal accuracy? Scholars have to make decisions about how to take the words out of their participants' mouths and reproduce them

elsewhere. And critically, scholars must acknowledge these choices as choices (Pickering and Kara, 2017; Lester and Anders, 2018).

The next challenge to consider was the translation of my data since the interviews and focus groups were in Spanish. I was aware of the two main dimensions at play: literal expression and translation. I first transcribed the interviews and noticed some of the expressions required cultural equivalents and that sometimes I had to listen to the recording again to make sense of a piece of text – tone of voice made it clear. During the translation phase, I was aware of my knowledge of the language as a possible interference where my tendency to polish expression could affect the authenticity of my data (Skloot, 2010). In this respect, I looked for ways to translate in such a way that the translated version was as close as possible to the original text.

Ethnographic writing is evocative, and the sense of embodiment is what makes that evocation possible (Clifford, 1986; Soyini, 2012). Thus, I made sure that my ethical commitments allowed me to listen, work and speak with my participants during the fieldwork, and that such ethics of engagement would allow me to do the writing (Mannay, 2016). However, I was aware of power relations in the research process, not in the sense of colonial power or marginalisation, but, as Pickering and Kara (2017) put it, regarding the presentation of the research itself, which leads to various representational acts such as the writing of the finds. Likewise, I was also aware of the tension between 'literal' (empirical, evidence-based) and 'real' (authentic, experiential) truths and its pros and cons (Bakan, 1996; Pickering and Kara, 2017). For this reason, I chose narrative analysis as part of my representational endeavour as I saw there could be a balance between the two. What is more, the purpose of the narrative is a quest for meaning contained in the stories, an event or fact that means something else, 'real truths' (Bakan, 1996; Gill, 2014). Finally, I tried to interpret the value of those stories considering my experience and the theory that underpins my research.

Finally, I had the opportunity to talk to some of my participants after the fieldwork. With some members of the library, we are still in touch, and we exchange ideas and material. I used some of the references by Escobar (2018) and Dussel (2007) that a volunteer from the library and schoolteachers shared with me. This takes me back to the relational ethics of my

research, in which there is mutual respects, recognition of dignity and connectedness between the researcher and the researched – my participant, human fellows (Ellis, 2006; Lincoln, 1995). The construction of future-oriented spaces was possible thanks to a schoolteacher who helped me write a brief text in which he envisaged the region 30 years further ahead. That text extraordinarily coincides with a previous conversation in which he told me about his actions now and the beliefs that sustain his persistence.

4. MAKING SENSE OF THE EXPERIENCE: UNDERSTANDING PEACE

3.3. Introduction

Valle del Guamuez has lived a long history of violence and oppression coming from different fronts. Illegal armed groups, presence, and absence of the state – this is and has been complex and problematic – illegal economic activities, and lack of opportunities have paved the way to an intractable conflict for more than 30 years and an extension of a nationwide conflict. The escalation of hostilities has transformed the social landscape of this territory and its people, causing desperation and a culture of silence and fear:

> 'Violence was everywhere, everywhere… until 2000 more or less. We saw many confrontations, violence everywhere, illegal armed groups… We all lived in fear, in the overwhelming uncertainty of what would happen next. The violence was unending… It was daily bread, particularly at weekends. Dead people, dead people, three, four, five… A priest once said, 'If a cross were erected for every person killed in La Hormiga, there would be nowhere left to walk' (Henry).

However, peace is a very common word in the parlance of the community. It has been an attempt and an aspiration for most of its inhabitants. War had met huge resistance on the part of some educational and other social agents. Small-scales initiatives have aimed to change the course of history marked by horror and hopelessness. Various settings such as schools, the local library and social movements have been the starting point for those initiatives to become gradually more significant in attaining peacebuilding opportunities. Thus, peace has been imagined, sought after, and constructed through actions that counteract the effects of war.

The geography of Bajo Putumayo favours the cultivation of coca crops and distribution to other places where it can be trafficked. Different sorts of illegal activities related to drug dealing have capitalised on the abandonment of this region and people's basic needs, which has had insidious effects on social and cultural practices. The reality that emerges is one of

disconnection amongst people, absence of dialogue and conflict resolution by pacifist means (See Discussion Chapter). The economic aspect becomes pivotal at the expense of life itself. Nowhere is this clearer than in the normalisation of war and death. Life becomes a transaction, something quantifiable and relatively easy – and justifiable – to lose. The idea of *'somebody was killed, therefore they must have done something'* is deeply rooted in the imaginary of people to the extent of being unquestioned:

> 'Although you don't normalise this, you say, 'Oh, here it is common to say that,' and you go quiet for fear. So, you don't dare too much. And the other thing is, the community did this oftentimes, let's say when you heard that many were killed, or one, or as it is happening now that there is no day that somebody isn't killed… And this is happening now. And what people say is 'oh, well, there must be a reason, they must have been up to something, so in doing this they justify the killer, so you say that's how you start normalising things and saying that it is alright if the person was involved in something. But when it somebody from your family who's killed – I told you I had a brother who was killed by the paramilitary and friends as well not only by the paramilitary, but by the guerrilla. So, you say, 'If people say there's something (behind the killing), to me 'that something does not justify assassination.' And perhaps other people know why, but you don't know why. Then you ask why, and nobody answers' (Gloria).

> 'I had students who worked. Later I understood that students worked in what they call the 'kitchens', which is the place in the countryside where they make the coca paste. Some of my students had small businesses, but only few of them (had) a small shop or an urban business, but the rest of them would come to (evening) school on great motorbikes from the kitchens. They worked there because that was how they could support their families and themselves' (Luz).

3.4.   Peace as Spaces

The theoretical considerations of this study have addressed the ontological fluidity of peace and the methodological traditions thereof. Of interest here is the richness that the local experience can offer to widen our understanding of peace, but also to see how those local discursive creations shape forms of peace from within educational settings. In this context,

my participants have shared stories of peace and war, not in a way that establishes a mere dialectical relation, but in ways that reveal how their actions and ways thinking in the face of conflict have contributed to creating alternative forms of living and relating to each other that rebel the logics of war.

The idea of *space* as follows comes from the voices of my participants who give account and 'spatialise' their experiences, actions and thinking (See <u>Methodology</u>). The metaphor of space is recurrent in their stories to illustrate their actions and their scope; for instance, for them, theatre offers spaces for self-discovery and change (See <u>Spaces of Childhood</u>). The conflict, cultural and structural violence – e.g., de facto state neglect – have eradicated healthy forms of social bonding, economic activities, and possibilities for people to live with dignity and respect; thus, education agents have come up spatio-temporal activities, relational in nature, that have proposed creative and non-violent ways of relating with others, interrogate social life – normalised aggression and warlike tendencies – and contribute to dismantling oppression. Four main themes have emerged: Spaces of *Childhood*, *Adulthood*, *Gender*, and *Future*.

3.5. Spaces of Childhood

All the spheres of the society have been permeated by the armed conflict in Valle del Guamuez; such influence goes beyond the social and economic environments, affecting family life and therefore children's upbringing. Children and young people witness and internalise aggression, killings, stigmatisation, silence as culture and survival (See <u>Discussion chapter</u>), and environmental destruction. The ethos of the community is shaped by the presence of armed groups, their actions, and the imposition of economic and social practices detrimental for all members of the community, but particularly for children and young people:

> 'Children used to show their everyday life in their games, right? They played gunmen or grabbed fruit and threw it at each other as if it were bombs, so… We had to carry out different projects to help them change that mentality, that way of life' (Headteacher).

'Always, and even now, I believe. We're no longer habituated to oil pipelines blasting, but that was constant, at least once a week. Or we (teachers and children) heard bombs and saw the smoke, and everybody went out to see where it had been. We have normalised the impact that it had, the impact on water sources, you name it! My sister, on one occasion, called me very worried to ask how I was, or what had happened, and sometimes I didn't know about things even though I lived here, because nobody used to talk about that. That was something normal' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

'Then the school environment was complex, very difficult. There was a lot of violence in the classrooms, because children did not resort to anything other than the use of sticks, toy weapons, toy rifles. The only game for them was 'you are the paraco' (paramilitary) and 'I am guerrillero' (guerrilla member) and let's start and bam! That was quotidian. All school breaks were like that. There wasn't even tolerance, children got upset very easily, like 'shut up,' 'look, that boy is annoying me!' There was even physical aggression like punches, or a pencil stuck in a student's shoulder, or the hand… erm, they were children affected by the conflict, perhaps that's because they're witnesses of it, aren't they? They've seen what was happening around here in that time and they brought all that to the classroom' (Fernanda, schoolteacher).

Violence becomes an oft-repeated place for children in the community and sometimes family life. A direct consequence of this is the appearance of modes of aggression in school. The terrain of children's imagination is riddled with images of war. Their aggressive games give account of their experience of the conflict. Their self-understanding, physicality and emotions are deeply affected by what they have witnessed, and this influences their world perception. Their interests reflect the struggles of their family caused by war and their close experience of violence. The playful expression of childhood has been replaced by the terror of war:

'I would say, 'Alright, we`re going to do an activity under the shade of a tree', the thing is to do something other than maths, problem solving… Something different that helps them relieve the monotony, for example, on a sunny day like this, because

children get stressed. They did drawings of fighter planes, crop-spraying planes and helicopters shooting overhead, and showed children firing rifles at them. So I asked, 'who are these? And they said they were in the drawings. 'These are us, shooting them so that they don't annoy us here and go away' (Wilson, schoolteacher).

'In the first town where I worked… (it was) excellent, I mean children were respectful as such, because that comes from home, erm they respected us and people in general, but their behaviour was influenced so to speak, because they would talk about guns and get excited about those things… or perhaps the fact that games always got around those roles as such, right? Between military and erm… some children had the idea of… well, I am going to be a guerrilla militant… erm so, we tried to help them have another mindset, different games, I mean they lived in their world and their context, but we would try to generate new ideas besides the school content, new ways of thinking through games, so they understood that was the reflection of their situation but that didn't have to necessarily be their aspiration for the future' (Gretel, schoolteacher).

The armed conflict has taken place in different manners in this region. Some areas more than others have suffered from stigmatization by the armed forces due to the presence of guerrilla groups mainly. Children have witnessed the effect of such accusations in daily life: their parents accused of being members of illegal groups or supporters, and, at the same time, they are diminished by their being peasants. They are assumed to have a low status, which is evident in the lack of opportunities, governmental support, and education. On the other hand, the guerrilla group FARC–at least in this region– seem to have the role of the state insofar as they impose some sort of 'social order' and act as mediators. The interaction between the communities and the guerrilla is tense but apparently less violent, which causes a shift in role models for children –this varies from community to community. Authority is represented by armed forces (the military and the police), the paramilitary and the guerrilla, roles conducted with significant belligerence. The implication of this is problematic as children perceive justice as defensive and punitive in nature. Under such circumstances there is no room for dialogue, constructive discussion and dissensus.

There are some other difficulties at work; first, economic profitable activities within the legal sphere are almost non-existent. There is no governmental support or infrastructure that facilitates the development of economic activities in the region. Some agricultural activities manage to struggle on despite the poor infrastructure and absence of assurances. Second, coca production becomes an 'easy' alternative to cope with need and progressively becomes dominant, particularly in rural areas –but it is even the only alternative. Teenagers therefore become interested in its production. If this is at first seen as work to support families, soon it becomes an element that distorts the social landscape. Money becomes relatively easy to obtain by adults and teenagers want their share, too. There is a change of status of children/teenagers into a state of 'adulthood' dominated by illegality, which is in large part normalised and accepted initially even in schools. It is impossible to oppose to the domination of war and its impositions:

> 'Sometimes students did not come to school for a week because it was coca harvest time, that was very common. It was somehow normal for us, OK, they are not coming for a week, so let's find a way to help them with the class activities the week after. And that was also because they had relatives involved in that activity, so students were involved in the conflict and drug trafficking directly or indirectly. For a youngster at that time, and even now I think, it was very easy to get involved in drug trafficking, it is very easy. Anyone could hire a young guy to do drug trafficking. That's why it is an achievement for us to see a student go to university. That's quite an achievement, a big one! Sometimes statistics show that only a small number of students went into university. A student that goes to university, a single student that changes their mind is a big achievement in a town like this. Nowadays we have professionals from this town' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

However, war and its effects are resisted to a certain extent by social actors. Schoolteachers, education agents, and some other people reflect critically on their reality. They perceive how violence is rehearsed and remains deeply engrained in the ethos of the community. Such awareness reveals a compelling call for action because there is a growing disparity between the quotidian and the efforts of education. Places like schools and the library witness the displacement of what pertains to the realm of childhood and the dominance of war: childhood is not in place, it needs repatriation. It is, therefore, necessary

to create initiatives –spaces, prefigurative and transformative practices that help students change their mentality of war for a mentality of dialogue, respect, and confidence:

'(…) And that is what we aim at, like working a lot on the extracurricular activities, assemblies, Mother's Day, child's day, sports activities, or even the school garden, right? Because in rural areas we work on the school garden a lot. For example, we did some work in the school garden called 'school garden: a place for social interaction,' because that's what it is, in the school garden you learn background knowledge of students and their parents, and we try to connect that to the academic. And we learned a lot. We learned from each other, and thus we were like building up those spaces of tolerance, peaceful spaces where one speaks and the other listens and so on. And it should be participatory…. In the activities, then, we all participated: parents, students, coordinators, and teachers. For them [students], it was very nice and I think they still remember. There was an activity led by a teacher: we acted, danced, erm… if it was an outside activity to paint our faces like clowns, we did it. During the sports activities, teachers were running, jumping rope, being part of all the activities… that motivated students as they looked at us involved, don't you think? They said, 'Look, the teacher does that so we can do it too.' And it was the same with their parents, so It was more like using those extracurricular spaces. Not just like here I come to teach a lesson and you have to listen, no. Instead, it is more like relating to each other in a different environment where everyone has their own viewpoints, we are different. You come from a place, and you come from somewhere else in Colombia, but when we are in these events, we are all equal to each other' (Fernanda, schoolteacher).

'We worked on a project with ONDAS (an NGO) about the right to live in peace. We also did traditional games, the rescue of traditional games. We also thought of doing a more inclusive activity with parents, that was a championship with the small towns. Every week we had a female and male team, and we went to a different town and played football as a way to know each other, to interact better. That wasn't easy though (laughs), but the idea was to make school reach the community and be a peacebuilding place… A championship to make people know each other, play, talk coexist peacefully particularly' (Headteacher).

This picture of schools and their actions reveal the means by which the return of childhood is attempted. The set of codes imposed by the conflict such as aggression, mistrust, separation, silence, hierarchies of power, and hopelessness are progressively overcome by socialisation, games, recreational activities, communication, conflict resolution, self-care, and equalising interactions that allow children to be just that: children. Rural schools make use of their gardens to gather children and parents together around knowledge of agriculture, which is an opportunity to reencounter themselves in relation to the environment and the community. There is a strong relational aspect in all these activities that are contrary to the unequal power relations imposed in the conflict.

The work of schools in peacebuilding is pivotal and goes beyond the curriculum, and some NGOs are aware of such importance in mitigating the impact of war. Some initiatives have taken place in schools in the region in order to help teachers cope with the culture of war widely spread. Those projects aim at providing teachers with cognitive tools, activities and incentives to deal with the everyday difficulties of school life and the challenges of conflict from a creative and well-informed perspective. Thus, there has been a lot of work around peace education. Some interventions have been more successful than others. Nevertheless, the work of teachers has been constant and varied from the incorporation of strategies to help students in difficulties because of the conflict, extracurricular activities, and community involvement to more creative and recreational activities such as theatre, radio programmes and sports, despite the discontinuity of some of the projects that have initially inspired some of those activities:

> 'We worked with 'Corporacion Amazonia' and 'Warchild Holland' on a project called 'building a better future for the children of Colombia', in conflict zones. We teachers made part of it and, coincidentally, they asked the projects to include artistic expressions. Things like handicrafts, and there was another teacher working on dance, she knew a lot. They also want to foster theatre, so I was assigned to work on theatre. I had no idea, no academic formation or anything, and that was a godsent because I discovered how it changes lives and I could rediscover myself, too. We started to see creativity and then we created a group called 'tierra fertil' as a theatre group and it is now a foundation, at least administratively we have legal status. It has been 10 years now, such an extensive experience. Then I see how

people can use their free time productively, on the one hand, and hone qualities and skills on the other… students and myself as a teacher. After some time of learning, we included the artistic component like theatre, storytelling, the artistic side to develop the academic aspect, right? So, we invented stories and used theatre to teach our lessons, and invented games. So, there we go despite the moves up and down… with good things, too, like having met '*Unidad de Víctimas*'(Victims Unit) that works on collective reparation and opened up unimaginable for us. That is a godsent, there is no other explanation. We performed in national venues, taking the guys to perform our plays in venues such as the Theatre Festival in Manizales, National Theatre Festival, Cali Theatre Festival, and all over our department with our message. And there you go, since we have a legal status now, we have had a constant process. There come new things like research project with ONDAS, teen pregnancy campaigns, all of this under the frame of theatre, research and radio' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

Dance and theatre, for instance, are artistic expressions that require sensitivity and a disposition to listen, to work with others, and, mainly more importantly in this context, to dream and think of other possible worlds. Storytelling becomes a disruptive vehicle to work on memory and to protest against the actions of armed actors. In this context, those tools are vital and help children gain confidence in their abilities, particularly when social resentment and stigmatisation are dominant factors associated within these communities. This extract comes from a teacher working for a rural school. In 1999 there was a massacre, and 20 men were killed. Since then, a process to vindicate the community has taken place, but it has been very difficult to repair its social fabric. The work of theatre has also aimed to vindicate the dignity of the community and encourage people to overcome the trauma of the massacre. In a region with little cultural investment, such initiatives are extremely valuable.

In this sense, the library also makes an enormous contribution. There is a process that counteracts the semiotics of war: from aggression, oppression, and resentment to the colonised imagination, images of war, and language of children. All of this meets resistance from a set of symbols that appeal to meaningful relational experiences, which provides opportunities for change at a personal and social level, encouraging children to replace the imagery of violence for new options:

'With the group of friends of the library, we did an activity in the park to encourage children to give up their toy weapons and play instead. The children who went had to take their toy weapon with them and put into a bag before they passed through a tunnel made out of 'fique' bags. They would give up their toy and we would wait for them at the end of the tunnel with a round of applause, a drink, rice pudding, and then we played with them. That was our process and from that moment onwards we had the radio programme in which we told parents to give their children something that did not fuel conflict. I mean, let's give (children) something that's useful. Your child always gets an idea of that they're given and what they're told. Children always used to play the cop, the guerrilla member, or the thief… the bad and the good, and it was normal for them to have a toy sword, a toy gun, and then we said, 'No, if I see them [with toy weapons], I will swap the toy for…[pauses]' And children used to come with their toy guns in the pocket. And we looked at them [and said], 'Well, in the library, we don't like war either in play or in reality. Therefore, erm, I am going to seize this toy gun. If your parent comes for it, I will return it. Alternatively, I could read a story for you, I could give you a sweet or teach you a game in exchange for that toy gun' (Gloria, librarian).

'The rice pudding was an activity we did to help children give up their toy weapons. You could see all the kids playing with toy guns here and there. So, the ideas was like 'you give me the toy gun and I give you rice pudding' —we did it in the park. And besides that, we had books to read with them, games, but the main idea was to help the kids give up their toy weapons and eat rice pudding. That was the first time and from then on we did it every year, it is a library activity and we try to promote all the activities we do: reading aloud, handicrafts, traditional games, chess, institutional offer. We invite other institutions to join us such as Warchild. You get your pudding rice if you do the whole day activity. We start at about 9 and finish at 3 and we give like 600 rice pudding. (Doris)

I think that (the library) is a place of peace because it's a space where one can receive and share opinions and ideas about anything. A necessary element for peace is dialogue and the library creates spaces of dialogue through various means: books, film clubs, conversations, spaces for photography and memory. There are various ways in which the library can generate those spaces of dialogue, but it's not just

about a peaceful coexistence in the moment. One gets some elements, and one has
a more reflective and critical thinking about reality… You get other perspectives; you
are no longer blind. We still need to work with indigenous and afro communities and
create more spaces to include them' (Leidy, volunteer).

This image of the tunnel is important for a number of reasons: first, once children understand the importance of 'laying down their toy guns', there comes a new state of mind in which dialogue is the new instrument, helping them negotiate to construct new understandings of themselves, their peers and the world at large. There is also a commitment to adopting new strategies in the playground. From then on, they are aware of their being children, not in the battlefield or holding a rifle, but in the park, playing games with others, using other sources for their imagination. Second, there is a sort of 'rite of passage' in reverse: it is not the transition to adulthood yet, but the return to childhood, their repatriation. Third, the library becomes a place where 'no violence is accepted.' There is a clear distinction between the outside world dominated by 'the logic' of war, and the library as a place offering alternatives to the conflict. Categorical as this standpoint is, it leaves the door open and does not reject children: they are welcome and safe. This also reveals the configuration of a space that is physical but also abstract. It is created through the activities, socialization, and programmes taking place in and outside the venue, e.g., reading aloud in the park and exchanging toy weapons for games, sharing food, and doing varied activities.

The library in itself is essentially an extension of the state –as is the school– and its function is the provision a public service to the community (any public institution in Colombia – e.g., schools, libraries, notaries – depends on the state provision). This includes the use of computers and assistance to children to do their school assignments. Resources such as computers and books are not many and the staff there makes every effort to help everyone. The emphasis here is clearly on 'no discrimination', which means everybody is welcome to the library irrespective of political views, religious beliefs or walks of life. As an institution of the state –and despite the precariousness of its resources–, it has orientated its efforts to materialise the aspiration of peace through a synergy between staff, volunteers, politicians, social actors, NGOs, and the community:

'I already know the librarian from a distance, but we didn't talk at first. Then we were studying together and started to work in group. She invited me to the film club, and then other activities and I started to get involved. I wasn't very active initially; I attended the activities as a guest and did not involve in the library activities as such. But 3 or 4 years ago I became more active. I participate in the activities and do reading promotion activities mainly in the town because I sometimes can't go outside of town for my job. However, I go to schools and do things here, and occasionally go outside of town. Our 'rice pudding' is really popular (laughs). And that's priceless, I do it for love and because I like it, particularly when it is with rural communities and children. I like it a lot. I join them whenever I can' (Doris, volunteer).

'I came from a smaller town. So, I was surprised to see local 'the library' here. Then the librarian told me about the magazine… wow, you have a magazine, I mean, you write, so that was amazing to me and then I realised they had a radio programme, too. But when I got involved, everything was at a standstill. They had the fifth issue and hadn't done any more for 3 or 4 years, so the processes were at a standstill… the radio programme, the reading sessions, film clubs, and the magazine. The other day we were talking about this… When I came to this town everything was at a standstill and (library) many friends were leaving, I mean the first people to put their heart and soul into everything here. They left because of work and study, they left and others would come. So, we restarted, that change is evident in the magazine. The sixth edition has different things, I guess that was because of the people who arrived and the resources that were available only until then' (Diana, volunteer).

'My parents moved to the urban zone and there I knew about the library. And I knew a world different to the one offered out there, because I had access to books, and stories. It was more than just doing school homework. That is why I think books saved my life, because in the logic of war you can lose your life, they recruit you, they make you an informant, I mean that was in part the destiny of our generation… That hasn't changed much, child and youth recruitment is still present in our territory. We still have debts in terms of cultural infrastructure for our children and youth. Our context still has its limitations, but the library accomplished its mission of opening the door to new possible worlds for me' (Deputy).

Despite its economic limitations, this library had–and still does have–an extraordinary capacity to look after children, accompany them in their school process, offer alternative ways of play, show them other possibilities beyond violence, and motivate them to read critically, study at university, make part of 'Friends of the library' GAB, help communities in distant areas and become active members of society. There is an interesting synergy amongst the members of the library, and new generations are inspired by the work of the first groups who came up with ideas such as a magazine and a radio programme. Some university students spend some time volunteering in their holidays when they come back from other regions where there are universities. There is a great potential for peacebuilding in the library, but it certainly needs more support by the state.

Similarly, the school has struggled to build up a better environment for children and counteract the culture of war inside and outside the institution. Peace is understood as a continuous pursuit of democratic spaces for children to develop their potential. This is done under the premise that access to education, when done well, is key in attaining better societies and goes beyond the mere provision of content in the classroom. It has to do with an amalgam of possibilities, realities, and choices different from war, injustice and deprivation. Nevertheless, while it is true that teachers make efforts to contribute to peacebuilding, there is also a less intense tired perception of the social reality. There is a number of educators who abandon such pursuit and stay in a state of discontent and mistrust, which is rooted in a long conflict and the incapacity of the state to provide effective solutions –it touches upon infrastructure, quality demands, salary just to mention a few:

> 'When we arrived, the guerrilla was already here. We talked at school and that was all. Erm… We heard shootings when working in the evening shift, but then we went straight home. We didn't meet in the day for coffee or a chat because the town wasn't nice. It was messy and there were no nice places to sit and talk. Everything was alcohol and loud music: vallenatos, rancheras. At first that's intriguing, but then it is tiring. There were no spaces to meet. We got together at school for a celebration in the evening shift, but never talked about the situation, never! We didn't talk because it was like 'the guerrilla is here and there's nothing to do.' When the

paramilitary arrived, erm… we talked about how dangerous it was or let's not talk about this person, be careful in the classrooms because there are informants of the paramilitary, not the guerrilla. So, we had to be really careful. And after this wave of violence, we said, 'Let's do something to change this from such violence we've suffered'. But we never did so. I don't know why. We had the idea, but we weren't able to do it. So many things to tell and we had the material, I mean our students who lived the conflict. Erm… I think we didn't do it because we were saturated at work, a lot of work, many projects, so many things that deep down were senseless. I think that's the reason mainly. And because of egoism. So, it was like 'I say this, I do it' and nobody did it' (Luz).

'It is Friday morning and pupils are gathered in the school theatre ready for the student president election debate. Ms. Enriquez, the social science teacher, explains the rules and its importance, being that it is a compulsory activity for schools countrywide and an example of democracy for students. There are 3 rounds of questions: general, specific and those asked from the floor, touching on subjects including leadership, rights, responsibilities, and resources within school, though some refer to national politics. Across the room I see one of the staff mocking the candidates' responses and a couple of other teachers follow her lead. She spots me taking notes and cautiously approaches to ask if I am a representative from the Ministry of Education. I explain I am observing the event for my Ph.D. research, which she dismisses as being non-threatening by returning to her place to resume her pejorative attitude. The debate has moved on - the candidates are now questioning how the school will support their presidency, fully aware there is no government support for the school itself. The students' mistrust of politics is revealing, but it was encouraging to see that they understood there was a need for change' (From fieldnotes).

Such state of discomfort also permeates their practices and attitudes towards education and its value. Sometimes there is lack synergy inside schools and antagonistic protagonists expressing outright disbelief in students' potential or ideas. This standpoint is critical and hinders any attempt on the part of teachers or students to bring about change. They carry out their practices under the frame of a pedagogy of hopelessness that coexists in hopeful pedagogical practices, but perhaps here it is more nuanced by the conflict.

In sum, this section presents how educators reflect on the realities of the conflict and how children have absorbed logics of aggression and disconnection. This is evident in children re-enacting violence in symbolic play and playgrounds. Likewise, there is a normalisation of acts of violence by the guerrilla and the military/police. The armed confrontation is unquestioned and somehow both the guerrilla and the military become role models for children. Feelings of anger and revenge are also present in children as they witness injustice and oppression. Therefore, those relational spaces seek to create transformative practices in which children have the opportunity to experience childhood from a playful and non-violent way, but also to reflect on their dignity and that of others. To do so, dialogue is an important element that permits equalising encounters, where children can interact, play, and dream outside the logics of war (See Discussion Chapter, question 1 and 2).

3.6.   Spaces of Adulthood

Hi, my name is…
Certainly, some time ago
I had just one name, now many…
I am Predro, I am José,
I am Yasmani…

I am Dolores, I am Noemí,
I am from the Embera, I am from the Cofán,
I am those taken away by the war
But above all things
I am those brave ones who stayed...
Luis Antonio Santacruz, Magazine Katharsis

The makeup of the population of Valle del Guamuez is a multicultural one. People from other regions of Colombia have arrived in pursuit of opportunities or displaced from other more violent contexts and have met indigenous and afro communities living there before. Such a process has taken different forms in rural and urban areas. The realm of adulthood has been reshaped by the madness of coca and the appearance of armed groups:

'This was a wonderful close-knit community before the conflict… We did all the work as a community, in Mingas.[2] We obtained the resources from festivals and raffles and we carried out our projects. A close-knit community indeed, but before 'the violence', people from other places – not from Nariño – start to come here, people from Cauca, Huila, and other places and that's how violence starts. That is why the poem says 'here came people from other places and violence sneaked in' (Social leader).

Internal migration brings about diversity of social and cultural practices. However, in this context such a mixture is both enriching and problematic. On the one hand, internal migrants have experienced violence, displacement, or deprivation in their hometowns, which shapes their (mis)understandings of communal relationships and creates a sense of precariousness of life. Some inhabitants of Valle del Guamuez feel that 'outsiders' have contributed to violence –although some of them are migrants themselves and arrived when they were children. Furthermore, distant villages (veredas) have very limited access to education, employment, healthcare, and institutions that mediate in the social arena. On the other hand, professionals from other regions have seen the opportunity to exercise their professions; doctors, teachers, psychologists, and others are predominantly from other regions. This is in part due to the absence of higher education institutions in Putumayo.

Another element that intensifies the tensions in the region is the appearance of coca production that soon becomes the most profitable economic activity – at least for a large part of the population. Peasants see their crops do not have the chance to be sold at fair prices due to poor infrastructure and lack of economic support. In fact, the effort and cost of transportation discourages people to rely on agricultural products, particularly those living in distant villages. Thus, coca becomes the number one choice for employability:

'The town I come from offers no possibilities other than countryside work, because I am a peasant! At that time, peasants used to build schools and therefore needed

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[2] Minga is a tradition of cooperation amongst members of a community in order to obtain a common goal, be it something material or an activity that benefits everyone. This initiative is widely used in South America and its origin is indigenous. In Colombia it is still used in schools and small villages in which some collective effort is required. It has also acquired a political connotation describing indigenous movements demanding their rights, usually organised in demonstrations.

teachers here in Putumayo. I had finished secondary school, so I knew I could get a teaching job easily here. I came here in 2000. That was the time of coca production at its highest level. Coca business was really profitable here and agriculture wasn't as good in my town, so I came because I had two choices: coca or teaching, because I was going to earn twice as much, and work was easier. I worked growing and collecting coca for a couple of years' (Wilson, schoolteacher).

Unemployment and lack of access to education in the region frustrate any attempt of economic progress within the law. Thus, coca offered quick and high profits and was the promise of an easy step forward, at least economically. Thus, every corner of this society was percolated by the coca business, from agriculture itself to education, small businesses and even the church in the form of donations. The money circulating in this region was mainly obtained from Coca crops and production:

'I had students who worked. Later I understood that students worked in what they call the 'kitchens', which is the place in the countryside where they make the coca paste. Some of my students had small businesses, but only a few, a small shop or an urban business, but the rest would come to school on great motorbikes from the kitchens. They worked there because that was how they could support their families and themselves. [There were] lots of people from elsewhere, Paisas (from Antioquia)… lots of Paisas, but not many from Putumayo, very few indeed… Paisas, people from Nariño who worked as 'raspachin', working with coca leaves that were taken to the labs. And not many worked in the laboratories really. Many people transported the drug, some would say. So, they had motorcycles –I don't know what it is called–, a high cylindered motorcycle, erm… and there were paths, not only roads, but they also used paths to get to towns near Nariño, so I imagine how difficult it was. They told me there was a path near Monopamba, which is a road that they (the government) have always wanted to build, but they never did. So, you can imagine that path was made by the narcos' (Luz, schoolteacher).

'This context has changed a lot. 12 years ago, it was quite different. When I was studying in La Hormiga, coca production was at its peak and was the core of most of the activities like commerce, the way of speaking, how people projected themselves or not. I started my studies in that context. At that time there were no choices like

school transport and meals. I grew up in a remote rural village (vereda) and coming to town was quite an odyssey. There were villages without roads, because this municipality is relatively new, and the process is very slow since the government has never invested in it. We are a neglected region. (…) There was so much money, so we (as students) did not go to the school restaurant because it was embarrassing' (Leonardo, schoolteacher).

A new set of unspoken norms and behaviours redefined social relations, from the way in which people perceive and understand themselves and others to the way of speaking or relating to the community and the environment. Status was granted by the display of material possessions, particularly things that can be exhibited such as a car or a motorbike. There was an exacerbation of individuality given the ephemeral character of life inescapably tied to illegal crops and derivatives thereof: what people get 'here and now' is all that counts. Social bonds were fractured and there was no common vision of society (although some parts of the town experienced cooperation too). Public spaces such as streets, schools and hospitals remained underdeveloped, even up to this date. The main spaces for socialisation and recreation for adults were bars and billiards parlours.

'Men wanted big motorbikes, high cylindered ones. The motorbike would say 'that guy has money' so that was the thing. So, a family could have 3 or 4 motorbikes. (…) Here came women from Pererira, Medellin, and Cali. They used to be in billiard parlours because people didn't work. They went to the farms for 15 thereabouts. Some of them went from farm to farm, and some people could even work in farms for 2 or 3 months. And (they had) parties every weekend. At that time there were many artists playing live, at least once a month. They (men working in coca) finished their work and spent their money on women and parties. and women (growing coca) were adorned in jewellery and in expensive clothes and shoes. And the houses… you could see houses with up to 4 TV sets, and oh, these sound systems had huge speakers, which were used to play music loudly everywhere. Then we had the pyramid business schemes and people spent their money on trips and parties, and most people who could afford to buy a house didn't do it. They invested all their money on these schemes and lost it all' (Doris, volunteer).

The failed presence of the state has led to further social issues. Putumayo has historically experienced internal colonisation, the influence of Christian missionaries, and oil exploitation -the latter still occurs, but the revenues for the department are minimal. Such a governance vacuum now facilitated the arrival of armed groups. The Guerrilla FARC started to dominate the region and played a 'dominant' role. As a consequence of this, a sort of parallel state emerged. Guerrilla groups often imposed social orders, collecting taxes to finance their cause whilst forcing communities to change their economic activities. This established a culture of oppression: people were scrutinised, the young suddenly disappeared - either recruited by the guerrilla, or simply killed. Farmers were often taxed and methods of school teaching, over time, were fiercely controlled. Every aspect of social life seemed to be under scrutiny.

A quick look at this context reveals two prominent features; first, silence became normative. People felt they had little choice but to remain quiet in the face of violence. There were no legal entities to support communities, and police and military presence was intermittent and equally problematic: people were stigmatised, particularly in rural areas. Family and social life were permeated by a governing logic of physical aggression and symbolic violence. Second, the presence of both the guerrilla and the paramilitary kept communities trapped in the midst of an intractable conflict. Escape became virtually impossible. Under these circumstances, displacement was to be an alternative:

'It was in 1995 when I worked in the evening shift. It was about 9 pm and there were some men standing at the doors. They wore ponchos, hats, unbuttoned shirts, boots, but no uniform. They weren't tall, rather short. They listened to the lessons, which was scary. Presumably they were guerrilla members. Students went very quiet. So, there was going to be a meeting because they had meetings in the school. The coordinator would say, 'We have to finish earlier, because they asked for the auditorium,' and we did not question them: we just left. (We would say) The guerrilla! The guerrilla! (...) According to my sister, students were often removed from classes, and they also were called by their nicknames. This started in 1995-96 thereabouts. For example, they would ask about someone called Petroleo. I didn't know who Petroleo was and neither did anyone else. People say they were

paramilitary. We experienced both guerrilla and paramilitary presence' (Luz, schoolteacher).

'I had 4 brothers. Violence was at its highest peak here in Valle del Guamuez –the time of massacres and everything. My brothers were eighteen, nineteen and twenty years old, so they were at risk of being recruited by armed groups. And they tried to take my brother away a couple of times. So, my mother couldn't bear the anguish and we moved to a different region for fear of being recruited or killed. That was a latent risk. At times my brothers would go for a walk. People would question them, accusing them of being informants. They were taken out of town where they could have been killed' (Leonardo, schoolteacher).

The reality that emerged here is one of profound territorialization of violent conflict. People were trapped in the middle of armed confrontations. Modes of behaviour, manners, and ways of dressing or speaking were strongly linked to identities under this logic. There was no place that escaped the presence of armed groups or public force, which was equally problematic in this context. This produced a fracture in the social fabric: neighbours became suspicious of one another, and social bonds began to disintegrate. Massacres took place in different villages and people internalised the presence of war in every aspect of life:

'When the paramilitary arrived, it was worse. 'El Tigre,' where we are now, was known to be a guerrilla zone, so the paramilitary arrived in 1999 and they swept everything away, because everyone was seen as a guerrilla member to them. Many people were killed. Some were innocent and some were involved in illegal businesses or got in some sort of trouble' (Wilson, schoolteacher).

'First, the guerrilla used the school for meetings, but when the armed conflict, massacres and the disaster started, they no longer came back. But then the paramilitary started coming. They asked for the typing machine or came to have a look and life changed completely, didn't it? And we saw how students' life changed drastically too. In the evening shift, the remaining students no longer wore boots, and many didn't return. Their whereabouts was unknown. And the students that stayed, 16- or 17-year-olds, were from urban areas. The students from villages, who worked in the kitchens, stopped coming to class. Now students cut their hair short

and wore t-shirts instead of shirts, because people wearing boots and shirts were seen as guerrilla members. This is the starting point of the paramilitary experience: people were judged for how they dressed, and their hair style. Facial hair was a sign of untidiness. So, they were from the countryside, and they disappeared. Appearance was crucial, so those who lived in rural areas were in a lot of trouble' (Luz, schoolteacher).

The main implication of this portrayal is the precariousness of life. Illegal jobs, armed groups and social conflicts were deeply internalized to the extent of becoming part of people's everyday experience. Life could be lost at any time and there was an underlying belief that those who were killed deserved it. Human relations were desensitized and mediated by mistrust and fear. There was a widespread sense of hopelessness in the communities coming from the absence of institutions that support them and alternatives for them to live with dignity. The lesson of these complications is that it is necessary to create processes that foster human rights and bring about opportunities at an individual and social level.

One means by which this has been attempted is the implementation of activities within education settings. While it is true that NGOs have been present during and after the conflict, some of those processes have been sporadic or discontinued. Such interventions, however short, have been a starting point for education agents to take peacebuilding initiatives alongside with their experiences of the conflict and its effects. Some of them, who are inhabitants of the region, have realized the conditions of oppression and the behaviours of the oppressed, which resonates with Freire's concept of pedagogy of the oppressed:

'You don't normalise this, (…) Let's say when you heard that many were killed, or one, or as it is happening now that there is no day that somebody isn't killed… And this is happening now. And what people say is 'oh, well, there must be a reason, they must have been up to something,' so in doing this they justify the killer, so you start normalising things by saying that it is alright if the person was involved in something. (…) People used to say, 'There was a party, but nobody was killed' Just imagine! In the carnivals or New Year's Eve people used to say, 'Oh, it was bad because there wasn't anyone killed.' Can you imagine? It was so common to see someone injured on the street, people fighting or shooting, and people just said, 'Ok, collect them and

the party must go on.' That was never normal for me. I mean if I am conscious this is not a place for me' (Gloria, librarian).

There is a need for change that takes place in practices which oppose war. While the conflict has established a culture of silence and fear, the new challenge was dialogue, voices being listened to and channels for people to communicate and experience sociality. This occurred in schools and the library, but it reached other places and communities. There was a very supportive and constructive group of people inspired by key educational leaders. Some schoolteachers understood they needed to validate peoples' experience and help them grow at a social and personal level despite the limitations and fear:

'There were so few families, and it was compulsory to know about the students' families and their professions. We also had to know about their villages in order to converse with them. For instance, they had to write letters - at that time letters were still widely used -, so we worked on the epistolary genre. Students would ask "who should I write a letter to, Ms?" to which I would respond "do you have family elsewhere?" and then they would respond "my mother". I'd ask them if there was anything they'd like to tell them, and they laughed, because they'd never been given this opportunity before, but finally had the chance. They asked me what they should tell them, and I told them they could tell them about their job, what they do, or simply anything. They told me telling their mother about their boss wasn't an option, since they worked in the kitchens. We had to be careful. I would encourage them to write about their commute, or if they got sick, or if a bug bit them, for example. This was a way for me to understand their context. The students enjoyed talking to teachers outside of class hours, being listened to, and being asked about themselves, to a certain extent. I also think this was a way for them to gauge how much we talked, which was crucial for them to know at the time, you know? They wanted to know how curious you were, and you could get into trouble based on that. So we were prudent in how we talked… we had to be cautious' (Luz, schoolteacher).

In the latter extract, we encounter an example of rural schools and their role in mitigating the effects of war. Fear and disconnection intensified the brutality of the conflict. People would not talk to each other since they did not know their neighbours and their

activities. Mistrust was a dominant element in communities. Thus, the potency of this practice lies in how it created spaces where families got together around symbols that exalted biodiversity and cultural expressions. In doing so, it emboldened sociality and therefore the re-establishment of trust amongst people.

The stark realities of war are nonetheless resisted. This gives birth to discomfort, and reluctance to accept violence as a way of living. Some education agents carry out pedagogical processes aiming to construct and deconstruct norms and behaviours established by armed groups and illegal activities. The quotidian, which has been transformed by mentalities that often lead to violent conflict, is pulled into question. Education initiatives provide spaces which allow this questioning to take place. Alternatives are brought to light which have the potential to reform social and cultural practices:

'I see that there is a type of consciousness in the people in the library, particularly Estela. They are different from the rest of the people, even teachers. They care about others and what happens to them. They are observers and engage in dialogue, which I have seen throughout the 7 years I have lived here. For example, my uncles live here [and experienced the conflict], but they tell you about it frivolously, in an unreflective way. So, there is no dialogue in our family, something like 'this is what happened, and we were affected in such and such a way. There is no room to think what to do next, how to build up our community. They went through it and don't say anything. If there's something in their mind, it remains unspoken. They don't do anything about it. They just keep going on as if nothing. I speak for my family. Instead, here, Estela is worried about this village on strike because of fumigations. [The government] doesn't commit to help the peasants, the police force may attack them, so let's better hurry up and say it on the radio and let's tell the mayor. They are more attentive to the community because they care, and they talk about it. You don't see that in other people because they are indifferent. So, being here [in the library] you see there are people who care, others write and talk on the radio, and that makes you acquire that level of consciousness' (Diana, volunteer).

'Our goal was to extend the voice of the library and take literature to the most remote areas. We knew people listened to our radio programme in all the villages,

so we wanted them to know that there was a library. We wanted to tell stories that were similar to the difficulty they were going through. That was the idea and then, we included more musical genres... not only vallenato, reggaeton or popular music. We wanted to show there were sorts of music. But also, as we were going through such a difficult time, we felt strongly about not playing 'that type of music.' So we played other musical genres, we wondered what we wanted... protest music has a lot of social content and we were like encouraging people to protest against the system or what was happening through music. It was a way to validate our feelings about how much it hurt us to see what was happening. For example, Mercedes Sosa's music... 'Thank you to life', music by Victor Heredia, erm... Silvio Rodríguez, Vitor Jara... we wanted to show that there were other ways. We knew popular music just plunged people into their sadness, nostalgia, and depression, so we said, 'why not listen to music that encourages us to raise our voice, to hum a song, and if we cannot sing it in public, we can do it at home and feel some comfort and then say, 'I have words, I have a voice'. It was the same with rock, it was viewed as the genre for vagabonds and drug addicts... So, it was like confronting and talking to ourselves through music. Those were our goals. When we played the music, we feared what we would be told, but people said, 'it was nice, but it had a very strong message' (Gloria, librarian).

Such questioning materialised, amongst many others, in the form of radio programmes led by both the local library and some schools. This aimed to share the understanding that there were alternatives to war and communicate the need for a change of mindset. Such a change comprises the recognition of the potential of peace and people and touches upon topics such as identity, memory, environment, and sociality. Schools have restrictions, but they manage to carry out initiatives such as radio programmes, theatre or sports which have a positive impact. All this is also possible thanks to the synergy between community members, school and university students, teachers, central government institutions, public servants, and enterprises:

'We received an invitation from the ministry of culture and the centre for historical memory to participate in a memory related project. They needed people to participate with their voices to tell stories, we did it and that was called 'El Tigre,

memories of a forsaken town.' Then we met CANTOYACO, a local communication association, which is great because you meet people and enterprises that share your interests. It is wonderful because you see you are not alone and there are people who believe in peace and act do things. Cantayaco then invited us to do something and we came up with a strategy called 'El Tigre is not as bad as it is portrayed,' which we adapted from an old saying. So, we came up with this to say, 'Look, people say things about our town, they say we are violent, dangerous, they say there's nothing here but violence.' This is a means to talk to people because I already understand. It is like Bojayá, a town where there was a massacre. TV just shows that after all these years, but they say there's a river, or a nice story, you see? War sells more on media. So, we decidedly showed that there was a lot to be said for El Tigre: stories, strong people resisting and creating peacebuilding and work projects, so we created a radio drama called 'El Tigre is not as bad as it is portrayed,' which is the story of an immigrant teacher that thinks everybody in this town is violent. We were the only school that participated, the rest were experienced radio groups from the department. We got the third place in and now our product is available on a programme by the ministry of culture called 'the borders tell stories.' I am very curious, so I learned to edit audio, something rather basic. Then We (students and teacher) started to create our own products. We created a story called 'theatre on the border' aligned with our previous work. Then we created our programme and a school radio programme as well' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

Seen in this light, this is a call to imaginatively reconfigure ways for them to relate to others. Members of the library and some schools make the effort to 'liberate' the communities from the inhibiting and asphyxiating impositions of both war and state neglect. The new proposal is literature, music, dialogue, and artistic activities for adults. The library represents the presence of the state, one that is pacific and effective, and, at the same time, does not pose a threat to any armed group. This particular condition gives the library and its members the possibility to navigate spaces dominated by the conflict without being trapped by any ideological rigidity (Cf Futures-oriented Spaces).

However, unlike schools the local library escapes the control of armed forces, which makes it a safe place for all the community. This is interesting for a number of reasons; first,

scrutiny was latent but rarely was it visible enough to be a threat for the library. Second, their projects and activities were antagonistic in essence as they propose a non-violent view of society where conflict and dissensus are dealt with peacefully and creatively. Third, it has established positive relationships with people based on respect for cultural and even ideological differences. Such a disposition is led under the banner of 'no discrimination' and 'no weapons', which makes it unique. Herein resides the success of the library as a peacebuilding setting. Its ethos has contributed to the creation of solid bonds of trust with urban and rural communities:

> 'Everybody can come in. It doesn't matter if you're white, black, or indigenous. It doesn't matter if you belong to an armed group (laughs), the police or the military. No matter what your ideology is. If you come to the library looking for a space it is here for you. But weapons are not allowed, that is the only one condition. We believe this is a sacred space, but weapons represent violence, war, a world of things that aren't compatible with the library. If you need a space to be or a book, that is the library. In fact, opening days are Monday to Friday, but we also open on Saturdays. All the time. You can be an adult, a child, there is no discrimination. Sometimes people say, 'oh, those guys are drug addicts!' Well, they also deserve a space and they have it here. Actually, they feel fine here' (Doris, volunteer).

'I have words and I have a voice' is worth quoting since it renders the efforts of the library concisely. In a region where oral tradition is prominent, silence becomes dominant. There is no room for expression of any kind, and activities would aim for opening many-voiced spaces that welcome dialogue, spontaneity, and discussion. This is the starting point of '*Letras Libres'*, an activity to promote reading in rural communities. Young adults and adolescents are promoters of reading and accompany inhabitants of distant villages in encounters with imagination, conversations, and play. Furthermore, a fine balance between orality and reading/writing is aimed at through spaces where adults can be listened to and explore their interests in simple ways, which they had never previously imagined possible in a region with a strong oral tradition:

> '*Letras libres*, a project from the library, is about we the group of friends of the library going to the villages with books to promote reading. We go there by

motorbike mostly, but there are places where we have to walk. We go to a certain place and then we have to walk carrying our bag full of books. Once there, we do the welcome activity like icebreakers and we all integrate, that is, children, young people, adults, and the elderly… this is an intergenerational space. We laugh a bit and then we read aloud. Sometimes the community chooses the books. We engage in a dialogue about the book, we share opinions and knowledges. Then we do an activity based on the readings, it can be a collective story, a drawing, or something that all the members do, so that they can talk, imagine, and express their opinions. Finally, we socialise what they do, and we conclude the session. Sometimes we include traditional games, or we just look at people's interests. There is also a time for reading freely and we invite them to see the books we bring. They choose the books they want to take home and the rest are kept in a community member's house who commits to keeping the books and lending them to whoever wants them' (Leidy, volunteer).

'So, we said that we had to take the public library to those rural contexts. It is hard for them to go to the library, they can mainly go on Sunday perhaps, but it is not open. So, we talked to community leaders and told them about our idea, so we came up with a project to submit to the ministry of culture, which was about taking the library to communities and training our reading promoters. We came up with travelling bags and trained readers in topics like reading aloud. So, the reader oversaw books, and they took care of books and people could borrow them. They were also trained to read with children as well' (Andres, deputy).

The significance of *Letras Libres* lies in its humanizing character. It is an authentic response to peoples' needs. Some rural communities live in isolation and have no access to basic services or government assistance. This project provides spaces of education where people can express their opinions and discuss with their fellows. Furthermore, there is an intergenerational dimension in these activities that build up relationships amongst members of the villages irrespective of age, gender, and ethnic background. It is an invitation to dialogue that has helped people gain confidence in the members of the library and feel part of a social fabric. This is evident in how some of those communities have found *Letras Libres* as space for conflict resolution and the development of some forms of social literacy:

'People's response is great. For example, in 2016, everyone –children, adults, everyone indeed, felt free to feel and do things and they say it was a very nice space. They also expressed their satisfaction collectively, and you could see that they got together and shared in a more personal way. We also saw how they confided in us, particularly the librarian. So, they talked about problems related to the community, its organisation, or a serious issue. And we were a reference to conflict resolution as well. Sometimes things like 'I go to the mayor office and nobody helps me. We need to learn how to make a formal request, so I go to the stationary and they charge COP 5000 (2 US dollars). For them that is a lot of money. So, they said, 'Teach us how to make a formal written request' They felt the confidence to ask for help. We managed to take the laptops or tablets and taught them how to use them, to use Word and write their formal request. That happened concretely in Malvinas and La Herradura' (Leidy, volunteer).

Due to the sense of safety bestowed upon the library, people have placed trust in its members. Some people would go there to tell their stories with some sort of apprehension, but, at the same time, with the confidence of being listened to, particularly by the librarian. People's stories are too difficult and often full of injustice, which triggers a call for action. What kind of action is this? What are the possibilities of a group of individuals constrained by their circumstances? It is in strategies such as the radio programme, reading with communities and reading at the hospital, amongst many others, that the members of the library respond realistically to the compelling needs for change.

A clear example of creativity is the magazine *Katharsis*. Expression and communication in such a hostile environment are difficult, if not dangerous. A new leap to more opportunities to defy silence takes place in such project brought about thanks to 'the group of friends' (GAB). People from different ages and educational backgrounds constitute an invigorating plurality that has inventiveness finds help of entities and people inside and outside the region. *Katharsis* became an instrument of voice expression through poetry, prose, drawing, and photography. This is a vehicle for people to explore their creativity and write about a variety of topics. The texts include experiences of the conflict, memory, identity, indigenous and afro ancestral knowledge, and relevant historical events –as a real means of catharsis for people.

The issues explore different topics and have extended their scope to other regions of Putumayo:

'With the group of friends of the library, we thought of the magazine and the radio at the same time, because we wanted to do something. We thought we had to do something so that we didn't give up given the situation at the time. Then, Italo, a guy that was in third semester at university, but dropped out rebelliously, was working and not doing much. He was 19 years old, I think. And he suggested we could create a magazine. We thought it was impossible, because we didn't have money, but he said it would be nice to do something for people to write. We wondered if that was possible, so we talked to the mayor, and he told us to formally write the project and he would help us with half of the cost. And what about the other half? We asked small businesses and people for help. It was exciting. We used a thread in the street and asked people for money. In return we would give them a little paper branch or a ribbon that was symbolic. That is how we started' (Gloria, librarian).

'I made part of the Magazine Katharsis, I was studying social work at National University at that time. And they had a programme that financed projects carried out by students, so I thought about submitting the project there as there were other editorial projects being financed. So, at least for 3 years National University sponsored the magazine proofreading and printing. The first issue of the magazine was difficult. We paid almost everything, and we even got in debt. It was such a difficult process' (Andres, deputy).

'The Mothers
We are the mothers, and we are mourning
For our children that have been devoured
By the big serpent called Amarún
Naked girl, is that you perhaps?
There is no laughter anymore, or sounds of party
Stay hidden, don't go outside
Fear lives in every corner
And pain is concealed in every path

There is no laughter anymore, or sounds of party

Only lamentations and cries can be heard

Taitas and Sinchis, give us a solution!

We the mothers demand now' (Katharsis, 9th ed, Knowledges from indigenous and afro Communities in Putumayo in association with the Ministry of Culture, p. 78, 2015).

Some schools and the local library have creatively defied the repressions of war. This has been too difficult a task, but they have remained strong in the face of danger, fear and lack of resources. Education settings have broadened their scope to distant villages and communities through the creation of spaces that provide opportunities for expression, trust, play, imagination, and sociality. Such encounters have been carried out under an ethos of respect for humanity and a profound desire of contributing to peacebuilding. There is no distinction of gender, ethnic background, or age, which is consistent with their discourses. The library is a good example of collaboration and leadership. Its members, inspired by the librarian, have reached all the corners of the region and have established positive networks with government entities, NGOs, Universities, artists, and personalities. In 2014, it was awarded with the national library prize for its projects and group of friends (GAB). Despite the national recognition, resources are still not enough, but the library and its members keep working for the communities.

'I think that (the library) is a place for peace(building) because it's a space where you can receive and share opinions and ideas about anything. A necessary element for peace is dialogue, and the library creates spaces for dialogue through various means: reading activities, film clubs, conversations, photography, and memory work. There are various ways in which the library can generate such spaces, but it's not just about a peaceful coexistence in the moment. You get some elements and a more reflective and critical thinking approach to reality… You get other perspectives, and you are no longer blind. We still need to work with indigenous and afro communities and create more spaces to include them' (Leidy, volunteer).

Some schools, on the other hand, provide some adult education at the weekends and carry out initiatives that go outside their spaces and project to the communities. Theatre,

radio, sports are amongst the activities that aim to contribute to alternative spaces that foster reflection and critical thinking based on the premise that 'there are other possible ways' outside war and illegality. I observe, however, that schools need to understand their potential in relation to the possibility of working together. Sometimes it is evident the fractures and disinterests of some members of the institutions or between institutions –a fight for resources, which is detrimental for schools and their pedagogical processes. There are efforts here and there, which have contributed enormously to the change of mindset, but there is still a long way to go that requires unity and consensus. Such a task does not disregard diversity, but it is a call for action based on respect and collaboration.

This section has explained how both formal and informal education have come up with alternatives that seek to restore sociality. The conflict, scarcity and illicit drugs have distorted social relations and have imposed a culture of silence and compliance with war. Education agents, nevertheless, have come up with alternatives that have restored the social fabric; the school, the local library and social movements have identified ways of helping people trust each other, exercise non-violent ways of communication and overcome fear and oppression by means of literacy, community activities, and cultural expressions.

3.7. Spaces of Gender

Peace has a female face!
(Banner in El Tigre)
Peace has a human face!
Carlos Alberto Mejía

There are two bridges at the entrance of El Tigre. The older one is a pedestrian bridge; the pavement's decor is colourful, which alludes to the flora and fauna from the region. There is an outstanding tiger painted on the floor as a reference to the town's name. Two wooden canoes used as planters stand on both sides of the bridge. There is a striking juxtaposition of the brightness of the pavement and the grey sky. Members of the community gather to commemorate the massacre that took place in 1999, from which they still struggle to recover. That bridge was the place where the paramilitary killed 30 men for being suspected members

of the guerrilla. Stories of what happened that day mix with the current news of people, introductions, and greetings. Members of the police and the military forces participate in the event. There are children, young people, men, and women. A procession leads to a public school where there is a religious celebration preceded by speeches. A group of local women proclaim themselves as 'violets of peace'. Every woman is paired with 'a godmother' and both commit to working together in some sort of 'friendship' that aims to help and nurture their work towards peace initiatives. Women give most of the speeches reinterpreting the events and encouraging the community to work towards peace. In one of the speeches, a woman says, *'We used to be the invisible women from El Tigre.'*

The image of invisible women is intriguing but no less than unsatisfactory, and still worth exploring. Not only have they worked on peace and reconciliation initiatives, but they have also been active participants in shaping the society of Putumayo. Portrayals of the town before and after the armed conflict, women and men work collectively for common goals. The cooperative work embodied in La Minga, coming from indigenous traditions, is still used to help when resources or workforce are scarce. The narration about the work carried out by the community does not reveal any distinction between men and women. In contrast, the first manifestations of violence traced back before the armed conflict show women as direct victims. This is due to a widespread 'macho' culture in the region. Feminine and masculine roles have been essentialised and ingrained: what it means to be a man is epitomised by a display of physical, sexual, and warlike potencies; on the other hand, what it means to be a woman is typified by marriage, motherhood, submission, silence, and lack of ownership of their own bodies.

The assumption of motherhood as a central aspect of femininity is not new. What is more, family roles are the main association when it comes to identifying womanhood and her agency. This has instilled a generalised and uninterrogated understanding of what it means to be a woman along with accepted forms of violence against them. From Indigenous communities, afro-descendants, colonos (people from other regions settled here), and other local groups, women have suffered from different types of violence. However, there are no absolutes in such configurations:

'**Wilson:** we see the communities that have been more intensely affected by the conflict. After the massacre in El Tigre, many mothers, daughters, wives were left alone, and they had to oversee homes, families and children. They've made progress possible in this community. They have looked after the children and demanded their rights without fear of any perpetrators. So, I think peace has a female face, because they (women) have always been working towards peace amidst violence.

Freddy: perhaps not directly, it is a rather concealed face. And why? They have been struggling invisibly for so long. Liberalism arrived with ideas of equal rights. So, women emerged and have been there (struggling). It is a concealed face.

Epifania: What does that mean? Is it because we (women) are tender? Is it so? Not all of us. I think that women at the end of the day —men are the biggest loss in war— have that responsibility when men are gone. Women -mothers- have to raise their children alone, particularly at this date when the mindset is so different.

Nubia: Maybe it is what women represent in society. They are mothers and always ready for dialogue. Women are generally less aggressive.

Yesid: So, peace does not have a male face?

Wilson: it is a bit contradictory. It is normally men who fight and suffer (from war) more. More men than women died in this war, men are the sacrificed ones. Men, not women, died in the massacre of this town. And women were affected by this, so maybe that is why they say peace has a female face' (Focus group, rural School).

Women's agency has been pivotal in the recovery of this society and particularly in peacebuilding initiatives and goes beyond motherhood. Nevertheless, traditional associations of femininity and pacifism are still prevalent; women are seen to be tender, less aggressive, and 'always ready for dialogue'. These social doings of femininity oppose men's apparent inclination to war and conflict. Women have assumed family roles and other social activities due to the absence of the men who go to war. This, nevertheless, has more implications; womanhood seems to be the antithesis of violence, whereas men engage in violence amongst themselves and against women uncontestably. A traditional and conservative femininity and an aggressive masculinity are at play in these discourses:

Yesid: How does school respond to the challenge?

Nubia: Who attends school meetings? Women! That says a lot. Groups working on peace are mainly women. In this town peace promoters are women, and…

Epifania: women cry their losses. In demonstrations, who can you see? Women!

Wilson: The school (has the challenge) to educate and create awareness about the importance of peace. Peace should not be understood as the absence of war, but as our rights and benefit for being citizens of a nation. This is the struggle of every teacher, to raise awareness in families, so that men and women are involved in the education of children. Sometimes male parents don't know their children's grade or progress. So, we have to teach children to experience and demand peace as a right. Everybody should be part of this, so they need to know what to do and how to demand their rights. Male parents are not present in their children's upbringing, and they think they do enough by simply providing material things, and mothers should do all the rest. Women are at the forefront of the whole education process of children, not men. So, first of all, education (is our challenge) and second, raising awareness so that the education process can be balanced between mothers and fathers' (Focus group, rural school).

Peace is understood as an aspiration and a human enterprise. Schoolteachers see a connection between peace and human rights awareness in both men and women in the school community. Such understanding comes with active participation of fathers and mothers in their children's education. This context, however, reveals more complexities, because families are not always formed in the traditional way (mother, father and children): *'more men than women died in this war, men are the sacrificed ones. Men, not women, died in the massacre of this town'.* As a result, in some families parenting is often carried out by just women.

An argument could be that the conflict provided women with arenas to act socially and politically. Women often lose their husbands and other male family members, which leaves the women responsible for roles in education, political activism, and other social roles. It is women who have to cope with the challenge of recovering and maintaining the social fabric; their agency has been shared and maintained with that of men, to a lesser degree, despite the distortion of violence. However, there is a big difference in how men and women have navigated their social lives during the war. Perhaps their traditional essentialised

femininity has been crucial when confronting armed actors and demanding justice or reparation, as described below:

'**Gloria:** I think people see peace with a female face, because it is women who always promote spaces of calmness, peace and wellbeing. At home we (women) aim for harmony. On the other hand, you say peace with a feminine article (la), and from there people assume its feminine character. But looking at this context we clearly see peace has many faces. Faces of all the people who work on this process. You say 'peace is a state of mind,' but it is a state we seek for everyone. We have those (peacebuilding) processes and the accord hanging on a thread, and we have to work on them. But women are carrying out these processes and, in times of violence, women protected their husbands, children and neighbours. Women were the initiators of demonstrations. They were there to do what was needed. Men were threatened, shot, and displaced more often than women, so perhaps that is why peace is seen as such. Also, the feminine is seen as righteous, so maybe women are associated with mothers, and weak people, even by the armed actors.

Leidy: I agree. And women's groups have been more organised, so their work has been more visible at a regional, national, and international level. All the demonstrations and public complaints have been articulated with different groups, which has materialised in public policies, projects, and the like. But I don't think peace has only a female face. There are also small (peacebuilding) experiences taking place in municipalities and villages. Perhaps they're not visible as women's initiatives, but they are making a contribution locally. And I think Galeano says that small people, in many small places, who do small things, can attain big results. For me, peace is what we are doing here and that includes women and men, although the majority of us are women. But you also see the role of young men, indigenous men, and the Taita (indigenous leader). It is true that there are more women than men in our theatre group, but they are really important in our group in everything they do. It is necessary to recognise the faces of men working in different groups and that they have not been visible like women.

Doris: for me peace has no (female or male) face. Peace has to do with children, adolescents, young people, the elderly, women and men. In our context the armed conflict killed more men than women. It was women who have carried out those reconciliation processes taking place now. But it is not only women, children also

contribute to peace with their happiness, their smile, and fresh ideas. Young people contribute with their participation in different settings. All this is to say peace is not merely a feminine task, it is, rather, a collective construction' (Library Focus Group).

This understanding of peace and gender has more nuances that are worth exploring. There is still a link between femininity and pacifism, emotions, and relational aspects. Women are seen to be more inclined to socialize and keep harmony at home and in society. However, there is also a type of liberated femininity at play: women protect their homes and neighbours, and they are politically active as a response to the armed conflict. Here, too, there is an interesting depiction of social doings of gender; both male and female participate in the pursuit of initiatives of liberation from oppression caused by the conflict and cultural violence. Therefore, peace is humanised rather than genderised, and has to do with processes of reconciliation and spaces of humanisation in which everybody can participate. It is also evident that the work of women is more visible and that more women are involved in peace initiatives, but there is also a synergy between people from different walks of life, which goes beyond gender.

Such visible and strong forms of organisation have emerged as a response to two main issues: first, men engage in cultural practices of violence that affect women and deteriorate the social fabric; second, there is structural violence coming from the state exercised in legal mechanisms. Women have traditionally depended on men economically, which implies a lack of protection when men go to war or separate. On the other hand, processes of reparation and land redistribution are directed to men as head of the household, which leaves women and their children without any legal assurance:

'We created some organisations, nine in total. We also have a coordination that ensures we all speak the same language and ask for benefits for all of us. We appointed a coordinator, and she was part of *Weavers of Life* (*Tejedoras*). So, she showed what we were doing through records, evidence, and invitations to see our initiatives. They visited us and were interested in working with us, so they trained us, because we have some common goals and we both want to work for the community, but particularly for a gender: women. We don't want to discriminate

against men, but when land restitution occurs, what happens is this: a couple gets divorced and the government compensates the man, who is thought to be the head of the household. The government just does not see that. Then, the man receives the compensation and the woman, and her kids are left with nothing. This is why we were empowered with the help of Tejedoras. We received training and we are more empowered. We are women and we are strong. Now we are recognised' (Female social Leader).

Tejedoras carry out processes of non-formal education to empower women and help them rethink their essentialised gender roles and those of men. They understand the need for women to build up their trust and capabilities in an environment in which men are given all the opportunities on an economic, political, and social level. A clear understanding of gender inequalities is crucial since it provides spaces for reflection and action that break cycles of oppression and dependence on the male will, which has been maintained structurally. Training/education here has been fundamental in changing women's attitudes towards family roles and economic activities. Men engage more in activities concerning childcare and some domestic roles, although this takes time and a process of conscientisation:

'That workshop asked men what they thought about women, their mothers and mother earth. They got lots of conclusions, particularly the prevalence of macho culture. Some men had to talk about boys and others about girls. You can imagine men talking about boys, they knew it all, because they lived that experience. The group talking about girls said things like, 'I have never combed my girls' hair'. They didn't know anything. In the socialisation of the activity men recognised 'machismo' was deeply ingrained. They said women were like roses, so they needed to be protected as they are seen to be weak. That needs to change! Both girls and boys need to be educated under the same principles: you fall then you rise! Don't cry! So, they understood they were educating their children mistakenly, that is, girls should be in the kitchen and boys on the street' (Female social leader).

The synergy between *Tejedoras* and other female groups has been positive in many senses. They have received training that has brought about changes in men's and women's attitudes regarding gender roles, and this is an ongoing process that extends to government

offices in the form of workshops and activities. Positive networks amongst women have facilitated economic activities and the creation of enterprises, although some often struggle more than others due to lack of economic support and business opportunities. Here, too, there is a conception of femininity that resonates more with emancipation as expressed by members of the library. However, some political and social intricacies promote narratives that are subtly inconsistent with a peaceful stance:

> '**Jenny:** female leaders are being killed, right? Why do they meddle? Why are they killed? Because they do, they participate in eradication (activities), right? So, one says, 'I won't do that, because I am a community leader, and I am carrying out quality life projects.' What is it? It is about improving the land and workforce. I mean, (it is) something to contribute to working more than receiving. No! there are people who don't understand. In the workshop from last week, we said that we didn't want to be victims.
>
> **Eliana:** because that's like remembering the past.
>
> **Jenny:** exactly! There was psychological treatment and she (the psychologist) said, 'Why do you think you are victims? Are you still being displaced? Are you being oppressed? Take your place. You are an example to follow. You are (a symbol of) resistance. You were oppressed and mistreated, but you're still standing. And look at your children!'
>
> **Noelba:** Still standing in the same place.
>
> **Jenny:** (she) said, 'It is like having a wound and you touch it roughly, it hurts. You have to do something until you heal, so you have to do it with your heart as well. Don't look back'. So, we screamed 'We are no longer victims, we are resistance' But resistance does not mean being left wing, ok? It comes out of our heart, and we resist everything.
>
> **Yesid:** When did you become visible?
>
> (indistintive): when we moved forward.
>
> **Noelba:** we went out there to be listened to by the government, the law, whoever. But we want to be listened to. We are not going to hide.
>
> **Jenny:** we don't want people to speak for us. We want to take the lead. When the president came to this town, I spoke, I took the microphone (…)' (Focus Group, Social leaders).

There is an element here that contradicts the assumption of femininity in terms of strict pacifism. This conversation shows how killing women due to their meddling in land restitution processes is subtly justified by some women. This region is still permeated by the idea that 'if someone is killed there must be a reason,' and the work of social leaders is risky, particularly when it is related to eradication of illegal crops or more political activism. The idea of 'resistance' seems to compete with the image of the victim. Whereas the concept of being resistant can motivate more active attitudes in women, it might, too, neglect the responsibility of armed groups and the government for the sake of neutrality. What is more, there is a political element that is still sensitive up to this date: right wing versus left wing politics. Therefore, any open discussion about politics and armed groups or military involvement is problematic, which could lead to a lack of economic or political support, particularly in terms of representation. It could also lead to a death sentence.

'Victimhood' has provided access to financial support by government institutions and NGOs in the training and projects. Such recognition is still fundamental for processes of reparation and land restitution. Thus, narratives that reject victimhood and embrace resistance need to find a balance and promote spaces for reflection. The idea or 'giving more than receiving' is then inaccurate insofar as it may harness determination and, at the same time, dismiss structural causes of inequality. It is in receiving where women have been provided with avenues to overcome conditions of marginalisation, poverty, and violence. Likewise, ONGs, government programs and institutions such as the ministry of culture, Office for Victims (*Unidad de Víctimas*), and others have helped women communicate their experiences of the conflict:

> '*Women, Coca and War,*' in 2011 we were invited to the launching of the book in El Tigre. We saw such an important thing and thought that we had so much memory to tell, so we invited The Centre for Historical Memory, so they helped us with a book. They came in 2011 and 2012 to socialise people's stories in the community. Not many people participated, because they wanted money. They thought that would make money for The Centre, so they wanted their share. Others were scared. Once the book was launched, many people were against us, because they felt that was incomplete, that they wanted to tell their stories. Some said the stories in the

book were false, lots of comments coming and going. But we made the book despite everything. (…) I wrote those stanzas. A woman came to town once and recited a poem about the war. So, I decided to write a few stanzas. I was invited to give a speech in Bogota, but I didn't feel capable. I said that I had some verses, so they told me to use them as my speech. So, I wrote like 50 stanzas. No one is a prophet in their own land. Hardly ever have I recited my verses here in La Hormiga. I went to the congress in Bogota on a Victims' day. I participated in a literature contest for the elderly. Then I went to Mocoa where I won a prize. Finally, I went to Quindio. People from other places have felt moved, because I start singing and then I can't help crying. They cry too. They told me their story was similar to ours' (Female social leader).

The experience of the conflict has been powerfully told through cultural expressions. A synergy amongst different women, institutions and programmes have woven a net of actors, narratives and initiative that seek to counter the effects of war, particularly regarding the devastating effects on women nationwide. However, this also constitutes an invitation for men to take part in peacebuilding actions. The sense of victimhood becomes a sense of social and somehow political empowerment, whose aim is to attain a dignified life for the communities once -or still- hit by the armed conflict. Some attempts are more effective than others due largely to financial support and the particularities of the contexts. Valle del Guamuez illustrates very well a diversity of peacebuilding initiatives connected to memory work, formal education, non-formal education and economic development for men and women with various degrees of success.

Back in the school setting, varied understandings of gender and peace coexist, which constitutes an opportunity and a challenge for teachers in light of peacebuilding. It is necessary, nevertheless, to overcome essentialised notions of gender and genderised notions of peace. This becomes more evident in new generations of teachers and their interaction with other educators and students who challenge taken-for-granted conceptions of what it means to be a man, a woman or what it takes to work towards societies free from preconceptions of the gender type:

Carlos: peace has a human face and war's face is inhuman, brutal, and awful. The task of peace is for everyone, isn't it? It is not about gender, look how the president promised gender parity in government jobs, but what do those women do? For example, the vice president, does she have any gender equity agenda? What is her view on this issue? Gender is not the issue, but people's way of thinking certainly is! It is politically correct to vindicate women, but it is also about ethical and ideological commitments. I say peace has a human face and it's not gender specific. Women have also been violent, and there are men who have defended peace. Women have suffered from war. Being a woman does not mean being a peacemaker.

Fernanda: it is more about the strength and value of women when we face difficulties. For example, no matter how difficult a son is, a mother is always there with open arms to listen and give advice. If they go astray, there will be consequences. But a mother is always there open to receive their children. So, when we say peace has a female face, I think it is connected to all this. Conflict always happens, but it is necessary to listen to each other, make agreements, and respect others' opinion. It is a motherly feeling of getting together, for example, at home constructing peace.

Carlos: So, can men not do that? It is not possible? Is it exclusive to women? It is problematic to assume fixed characteristics of gender, isn't it? That is to say, it very much depends on individuals. There are mothers utterly denaturalised. As you say, mothers are always there for their children, so is my father.

Fernanda: not all fathers are!

Carlos: exactly! That's the point! Fixed roles. My parents are divorced. When I was a teenager, I was a disaster, and my father was there for me. I felt my mother rejected me somehow. She was more rigid. So, I reiterate the point that we've got to degenderise (peace) and talk about human beings. People talk about women and mistreatment, but we forget most of the war casualties have been men. Armies of men' (Focus group, urban school).

Two contrasting elements are important here: on the one hand, a degenderised understanding of peace is put forward. This rejects the essentialist view of women linked to pacifism and calls for collective responsibility in peacebuilding action. There are outstanding examples used here to illustrate how gender does not guarantee a peace-oriented ethos. The state itself epitomises the

lack of commitment to provide spaces of equity in which men and women develop their potential in every sphere of society. The presence of women in the political elite has not made substantial changes in this matter -at least not in the sense it is assumed here. On the contrary, their narratives are sometimes warlike and seek to delegitimize the peace agreement and its implementation. The second understanding goes back to placing motherhood as the central aspect of femininity. Women are again associated with endurance, forgiveness, calmness, and respect as constitutive characteristics, whereas men seem to be oriented to war and conflict:

> '**Nury:** Who had to face the situation when men went to war? Women did! Men went to fight and women stayed.
>
> **Carlos:** Women's roles are not denied.
>
> **Nury:** Who had to go and work for factories to replace men's workforce? Women.
>
> **Carlos:** women and children.
>
> **Nury:** women!
>
> **Carlos:** I agree, but what I am saying is war has affected all of us, but men are killed more often.
>
> **Nury:** Yeah, but a woman sends her son to war, because she had to or because that's the law, whose life is lost then? And who suffers? The mother has to struggle on, and she probably has other children.
>
> **Carlos:** Everybody has suffered from war. But I think we have to degenderise this. Everyone has paid a price and we all have to assume responsibility in peacebuilding. This is about people, citizens.
>
> **Fernanda:** However, in school meetings you often see mothers.
>
> **Carlos:** That's different, it is '*machismo*'(macho culture) and its subsequent roles.
>
> **Fernanda:** women have always kept families going, and they also grabbed the shovel, worked the land, faced problems, dealt with debts, lack of money, kids…
>
> **Carlos:** I remember talking to a lecturer about macho culture and its victims. Who are the victims? Everybody! Women directly but men as well. Becoming a macho is violence against us (men). When a man mistreats a woman, he is destroyed psychically. He dehumanises himself. That's why we have to get over it. It hurts us all.

Nury: Going back to peace with a female face, I don't agree (with it). It is like calmness, so what's the role of women? (being) calm, perfect, resistant, passive. This doesn't give women their importance in society, so I don't accept it.

Luz: I see two meanings of peace there. On the one hand, the face of women who have suffered, but they also have the power to overcome things and struggle on in order to reconstruct things. On the other, peace is calmness. Nothing happens, so I think it is a bit of macho culture, so I don't agree either' (Focus group urban school).

The school is promoting spaces for reflection and action learning towards change. In this sense, it is a place of contestation where taken-for-granted assumptions of gender, amongst many other aspects of social life, are questioned in light of the challenges of the conflict and visions of peace that are rooted in human rights and practices of equity. The circulation of ideas –old and new – of peace, gender, human rights, and other vital aspects relevant to society promoted by educators give birth to new ways of understanding society, which is reflected in small changes in students:

'It is break time and students are in the playground. They have their school radio programme on, and the different sections go on one after the other. A section goes on: *'your opinion counts. It is time for our section I am tired of…'* Some students complain about things that bother them at school. 'The first student says, 'I am tired of my teachers' coming late to class', which is strikingly amusing and shows some critical – and well justified – attitude towards authority'. Another student complains about a whole class being too noisy. Suddenly, an interesting complaint is broadcasted, 'I am tired of my PE teacher lending sport equipment just to male students.' Female students demand equal treatment for boys and girls' (Field notes, February 28th , 2019).

Women's work on peacebuilding education has been prolific. Schools, the local library and social movements have made important contributions to the consolidation of processes leaning towards peace in the region. Men have also learned to work together with women and have been invited to accept a change of mindset that embraces new ways of understanding society. Female social movements work to overcome issues of gender inequality existing on a structural and social level. Both men and women work with men on

economic initiatives and female groups provide opportunities for education leaning towards a change of mind regarding macho culture and gender bias:

> 'She (The librarian) invites us (to take participate in the library activities) and makes us feel confident. We can talk about anything here and we know we are safe. We know the library respects your religious beliefs, your political ideas, your sexual orientation, which is not possible in other places. You can be red or yellow, you can like men or be catholic. Here you are respected and accepted. That is why I think persons arrive first and then institutions do. The work is articulated. If there is something to do one person cannot do it, others help. The magazine was a group initiative. When we go to veredas, we go as a group. When just one of us is hired (for work at the library), the rest of us join them and work together in activities in veredas' (Diana, volunteer).

The library constitutes itself as a space of no discrimination in which diverse masculinities and femininities coexist. It also includes age, political ideology, religion, cultural background, and sexual orientation amongst others. The role of women in the library is active and effective in creating social bonds and relations of collaboration. The men working with them are also active in building up bonds of trust with the communities. Both men and women – and here understandings of gender are widening gradually – work to overcome inequality and propose alternative ways of living in society where every single person deserves to live a dignified life:

> 'Leadership comes from the library. We don't know much about (male) community leaders, but some female leaders said that the library encouraged them to speak out, read and understand that they could find other places beyond the kitchen. They said that by reading they have come to understand other things' (Gloria, librarian).

Women have taken on the reconstruction of society during and after the conflict. Their work is pivotal and inclusive. Whereas it is necessary to overcome some pervasive assumptions instilled during the war, their initiatives are diverse and seek to dismantle structural and cultural practices causing oppression, violence, and war. This is still a hard task, but it is, amidst adversity, an enterprise that bears fruit.

3.8. Futures-oriented Spaces

'Welcome to Valle del Guamuez. This is the year 2040. We are in the eco-touristic farm (called) 'Eco Tigre'. This was an idea thought of by young people. We lived through an environmental and social crisis that compelled us to reinvent our way of living, our conception of 'quality of life', and we included 'peace', coexistence, and spirituality as principles. We abandoned the predominant view of favouring economics over life. We embraced equity, solidarity, and common wellbeing. More than just the academic aspect, our education system has focused on the social and has helped learners to create their own entrepreneurships. Our town now has legal options that provide a good living. Eco-touristic farms are sustainable and provide people with an income, which fosters community progress. An education based on the social helped us set free from coca. The eternal win-lose game with governments ended because all of us would lose. We stopped normalising illegality and violence. We learned to value art as a mechanism to repair and rebuild our community. We understood the cosmovision of our indigenous communities regarding human beings and our planet. This is becoming a part of us' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

Putumayo is a region that possesses very high biodiversity. It has a humid climate and water resources are abundant. Oil exploitation has been a main economic activity since the 1960s, but no substantial benefits have been granted to the region. Thus, the neglect of the state, its extractivist model, and the lack of opportunities for the population have paved the way for the conflict in this region and the country in general. This picture of the future reveals two prominent features: first, war is present-focused, because it operates in the now and the detriment it causes, be it social or natural, curtail any projection to the future. Second, education has a future-focused dimension that may contribute to peacebuilding. It takes place in the realm of creativity and imagination, but it is critically informed and anchored in the experience of the past and present.

The government action is present-oriented and lacks a deeper understanding of the socioeconomic characteristics of Putumayo. Interventions have historically focused largely on

aspects such as security and state-building, but even those attempts have failed substantially. Such apparent solutions have avoided the real problems of the region; economic plans and some NGOs' work have provided an inefficient and temporary palliative to the actual causes of the conflict, namely infrastructure, environmental issues, inequality, educational provision, weak institutionality amongst others. The reality that emerges here is a failure of recognition of the dignity of the populations and their rights:

'El Tigre has always been a target for NGOs because of the direct conflict. Some [projects] have been productive; others have been a way to waste big amounts of money and haven't had any social impact… For example, there were 9 NGOS managing money from Plan Colombia. They brought 9 heifers from Cesar (the Colombian Caribbean region) for the peasants to substitute coca crops. Heifers from Cesar, the contexts are different, there cattle breeding is extensive. The heifers were wild and some of them fled. That never worked well' (Antonio).

Precariousness has become the dominant factor for most of the communities in Putumayo. Such state of need becomes permanent, and no options are provided. As a result, the access to a better standard of living – in economic terms – can be found immediately in coca crops. Agricultural work is not supported by the state and the conditions for peasants to trade their products are non-existent. In contrast, children, young people, and adults can be part of coca production and therefore support their families. The social sphere is configured within the limits of the present; that is to say, the immediacy of economic survival at any cost (Cf. Spaces of adulthood). Indeed, whereas some families live on illegal crops as the only alternative, other people are deeply seduced by easy money and its subsequent lifestyle marked by violence and excesses.

Only rarely, however, does this economic choice result in a benefit for the community. Although coca business percolated all the activities of society, progress has not been achieved. Even up to this date, and despite the amounts of money that coca brought to the zone, the towns of Valle del Guamuez still lack a solid infrastructure: roads are unfinished, water supply and electricity are intermittent, schools are not well equipped, some houses are deteriorated, and transportation is still difficult. Some small villages (veredas) remain stuck in

their violent past and the present does not offer any alternative. This is evident in a culture of hopelessness and reluctance to change.

In contrast, the school has become a place where those instilled ideas are contested. There is a shift from physical aggression and violence as a mindset to dialogue and reflection (Cf. Spaces of Childhood). Children and young people see a limited set of possibilities, which all but denies their dignity and human potential; on the one hand, illegal activities are accessible to the youth, on the other, armed groups or the armed forces offer 'security' and an economic income:

> '(…) they [children] would talk about guns and get excited about those things… or perhaps the fact that games always got around those roles as such, right? Between military and erm… some children had the idea of… well, I am going to be a guerrilla militant… erm so, we tried to help them have another mindset, different games, I mean they lived in their world and their context, but we would try to generate new ideas besides the school content, new ways of thinking through games, so they understood that was the reflection of their situation but that didn't have to necessarily be their aspiration for the future. We would talk to students. They often felt more confident with a particular teacher, as it were, the PE teacher, because he had them play. So, if we noticed a student was talking a lot about war and playing war, we would try to talk to them and show that [war] could not be what defined their life at that time, and that there would be more horizons for them' (Gretel, schooloteacher).

Teachers interpret the realities of the conflict and its effects with their students. For example, the lack of assurances for agricultural work, the non-existent provision of technical training or government assistance for solid and sustainable economic activity, and the deterioration of the social fabric. All these conditions of inequality evident in the quotidian become the raw material for reflection with students. Teachers invite students to think of their present from a critical perspective and imagine the possibilities that might open up if they educate themselves and bring about change. Education is seen to be a key element in the transformation of a violent society into a more equitable one:

'We teachers see the only choice for students to have a better and prosperous life is getting education. So, we always talk to them about how difficult the agricultural work is nowadays. We start from that notion so as to make them aware that going to university is the path to improve their lives and that of their parents. I mean, we sell the idea that education is perhaps the only way people have to 'be someone', to exist, and live in a dignified way, isn't it? Success depends on the level of education we can achieve. We always instil that idea in our students. We know it is better to be in a classroom protected from the sun and the rain, and in calmness. This is much better than being out there with the sun and the rain on the back. We teachers envisage our children's future based on education… Yeah, education, even when there is no such a culture here in Bajo Putumayo. That is because we do not have the government's support. No policy state offers students the possibility to access university education, so we sometimes feel our discourse isn't backed. And when they finish school, they don't know what to do, because they have neither choice nor opportunities. From the very first moment I started to work as a teacher, my aim was to defend education and make students aware that it is the only choice they have to succeed' (Wilson, schoolteacher).

The school is a place where children and young people experience transformative relational practices. Student-teacher interaction constitutes an opportunity to question taken-for-granted assumptions about social life and life choices, even before they occur. Likewise, learners have the chance to rethink themselves, which configures a reflective and critical process that opens up possibilities in light of the future. Whereas the present is static and limited, the future – as shown the school – is to be constructed by themselves. This is not to say the present is fixed and immutable; on the contrary, there is a dynamic relationship between the present and the futures – there are multiple futures, because there are *'horizons'* to create, but that process initiates in the present. Such relationship is given by dialogue and by an interpretation of the present, which sustains conflict and injustice. Students have the opportunity to exercise their citizenship at school and imagine alternatives to the culture of war:

'Epifania: (…) I mean when you read, you know your rights and duties. When you fulfil your duties, you can demand your rights…

Wilson: rural communities have experienced that up to this date. (…) I see this within education. if you have an education, you have the possibility of a better life, a good job, and success. I worked in a vereda for many years. Children only wanted to join the guerrilla, since they did not have the possibility of access to education. children still do not have access to education. they are not given tools for them to feel enthusiastic about going to university. Some children said they would join the guerrilla as soon as they finished primary or secondary school. And they joined the guerrilla voluntarily, no one would force them. They said they did not have any choice but military service or armed groups. War would feed on ignorance and lack of opportunities for people. If you have education, you will know. Like you said, Epi, you will know your rights and you will have better possibilities. You become critical and reflexive. And that self-criticism will lead you to make better choices' (Focus group, rural school).

Thus, reading and writing are learning skills that foster students' knowledge of the past and the present. Language is a means of communication and reflection as opposed to fear and silence – the logic of the conflict. The *word* is the vehicle of ideas and expression that allows learners to explore and critically describe their context and histories of conflict and, at the same time, propose ways to project their futures. However, more than just addressing conflict and its causes, this constitutes a practice in which learners (re)gain a sense of their humanity. Whereas outside school their voice is curtailed, in school they have a voice, and it is the main mechanism to interact with others: language is the tool to encounter otherness:

Fernanda: we can talk about peace in school when we interpret students' realities and the issues they are undergoing. Reading and writing take place when, for example, - I speak of the armed conflict – we do research and students are asked to think of their reality and write about it. Because what isn't written gets lost. So, this allows students to see what is happening and its effect so that they can try to build peace. When we analyse violence, we notice there is no understanding, dialogue, we notice there is inequality sustained by the state, which causes conflict. So, if there is more equity, we can reach peace.

Luz: [understanding] peace from reading and writing is based on the word which is the medium through which people construct language and therefore forms of communication. Without language, without words, there is nothing.

(…)

Fernanda: I take Luz's view on language; I remember someone said that language humanises us, because when you communicate with the other, you exist in them. If there is no communication, you cannot exist [for them]. You exist as long as you communicate with others. (Focus Group, urban school)

People's freedom of expression has been restored by reading and writing not only in schools, but also in other educational settings, for example the library and social movements. This is connected to the recognition of people's dignity and their right to be themselves despite the fear of possible retaliation, which is essentially emancipatory. People have their own voice to express their concerns, protest against injustice and call for action and a change of mind:

'When people disappeared, as it were, someone's relative or an acquaintance from the town or a vereda – anyone – and if we knew the name, we would go the radio station and say that that person had disappeared and give information about how they were dressed and where they were the last time they were seen. We dared to do that, and we were scared indeed. So, we would spread the word and people would know they were not alone. Or for instance, – this is a sensitive topic – a priest was once threatened. [We said on the radio] 'People say the priest is menaced because he defends human rights. He's not doing anything wrong, so we need to support him. We spoke and knew people from outside would also listen, even when here we would pretend to be deaf and blind. (…) It was the community demanding their rights. We also warned parents about their children and incidents with the police. Or animals are being killed, and that river poisoned. So, we condemned publicly what was happening, although we didn't know who was behind that. So, this is happening and what can we do as an institution? What can the library do about all this? [We can] Keep talking and invite to care for the environment. We talk about things and the violent [groups] disregard it all, but this has an effect on those who listen. We played a song about the killing of students from Ayotzinapa in Mexico. So, I thought I had to do something so that people knew that things are difficult over there, too. Then people came [to the library] and asked about this. They read about it on the Internet. It is not even me, it is the leaders that are connected to the library' (Gloria).

This portrayal of the action of the library shows its disruptive character. The library is a referent of freedom of expression and courage in a town where talking about social issues is not allowed. However, the librarian and the group have managed to communicate with members of the community through the radio and other initiatives that have reached the furthest places of Valle del Guamuez. Such communication is humanising in nature, because it seeks to re-establish the dignity of the peoples in the community. It is the conviction that people have rights that ought to be protected and guaranteed and other realities need to be sought after. Speaking publicly is a risk, but the library has managed to navigate social spaces in the middle of the conflict; that is to say, in the middle of a geography of violence, the library has created spaces for peacebuilding, even while armed groups have been in the territory. Peacebuilding lies in the recognition of people's dignity and their capacity to transform the stark realities of war:

'We invite people to create a revolution of thought' (Gloria, librarian).

Such *revolution of thought* – and *revolution* has negative connotations in the Latin American context, normally associated with left-wing movements and communism – has equipped people with trust in themselves and the members of the library. They build up relationships of trust and respect amongst their neighbours and think of themselves as capable of making decisions, expressing themselves and understanding others. People (re)learn to operate in social settings and exercise their citizenship leaning towards the future (Cf. Spaces of Adulthood). For example, where lack of literacy has marginalised people, the library has created provided reading and writing practices and includes the use of technology at hand for communities and individuals to cope with the challenges of social life and oppression:

'People's response is great. For example, in 2016, everyone –children, adults, everyone indeed, felt free to feel and do things and they say it was a very nice space. They also expressed their satisfaction collectively, and you could see that they got together and shared in a more personal way. We also saw how they confided in us, particularly the librarian. So, they talked about problems related to the community,

its organisation or a serious issue. And we were a reference to conflict resolution as well. Sometimes things like 'I go to the Mayor office and nobody helps me. We need to learn how to make a formal request, so I go to the stationary and they charge COP 5000 (2 US dollars). For them that is a lot of money. So, they said, 'Teach us how to make a formal written request' They felt the confidence to ask for help. We managed to take the laptops or tablets and taught them how to use them, to use Word and write their formal request. That happened concretely in Malvinas and La Herradura' (Leidy, volunteer).

Some NGOs and *Unidad de Victimas* (an organisation created to support reparation processes in conflict zones) and individuals have worked with schools, social movements and communities. This sort of hybridity has been beneficial for some groups more than others. This is clear in the case of schools, where schools and teachers have been motivated to come up with initiatives to promote peace education within and outside the boundaries of the institutions. However, the scope of these activities and people's will are certainly vast. There is a shift from peace education to a peacebuilding approach. Teachers, individuals, and movements make sense of their experience of the conflict and their formation and sharing with external actors – when positive – and carry out their own initiatives.

'Erm, the presence of the state in these processes (has been) Unidad de Victimas. [They have helped us] with the logistics. 90% of the logistic resouces we've got now have come from them and [they have provided with access to] spaces where we have presented. Surely there are better theatre groups then us, but they haven't had the chance. But the state does not have a presence here, they do not support [these processes]. For example, we wanted to create a theatre festival in La Hormiga. I submitted the proposal, I stayed up writing it… erm, methodology and all that and in the end nothing happened. Here we have to be friends with [the person in charge of] cultural affairs to get help' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

This is an illustrative account of how the work around peace has been helpful for the community beyond the boundaries of schools. Initiatives such as theatre and radio programmes have been a tool for children and young people to express themselves freely and

teach the community lessons on the value of life. Students and teachers have reflected on themselves, their culture and history. Likewise, they have invited the community to rethink themselves through art and stories. What is more, school students have imagined possibilities outside the scope of the war. It is here where children and young people learn about the past and present and imagine possible futures where there is no room for war. Imagination and voice are two transgressive resources given their context. This is a radical proposal when the context does not offer any incentive to creativity or imagination:

> 'If we want social change, we need to go beyond teaching concepts and teach behaviours. That's what the radio is about; let's say human rights and children's voice. So, when a child expresses themselves complains, for instance, about their bike being punctured, that can have an effect on the person who does it, right? So, that can be done with respect and education. We had an experience: we created a story about a black stain to tell the guerrilla we were tired of oil pipes being bombed. I don't know if they heard it or it was worthy, but two did it. It was a way to show arts, education and the radio are media (through which we can express)' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

Theatre is, for example, constitutes a platform to create stories and travel to other regions where students share their experiences and get in touch with other contexts. This is tremendously significant for a community that has been historically isolated and used as a source of natural resources without any gain. Precariousness and imposed silence – characteristics of war – are surpassed by imagination, freedom to express their identities, desires and complaints through non-violent means. The lesson of this initiative is that young people see an amalgam of possibilities beyond war and scarcity. Schools and the library have motivated students and helped them exercise their capacity to aspire to the future, which is essentially emancipatory: education then opens up a window of opportunities through which peace is envisaged in relational spaces: dialogues, reading and writing activities, and conversations with the community:

> 'We would choose a topic and do some research or invited somebody who knew the topic, somebody from any institution. We had questions and information, but we always had people from the mayor office, university students, or any institution at

hand. It was a 15-minute talk with key questions, or sometimes they addressed the topic. University students who were part of the library retuned on holiday and asked what they could do. The answer was always the radio programme. So, we told them to think of something new learned at university, or a solution to a problem people had in town or any rural community, because people talked about their issues. Things like healthy social co-existence, children upbringing. They could help and use their learning at university. And people liked it and they still do, because that programme is still on' (Gloria, librarian).

This experience of the library is very telling of the process with some young people in the community. Some of them have travelled to other regions where there are universities and have received education. On their return, they feel motivated to make part of activities that help the community, mainly connected to the local library. There is an interesting synergy with local movements and NGOs that brings about a multiplicity of ideas and understandings of society, peace, and other issues. The promise of an emancipatory future mobilises people to act and work together from their contexts and perspectives in order to contribute to peacebuilding. A powerful characteristic is the equalising nature of this actions in which people are valued and respected, even in the face of dissensus.

Although the peace accord signed in 2016 brought about a sense of hope to the communities, there is still a lot do in order to help Putumayo overcome more than five decades of conflict. After the agreement, the government has not been consistent with the commitments established in the document. Coca crops are still a concern and wreak havoc on the population, because no better choices are available yet. However, educational settings like schools, the library, social movement remain strong and persistent in the pursuit of peace and social justice:

'I understand peace as changing people's mindset, even towards the future. A peace accord is not peace. Though it is the starting point, and it has helped. Perhaps the people who have lived the conflict on tv might think it is insignificant. But we have lived here, and this is a different place now. I am not saying it's fine, no! But we are in a different environment in which we can come to school and teach. We can work

towards peace step by step. Peace needs work, job opportunities, productive chains' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

'**Leidy:** Here we are talking [about peace] now, but a man lost his eye two days ago. Many corners of Putumayo are unwell. People go to the meetings with government representatives. But they cannot do anything by pacifist means because [the government] will send the ESMAD [Mobile anti-riot squadron]. In Sibundoy, people are banned from using native seeds… They are forced to use that transgenic corn and it is even packed. So, we know it is not just the war, there are other things that contribute to that calmness' (Focus group, Library).

Jenny: I already told you something that summarises everything: peace and hunger means no peace. Why is that? If there are no roads, you can't trade your products and therefore you can more provide at home. 'No roads' implies you can't [mobilise to] study, and if you don't study, you can't support your family. You miss opportunities. I always say, 'Peace with hungers means no peace' (Focus group Women's association).

Social movements (women's groups mainly) have reinterpreted their history – the history of women victims of war, state neglect, and domestic violence and worked on plans to restore women's dignity and voice. There is a clear understanding of structural causes of violence and the need for change. Thus, their organisation has created mechanism of knowledge production and dissemination, and entrepreneurial activities that supports women's independence and personal development. They also work with men, but they concentrate their efforts in empowering themselves and educate the men in the communities in order to overcome violence:

'We created some organisations, nine in total. We also have a coordination that ensures we all speak the same language and ask for benefits for all of us. We appointed a coordinator and she was part of *Weavers of Life* (*Tejedoras*). So, she showed what we were doing through records, evidence and invitations to see our initiatives. They visited us and were interested in working with us, so they trained

us, because we have some common goals and we both want to work for the community, but particularly for a gender: women. We don't want to discriminate against men, but when land restitution occurs, what happens is this: a couple gets divorced and the government compensates the man, who is thought to be the head of the household. The government just does not see that. Then, the man receives the compensation and the woman, and her kids are left with nothing. This is why we were empowered with the help of Tejedoras. We received training and we are more empowered. We are women and we are strong. Now we are recognised' (Female social Leader).

A multiplicity of futures is at work in schools, the local library and social movements. Those futures are engaged with children, young people, women and men who strength and tenacity do not fade in the face of adversity. Those horizons imagined and prefigured in classrooms, meetings, reading sessions, plays in publics squares and radio programmes are food for thought in those communities where silence was the law. Educational settings, formal and informal, create relational spaces where people hone their capacity aspire to peace in the middle of a context dominated by precariousness. Such aspiration takes place collectively and voices are listened to, which gives birth to those imagined futures:

'You have to be persistent and never give up. You have to face a lot. I mean, you have to rethink the concept of 'classroom' and some people have done it already. (…) being persistent is the key. The other aspect is creativity, and students help you with that, particularly children; they are good at it. So, it is about preparing a topic, how to do it differently, which is innovation. Sometimes it works and sometimes it just doesn't, but you need to be persistent. And you have a lot of tools, so innovation is about using the tools you have videos created by students. For example, 11 grade students are making a video, it is an Eco touristic strategy about the region. They are making this video with images of the region and [creating] an Eco touristic plan to sell – but this is a mock exercise. I told them I would come with 15 people from Bogota. People say El Tigre is a dangerous town, but other people say it has a lot of flora and fauna to explore. So, the plan is for four days and we need to collect the people at the airport in Puerto Asís. That is their job. [I say,] 'Go ahead!' Let's see what they come up with. Teachers have to be creative and motivate students. It is

not only the academic aspect, but students are also developing other skills, for example, communication, self-expression, and they are overcoming shyness and discovering things about themselves' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

This chapter has presented the ethnographic account of my experience in Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo, Colombia from a narrative perspective. I have presented four main sections in the form of 'spaces' as a recurrent metaphor used by my participants. Spaces of childhood, adulthood, gender, and future have been discussed in light of their stories. This reveals a complex and yet worth exploring terrain to understand the efforts of communities to promote forms of peace amid the conflict and afterwards.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This research journey intends to explore conceptualisations of peace from a local perspective in Putumayo, Colombia. Here, too, attention is drawn to the practices enabled by those discourses at play in educational settings – both formal and informal, which is the result of hybridity and mainly the experience of those who have lived the conflict and proposed alternatives to war. The ethnographic journey has provided me with insights into people's struggles, aspirations and actions leaning towards social justice and non-violent modalities of change in the middle of the war and in a post-conflict scenario. As a learner-researcher, I have learned from people's concerns, histories, and efforts, which has orientated my understanding of their struggles for peace.

In this section, I present a discussion based on 3 main research questions – emerging from experiences in the field and my own reading of theory – that address 1) conceptualisations of peace and their practices, 2) the contributions of formal and informal education, and 3) the challenges and opportunities posed on (education) policy. With this approach I do not intend to make normative claims about peace. However, I provide an account of my ethnographic work in three localities (urban and rural Schools, local library, and women's social organisation) that recognises not only texts – interviews, observations, and conversations –, but also contexts of power, resistance, conceptual contestation, and emancipation underpinned by multiple ideas of peace coexisting and superseding physical boundaries and time in Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo (Cf. Clifford, 1986).

4.2. What understandings of peace are evident in local discourses in Colombia?

Although the emphasis of my ethnographic work is on local forms of peace, I am aware of the existence of global and national discourses. Likewise, competing discourses on peace are evident in the case of education policy and implementation of projects leaning towards any form of reparation or justice. The theoretical framework of this study explains some of

the most prevalent visions of peace connected to state-building, security and (neo)liberal forms of peace, and its failure to address issues rooted in the experience of the oppressed and marginalised peoples. Therefore, this first question aims to understand conceptualisations of peace from inside educational spaces and their practices. Here four understandings of peace are presented:

- peace as the return of people's 'voice',
- peace as recognition of human dignity,
- peace as emancipatory action, and
- peace as material.

4.2.1. Peace is the return of *People's 'Voice'*

A prominent feature of war is the impossibility of expression of any kind. The dynamics of the conflict subject people to a continuous state of fear and non-expression. Thus, a culture of silence annihilates communication and display of cultural values, identity, and difference. War configures modalities of fear, mistrust, and isolation underpinned by relations of power (Gendron, 2011), which is evident in the fractures of the social fabric:

> 'Violence was everywhere, everywhere… until 2000 more or less. We saw many
> confrontations, violence everywhere, illegal armed groups… We all lived in fear, in
> the overwhelming uncertainty of what would happen next' (Henry).

Peace is viewed as the disruption of the impossibility of expression. The school, the local library and women's organisations opened spatio-temporal spaces – relational in nature - in which the capacity of dialogue and self-expression are restored and rehearsed in the everyday (See Mac Ginty, 2021). Here the word constitutes a fundamental tool to counteract fear and violence. The word and the self are welcome to dialogue, which is critical and liberating in nature and leads towards action (Freire, 2017; Steinberg and Araujo, 2013). However, such criticality implies the capacity to understand the world and the influence of war in people's lives. It is not, as Freire notes, a sort of dialogue seeking to domesticate people

or create vertical relations; instead, it is the possibility for people to be themselves and communicate their experiences of the world and concerns that constitute authentic dialogue:

> 'As we attempt to analyse dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: *the word*. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; Accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word refined to dimensions, reflection, and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed – even in part – the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world' (Freire, 2017).

> 'People's response is great. For example, in 2016, everyone –children, adults, everyone indeed, felt free to feel and do things and they say it was a very nice space. They also expressed their satisfaction collectively, and you could see that they got together and shared in a more personal way. We also saw how they confided in us, particularly the librarian. So, they talked about problems related to the community, its organisation, or a serious issue. And we were a reference to conflict resolution as well' (Leidy).

In war contexts, liberation is necessary insofar as the image of the self is distorted and deprived of value, which is internalised (Taylor, 1992). Thus, both formal and informal educational settings may provide avenues for people to overcome that internalised valueless image that contributes to acceptance of war and its logics. In this context, silence does not only manifest itself because of the armed conflict, but also because of cultural violence, oppression, and discrimination (Galtung, 1990).

Conceptions of peace based on 'dialogue' are insufficient here (Cf. Akgun, and Araz, 2014; Harris, 2004, Hakvoort, 2010; Jones, 2007; Trinder, *et. al.*, 2010; Smith, 2006, OEA, 2020). The first step towards dialogue is the possibility of expression and dissensus. The direct consequence of the conflict is the rapture of processes of dialogue with the perpetrators of violence and the community. Thus, peace is viewed as the return of voice and the configuration of many-voiced spaces, which in turn makes dissensus possible and necessary; here, too, is, as the Colombian philosopher Estanislao Zuleta (2011) proposed, the transition

towards better conflicts. Once people have a voice that is listened to, authentic dialogue takes place.

The library, the school and social movements open spaces where the word is welcome. However, the word undertakes a transformation. It is the restoration of trust and creativity. The word that comes out of silence becomes an instrument to imagine new realities embedded in the everyday experience and aspirations. For instance, a radio programme, an activity in a public square, or a cultural event to facilitate community building breaks the logics of fear and mistrust and configures modalities of interaction that promote innovative ways of existence given the precarity of war. The idea that *'I have words, I have a voice'* vindicates the agency of individuals trapped in the rigidities of the conflict, but also renders new languages visible. Once fearful silence starts to disappear, languages of peace and emancipation come to existence in the everyday of people. Forms of conversation, artistic expression, environmental work, and others substitute the inaction and non-expression of violence.

By and large, Putumayo is a region with a strong oral tradition handed down from indigenous generations. However, a strong macho culture has silenced the voice of women for a long time, which has started to change as women have acquired a more social and political role in this society. However, such violence against women comes from different fronts, and some indigenous communities have their share too. It is, therefore, worth noting that the armed conflict and their experience of cultural violence have motivated women to organise themselves and gain visibility to seek reparation and vindication; once people's voice is in place, there is a transformation starting in the everyday experience. The quotidian becomes an object of reflection. The assumptions and expectations of the role men and women, for instance, are called into question. This also makes room for many conceptions of femininity in favour of peace and the shaping of new forms of masculinity (Cf. Skjelsbæk, 2001; See Spaces of Gender). There are opportunities for peacebuilding, which happens in school breaks, conversations, family life, and other social encounters like workshops, talks, spontaneous cultural activities, and meetings. Peace is here the overcoming of imposed and numbing silence and fear, and what follows is action, possibilities, and new ways of being:

'I think that (the library) is a place for peace(building) because it's a space where you can receive and share opinions and ideas about anything' (Leidy).

'She (The librarian) invites us (to take participate in the library activities) and makes us feel confident. We can talk about anything here and we know we are safe. We know the library respects your religious beliefs, your political ideas, your sexual orientation, which is not possible in other places. You can be red or yellow, you can like men or be catholic. Here you are respected and accepted' (Diana, volunteer).

New generations of students have begun to use their voice as an instrument to communicate and demand participation and changes in the school. This is particularly relevant in a context where the authority of men and armed actors remained unquestioned for more than 3 decades. Students' self-expression is also evident, and it finds its way in the middle of frictions and resistance to change – be it sometime within schools or in the wider community –. For example, new aesthetics and expressions of diverse gender and sexual identity have begun to be visible, which is characteristic of new times in which the repression of armed groups is decreasing. There are changes taking place in the school and some teachers are making their contribution for such a change to happen:

'It is break time and students are in the playground. They have their school radio programme on, and the different sections go on one after the other. A section goes on: *'your opinion counts. It is time for our section I am tired of…'* (…). Suddenly, an interesting complaint is broadcasted, 'I am tired of my PE teacher lending sport equipment just to male students.' Female students demand equal treatment for boys and girls' (Field notes, February 28th , 2019).

'Teaching can be linked directly with the political and moral discourse that takes us one of the first considerations the issue of how schools contribute to the oppression of youth and how such conditions can be changed' (Giroux, 1988).

The school is a place of contestation where pedagogies anchored to forms of authoritative practices meet resistance. New forms of pedagogies advocate the word as a powerful instrument through which both consensus and dissensus are dealt with. Young

people have begun to adopt creative forms of expression to claim a space in social life. Both boy and girls understand the need to counteract the history of conflict and male domination that has silenced women and their struggles and views. Here the *word* is the seed of action, and the school is a place for children to learn how to use it instead of violent means:

'If we want social change, I believe, we need to go beyond teaching concepts and teach behaviours. That's what the radio is about; let's say human rights and children's voice. So, when a child expresses themselves complains, for instance, about their bike being punctured, that can influence the person who does it, right? So, that can do with respect and education. We had an experience: we created a story about a black stain to tell the guerrilla we were tired of oil pipes being bombed. I don't know if they heard it or it was worthy, but we did it. It was a way to show arts, education and the radio are media (through which we can express)' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

Likewise, the library and social movements (women's association) work with members of the community with create innovative ways of exercising their voice as an instrument of reflection and change leaning towards peacebuilding. The creation of radio programmes, magazines, reading groups, outside activities, and cultural groups are nothing more than avenues for people to express themselves and connect to others in ways that stimulate personal and social transformations. People once oppressed by the war, structural violence, and inequality are now aware of their role in transforming social life. The town still lives subjected to old forms of cultural violence and inequality, but diverse forms of thinking and living – of existing and re-existing – are changing the social landscape of the region.

On a macro level, the state has been responsible for the historical neglect and exploitation of these communities. The organisation of women and initiatives coming from schools and the library have created mechanisms to ensure participation and active exercise of their citizenship, which in this context is a novelty. The disarticulation of silence provides avenues for peacebuilding and takes place in multiple forms: in and out-of-school activities, associations, workshops, and art (poetry, music, memory, etc.). Furthermore, national institutions, NGOs, and cultural actors have participated in a great many of these initiatives

in the form of formation, financial aid, exchange of ideas, which creates diverse forms of synergy.

Women have strengthened their capacity to synergise and create entrepreneurial activities and forms of communication and interaction with male members of the community. For instance, female members of the library or *Tejedoras* have worked with family members and friend to subvert the traditional conceptions of masculinity vs/and femininity and the inequalities women have traditionally been subjected to. The possibility of expression brings about dialogue and forms of interaction where discrimination has no place. This does not mean frictions do not take place, but violence is no longer a mechanism or instrument to force others and annihilate their agency.

4.2.2. Peace as Recognition of Human Dignity

Once restitution of voice starts to take place, it becomes action. The organisation of social groups, school activities (pedagogies, actions with the community, extracurricular activities) make efforts to re-member their communities (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). This is a process of gradual reconstruction on a cultural, physical, and ontological level (Nordstrom, 1992 cited in Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Here voice is language in action and constitutes the possibility of dialogue, one that can transform realities and restore people's dignity and their awareness:

> 'This crucial feature of human life is its fundamentally *dialogical* character. We become full human agents, capable of understanding ourselves, and hence of defining our identity, through our acquisition of rich human languages of expression. For my purposes here, I want to take *language* in a broad sense, covering not only the words we speak, but also other modes of expression whereby we define ourselves, including the "languages" of art, of gesture, of love, and the like. But we learn these modes of expression through exchanges with others. People do not acquire the languages needed for self-definition on their own. Rather, we are introduced to them through interaction with others who matter to us—what George Herbert Mead called "significant others." The genesis of the human mind is in this sense not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical' (Taylor, 1992).

The restoration of communities takes place in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, people are aware of their voice and exercise their right to express, which reinforces their sense of dignity (Appadurai, 2013). They understand that they deserve to live in a community where their voices are listened to, and their rights and needs are attended. On the other, such awareness triggers a sense of action with others: they know a different world is possible. Some members of those communities refuse to accept the project of violence and propose alternatives constructed through a creative and many-voiced dialogue.

The awareness of people's dignity is compelling to act in that restore people's own value. In this sense, the articulation of projects with government institutions and NGOs has been pivotal. Some initiatives have motivated schoolteachers and social groups (like Tejedoras) to tell their stories. It is here where creative forms such as storytelling, memory work, and photography, amongst others, have been an instrument to reinvent their identity and, therefore, renovate their sense of dignity. For example, El Tigre, a small unit of Valle del Guamuez, were victims of a massacre in 1999, which caused the displacement of people and the profound sense of disconnection with the rest of the region. People from other regions and the national media contributed to the formation of a stigma. The inhabitants of El Tigre were seen to be violent, drug dealers, and guerrilla members. This, radio stories such as '*El Tigre no es como lo pintan*', a saying that reads, 'The tiger is not as it is portrayed' (or not what it seems) appeals to the redefinition of an identity marked by violent acts and structural violence (See spaces of Adulthood).

There is a search for meaning carried out by pedagogical acts. A devalued image of people, communities, and the environment (this caused by an exacerbated and rapid spread of illegal crops, oil pipes bombarded, and an exploitative relation to nature) is challenged by creative forms of redefining the social fabric and the human and non-human relations in place. Whereas peacebuilding is associated with dismantling the image of the enemy (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000), another dimension worth mentioning is the nurturing of people's image, voice and will to bring about change. It is in the redefinitions of the social contours that creative calls for dignity human fulfilment are in place (Steinberg and Araujo, 2014). There is a Freirean conception of learning at play: a process of mutual humanisation, 'where social

struggle for meaning and becoming involves the return to, and affirmation of humanity' (Freire, 1996 cited in Steinberg and Araujo, 2014).

The hybrid work in place and facilitated by Laws that have sought to promote reparation and transitions to post-conflict scenarios -mainly the Victim's law of 2011 (Firchow, 2018). This and other laws have intended to provide reparation and opportunities for the victims of displacement, war, and other issues related to the conflict. Thus, these communities have been able to make sense of their own experience of the conflict, of themselves in relation to the country and their communities and talk to themselves and others about what it has meant to be in the middle of a war and show their value and dignity despite the conflict. They are not predisposed to conflict, as is sometimes assumed outside or even by people who have seen no way of living outside armed conflict until now. It is dialogue in action bringing about social change. To do so, the idea of organisation is crucial, whether it be women's association, (in and out-of-school groups (after turned into foundations, for example), cultural collectives. However, not all the communities affected by the conflict have had the same access to opportunities of this kind.

This relational dimension of peace that recognises human dignity aims at no discrimination of any kind. Although there is a clear opposition to violence and weapons, there is no ideological rigidity and people have the possibility to express their opinions and dissent without apprehension or retaliation, despite the normal tensions that may emerge in any social setting. Here peace is rooted in the recognition of identity and people's right to express themselves and be authentic, which touches on ethnicity, place of birth, political views, sexual orientation, and the like. Likewise, predisposition to peace and peaceful actions, which is evident in children attending the library and school activities with the community.

The library is the epitome of such embodiment of no discrimination. The groups there exemplify diversity and acceptance. Children, adolescents, men, and women – including members of the police, military, and armed groups- are welcome. The initiatives of the library have aimed at different communities and offer different interests to explore, which promotes the development of people's potential and strengthen the bonds amongst members of the community. School can be rigid in this respect, but children and young people are starting to

reclaim their participation and acceptance of their identity – be it gender, sexual orientation, or interests.

The logics of war deteriorate the social fabric; therefore, the consolidation of human bond becomes unattainable. In this sense, education settings can potentially create forms of relate to one another based on confidence, respect, and recognition of the other. This is innovative in that it becomes a new type of sociality where people's voice is recognised and with it comes their identity and authority to speak (Elbow, 2000):

> '(…) And that is what we aim at, like working a lot on the extracurricular activities, assemblies, Mother's Day, child's day, sports activities, or even the school garden, right? Because in rural areas we work on the school garden a lot. For example, we did some work in the school garden called 'school garden: a place for social interaction,' because that's what it is, in the school garden you learn background knowledge of students and their parents, and we try to connect that to the academic (activity). And we learned a lot. We learned from each other, and thus we were like building up those spaces of tolerance, peaceful spaces where one speaks and the other listens and so on. And it should be participatory' (Fernanda, schoolteacher).

Artistic expression is also an element that contributes to restoring human dignity and weaving narratives that reconcile a violent past with a peaceful present-future. Memory constitutes a powerful narrative in a double temporality: chronological and its writing. The facts narrated are important and offer a testimony that calls for change and opens ethical dimensions. However, beyond the facts, what is *said*, which is the inexorable proof of crimes and offences during war, the dynamics of narration offer a valuable interweaving between personal and collective experiences (Arfuch, 2013). Furthermore, those often-marginalised narratives constitute powerful accounts in which there is an opportunity for 'contestation, negotiation, and cultural production' (Paulson, et al., 2020).

Memory and other narrative approaches constitute a pedagogical tool for rendering human actions meaningful (Steinberg and Araujo, 2014). People tell stories – and there is contestation here too, nurture their stories, and create new ways of moving forward despite

the horrors of war. It is here where a humanised relationship with others and the world constitutes a starting point for peacebuilding:

> 'In our making and remaking of ourselves in the process of making history – as subjects and objects, persons, becoming beings of intersection in the world and not of pure adaptation to the world – we should end by having the dream, too, a mover of history. There is no change without dream, as there is no dream without hope' (Freire, 2017).

4.2.3. Peace as Emancipation

In the terrain of peacebuilding, there are different hegemonic conceptions of peace associated with security, state-building, conflict resolution, human rights, and others (Richmond, 2010). However, those approaches fail on two fundamental levels; first, the population suffering from the conflict become the object of their approaches and not subjects with a voice (Richmond, 2006; 2013; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012; see the case of Human Rights discourses in Santos, 2015). Second, those subjects understand more than anyone else what needs to change to revert structures of oppression no matter where it comes from – usually from armed actors and the state itself:

> 'Who are better prepared than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an impressive society? Who suffered the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who came back to understand the necessity of liberation? They will not gain this liberation by chance but through the praxis of the quest for it, through the recognition of the necessity to fight for it. And this fight, because of the purpose given it by the oppressed, will actually constitute an act of love opposing the lovelessness even when clothed in false generosity' (Freire, 2017).

What is problematic and promising is the same: people's experience being neglected; it is problematic because state interventions fail to capture the essence of conflict and reduce it to levels of security or state presence, which has been the case of Colombia in the last 20 years where the state has perpetrated acts of violence in the name of – as they call it – democratic security (Giraldo, 2020). Likewise, there have been productive projects that

impose forms of economic activities that do not exist in the region – cattle raising in a predominantly agricultural region – (Rojas, 2007). However, it is promising because the experience of the marginalised and their non-violent and creative response offers an insight into how peace is enacted, which is emancipatory in essence. For example, a rural school mobilises their initiatives and reaches members of the community intending to create a sense of trust and knowing one another, which in turn stops the indiscriminate killing of civilians at check points by the paramilitary. What is revealed here is the power of education when searching for creative mechanisms to subvert the logics of war.

Creativity comes after conscientisation. Education settings become a place where people read the stark realities of war and refuse to accept that as a permanent ethos. It is here where emancipatory actions take place to counteract violent actions and their effects. Those actions are creative and powerful, actions of peace contest violence and privilege life above all things. A process of constant reflection motivates actions because it is necessary to interrupt that 'the oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines, are fearful of freedom' (Freire, 2017).

Thinking about and acting on peace are disruptive. The normalisation of war and its logics is interrupted by an interrogation of the taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs on the value of life and the precariousness of living conditions. Therefore, creative ways are needed to counteract and dismantle those misconceptions widely spread in thought and action. Putumayo is a region where oral tradition is strong because of indigenous traditions and legacy. What is innovative here is that war has silenced people's voices and fear is dominant, but such a hegemony meets huge resistance in creative ways of expression beyond orality, and people (the elderly, women, men, young people, and children) participate in these emancipatory actions of peace:

> 'With the group of friends of the library, we thought of the magazine and the radio
> at the same time, because we wanted to do something. We thought we had to do
> something so that we didn't give up given the situation at the time. Then, Italo, a
> guy that was in third semester at university, but dropped out rebelliously, was
> working and not doing much. He was 19 years old, I think. And he suggested we

could create a magazine. We thought it was impossible, because we didn't have money, but he said it would be nice to do something for people to write. We wondered if that was possible, so we talked to the Mayor, and he told us to formally write the project and he would help us with half of the cost. And what about the other half? We asked small businesses and people for help. It was exciting. We used a thread in the street and asked people for money. In return we would give them a little paper branch or a ribbon that was symbolic. That is how we started' (Gloria).

The role of literacy is fundamental because people can use their words, be it written or spoken, to tell their stories, to speak their minds, and to have a place in the world (Elbow, 2000). What is more, the act of writing and reading, for example, constitutes an exercise of peace on different levels: first, it is a cathartic experience since people can tell their stories of oppression, be it at home or by an armed actor. Second, the library configures a space that provides a sense of safety for people to write their stories; people engage with creative writing experiences where expression is recognised and never punished (Gordon, 2017). People have the freedom to claim a space in the world free from the conditioning of violence. This is a contestatory act, writing somehow seeks to reconcile the victim/oppressed with their past and claims some form of justice, which is contained already in the act of *saying/writing*:

Another strategy that has consolidated an emancipatory nature of peace is the radio (Iqbal and Bilali, 2017). Both the school and the library have created radio programmes in which people exercise their voice, complain about violence, and propose non-violent alternatives to live both in private and in public spheres. A schoolteacher, for instance, has created a radio programme during the breaktime; students and teachers make use of this strategy to communicate and strengthen their community bond, which is also a channel to solve problems regarding the school life. The benefit of the radio lies in the fact that people can participate and are allowed to speak (Brech, 1927 cited in Iqbal and Bilali, 2017).

Likewise, the library has created a radio programme in which many strategies were put in place. They combine literature, music, and communication about what is happening in the villages. This is a political exercise that connects people, creates a sense of community, and provides spaces for participation and enjoyment while making room learning and

reflection leaning towards non-violent and creative modalities as, the librarian says, '*We invite people to create a revolution of thought*':

> 'People knew we worked in the library. First, our relatives reprimanded us for the music we played, so we thought, 'they are attentive, but what about other people?' So, suddenly a phone call in the radio station saying, 'send my regards and tell them the music was nice.' But they never said who they were. Then, when we started going to the villages, people told us, 'Did you speak on the radio? That was a nice message or a good story, I liked the music. what's the song title? Who's the author?' They also asked to expand the topics we talked about in the radio. Sometimes we talked about sociability, or how reading literature works as a form of therapy, how to manage free time, how to start a conversation. Or sometimes they said, 'Next time prepare such and such a topic and tell us about it. So, we realised people were listening to us. And then people would call the radio station or our phone to ask for song and we told them to send their suggestions and we would see if that was possible. And we explained that it had to be within the music genre we would select, and it was fine' (Gloria).

The radio has an innovative cultural proposal that resists the imperatives of war. It is widely accepted to act in particular ways fuelled by illegal crops and the cultural elements such as music, parties, fights, and human disconnection amongst others. The radio and its music and messages seek to appeal to reflection and a change of mind that brings about non-violent forms of relate to others and raise awareness of the negative effects of the culture of war. The Colombian philosopher Estanislao Azuleta (2017) describes a state of collective drunkenness in war, a type of festivity in which the false idea of identity and unity are instilled in the fight against a common enemy. What is more, that state of unconsciousness is the ethos that results from the absence of solid bonds and the exacerbation of individual profit at the expense of the others. The library, in its radio programme, seeks to be a voice that connects to people's suffering and oppression, but also to give them the chance to reflect and act in the face of their oppression and fear.

Another element is the inclusion of arts to promote social inclusion and participation from educational contexts (Chappell and Chappell, 2016). Community art and cultural

development (CACD) have been seen as powerful tools to interrogate taken-for-granted assumptions, work on future aspirations and enhance community cultural values (Sonn et al., 2017). Furthermore, theatre configures horizontal modes of learning where both teachers and learners work together and make sense of their context, its challenges and talk to other members of the community. Theatre is an invitation to liberation:

'We started to see creativity and then we created a group called 'tierra fértil' as a theatre group and it is now a foundation, at least administratively we have legal status. It has been 10 years now, such an extensive experience. Then I see how people can use their free time productively, on the one hand, and hone qualities and skills on the other... students and myself as a teacher. After some time of learning, we included the artistic component like theatre, storytelling, the artistic side to develop the academic aspect, right? So, we invented stories and used theatre to teach our lessons, and invented games. So, there we go despite the moves up and down...' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

4.2.4. Peace as material

The conflict in Colombia has been historically rooted in issues of injustice and inequality in different forms, be it land ownership, political participation, access to employment or education, among others. Deprivation of material and non-material goods has been at the heart of the conflict, which points the way to a materiality of peace. Peace is partly understood as the realisation of projects of infrastructure, education, health, and others that provide the communities in remote regions or affected by war with alternatives to overcome isolation, deprivation, and low standards of living – although such inequality also exists in big cities –:

'Jenny: I already told you something that summarises everything: peace and hunger means no peace. Why is that? If there are no roads, you can't trade your products and therefore you can more provide at home. 'No roads' implies you can't [mobilise to] study, and if you don't study, you can't support your family. You miss opportunities. I always say, 'Peace with hunger means no peace' (Female Social Leader).

Putumayo has historically suffered from exploitation and violence, which is traced back in the 1900s in 5 main periods of violence: 1) agricultural expansion and extraction 1900 – 1946, 2) political violence 1946 – 1962, 3) oil exploitation 1963 – 1976 (still in place), 4) Coca 1977 – 1987, and 5) drug dealing, guerrilla, and state intervention 1988 – 2006 (Bello and Cancimance, 2011; see Introduction). Furthermore, some of the projects implemented by the government and the work of some NGOs have been highly inefficient, which has contributed to people opting for coca production as a means of living.

The dominant conceptions of peace are connected to security and state-building, although such approaches have spectacularly failed to provide any solution to violence and inequality. On the contrary, land ownership has been at the heart of the conflict and peasants have suffered from this conflict in unthinkable ways. Whether drug dealing, ideological differences, or presumed collaboration to one or another side of the conflict, all has served as an excuse to displace peasants and steal their lands (Molano, 2001). This is more problematic as peasants in Putumayo, for example, and other regions have changed their economic activities due to lack of infrastructure or pressure from illegal groups (Baquero, 2014). For instance, some indigenous communities have been trapped in the conflict and have been displaced or their territories have been reduced due to the presence of armed actors (ASEK-Ministerio del Interior, 2011).

Until this date, and despite the peace accord, Putumayo remains partially isolated, and its infrastructure is deficient. For example, some towns still do not have access to drinkable water or permanent electricity, which is detrimental to their living standards. In recent years, the capital suffered from a flood that destroyed a quarter of the city and reconstruction has been slow (Colprensa, 2021). It is here that understandings of peace are materialised in concrete actions such as entrepreneurial organisations and initiatives that benefit the communities on an economical and educational level, particularly those who have been affected the most by the war and the culture of violence:

'We created some organisations, nine in total. We also have a coordination that guarantees we all speak the same language and ask for benefits for all of us. We

appointed a coordinator, and she was part of *weavers of life* (Tejedoras). So, she showed what we were doing through records, evidence, and invitations to see our initiatives. They visited us and were interested in working with us, so they trained us, because we have some common goals and we both want to work for the community, but particularly for a gender: women. We don't want to discriminate men, but when land restitution occurs, what happens is this, for example, a couple gets divorced and the government compensates the man, who is thought to be the head of the household. The government just does not see that. Then, the man receives the compensation and the woman, and her kids are left with nothing. So, we were empowered with the help of Tejedoras. We received training and we are more empowered. We are women and are strong. Now we are recognised (Female social leader)'

Understood in this sense, the 'material' aspect of peace is not just 'matter,' i.e., infrastructure per se, but rather the possibilities that emerge in the series of relations that take place between the human and non-human – e.g., there are ecological notions at play too. The lack of material goods and infrastructure is a fundamental aspect, but what is also relevant is the series of interpersonal transactions of interests, common goals, and synergy that make agency possible. There is a link between the material and 'an agency of motion and transformation' leaning towards better conditions (Chow, 2010). Therefore, a material dimension of peace needs reconsideration as material factors shape society and bound human prospects (Coole and Frost, 2010).

In this sense, accounts on new materialisms help to explain the complex and interesting relation between human and non-human in social processes beyond dialectical oppositions where one excludes the other, which illustrates the entangled connections hidden in social phenomena:

'(…) if everything is material inasmuch as it is composed of cycle chemical processes, nothing is reducible to such processes, at least as conventionally understood period for materiality is always something more than "mere" matter: and access, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable. In sum, new materialists are rediscovering a materiality

that materialises, evincing immanent modes of self-transformation that compel us
to think of causation in far more complex terms; to recognise that phenomena a
caught in a multitude of interlocking systems and forces and to consider a new
location and nature of capacities for agency' (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 9).

There is more than just one issue at play: first, there is a development agenda based on western notions attached to any project of infrastructure that usually clashes with the local (Cf. Escobar, 2010). Both social movements and education agents recognise the disadvantages of a poor infrastructure and the precarity of the state institutions in the region. Thus, the spread of illicit crops is a result of the absence of solid plans that allow a daily interaction with material objects and the natural environment translated into opportunities for the people at a social, economic, and cultural level. Second, there are certain rituals, views and practices inserted into those relations between the material and the environment, which normally give account of more profound and sociocultural legacies of people. With the introduction of alien practices – which require a gradual transition and careful consideration –, some practices, ancestral knowledges, and environmental concerns are displaced inadvertently. For example, cattle breeding goes against the natural environment (the Amazon, tropical jungle), and even so it has extended at the expense of the Amazon – and what it means for the planet (Molinares and Prada, 2018).

Thus, peace in its material dimension inhabits in people's agency and the transformations in the ways the material environment, the circumstances, networks, ideas, and people themselves work together towards the transformations of sociohistorical conditions (Cf. Coole and Frost, 2010; Escobar, 2018). For example, theatre groups from school and the library seek to raise awareness of the culture of violence prevailing in their society and the lessons to learn when facing opportunities of change. This presupposes a dynamism of forces translated into actions, messages and provocations that invite people to rethink their place in the world and see themselves as possessors of agency and will. Likewise, women's associations have understood the oppression they have been subjected to by the conflict and macho culture. In turn, they have come up with entrepreneurial initiatives and educational activities in which they raise awareness in men regarding men and women being trapped in stereotypes. However, this is possible due to networks and cooperation with

organisations, family, and community members – including men –, and other material factors at hand that facilitate such processes:

> 'One could conclude, accordingly, that "matter becomes" rather than "matter is." It is in this choreography is of becoming that we find cosmic forces assembling and disintegrating to forge more or less enduring patterns but may provisionally exhibit internally coherent, efficacious organisation: objects forming and emerging within relational fields, bodies composing the natural environment in ways that are corporeally meaningful for them, and subjectivities being constituted as open series of capacities or potencies that emerge hazardously and unambiguously within a multitude of organic and social processes' (Coole and Frost, 2010).

In the face of adversity – armed conflict, state neglect, and scarcity – both formal and informal education have constituted platforms for creativity and resourcefulness. It is important to highlight that some state institutions (e.g., Victims Unit and Centre for Historical Memory), NGOs, Individuals (e.g., artists, companies, volunteers) have contributed to enrich the spatio-temporal dimensions of peacebuilding education (See Lit Review). This is an ongoing process open to new modes of doing things, ideas, people, institutions, and other material and non-material factors leaning towards mitigating social inequality and ever-changing sustainable forms of peace. In all this, ecological visions are vital since this is a region where such concerns find roots in everyday experiences – whether those of destruction, enjoyment or use of nature.

4.3. How can education contribute to peacebuilding?

Formal and informal educational settings have been the focus of this research. As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, it is necessary to widen the understanding of education and recognise the important contributions happening outside schools and universities (Foley, 1999; Novelli, 2010). To answer this research question, I will focus on 3 main areas based on my research journey and the insight I received from my participants. I am fully aware that there are many other contributions that education can make in terms of peacebuilding. However, I am here making sense of my ethnographic experience. The themes I found are the following:

- Recognition of human dignity

- The capacity to aspire

- Future-orientated pedagogies

4.3.1. Recognition of Human Dignity

Both formal and informal educational settings have a vital role in contributing to societies and the responsibility of prompting social change. In relation to peacebuilding, the first task is to help people purge imposed and destructive images of themselves and others (Taylor, 1990; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). War distorts social relations and instil ideas where relations of power and domination are prevalent. Thus, the task of education (both formal and informal) is to restore the formation of social bonds where many – voiced dialogue is the main mechanism to deal with conflict and difference, be it opinion, ethnicity, sexual identity, or religious beliefs. To do so, educational activities and relations should be based on practices that bring about forms of justice:

'The scope of justice, I argued, is not limited to distribution, but includes all such a process is that support or undermine oppression, including culture. Their behaviour, comportments, images, and stereotypes that contribute to the oppression of bodily marked groups are pervasive, systematic, mutually generating, and mutually reinforcing. They are elements of dominant cultural practices that lie as the normal background of our liberal democratic society. Only changing the cultural habits themselves will change the oppressions they produce and reinforce, but changing cultural habits can occur only if individuals become aware of unchanged the individual habits this is cultural revolution' (Young, 1990, p. 152).

Such process of change can only occur in dialogue. I mean to highlight a horizontal nature in such dialogical processes. If dialogue permeates pedagogies and other educational practices, then dignity will be cultivated and nurtured. This is a fundamental contribution that both formal and informal education can make: relational practices through which people become aware of their own self, history, and place in the world. It is, then, through a process of recognition – relational practices that embrace otherness – that persons become aware of

their own dignity and that of others (Honneth, 2014; Taylor, 1990). What follows as part of this natural progression is the development of an ethos that goes against imitation and conformity:

'They (students) also wanted to become members of the guerrilla once they finished their secondary school. That was the only thing they wanted because that influenced them quite a lot. They looked up the guerrilla more than the military or the police… they never said they wanted to do military service of serve in the police. They always said they wanted to join the guerrilla… Because them, and all of us who lived there, suffered that kind of attack from right wing forces, so to speak, the military and the police, we suffered from their mistreatment all the time. So, children saw how they (the military and the police) mistreated their parents, how they despised them because they are peasants and lived in a guerrilla zone. So, children just wanted to take revenge, to go against those people since they just mistreated the community. And I don't blame the children because we lived in the conflict and they were defensive all the time, expecting them (Armed forces) to go out of nowhere and attack them and exterminate them' (Wilson, Schoolteacher).

'We would talk to students. They often felt more confident with a particular teacher, as it were, the PE teacher, because he had them play. So, if we noticed a student was talking a lot about war and playing war, we would try to talk to them and show that [war] could not be what defined their life at that time, and that there would be more horizons for them' (Gretel, schoolteacher).

Discourses on human rights are present in conflict zones and areas where forms of injustice are present. Santos (2015) notes how from a historical western tradition, human rights discourses have prevailed over versions appealing to human dignity, emancipation, and utopianism, normally seen as contrary to human rights. Two elements are problematic here; first, human rights as a discourse have been instrumentalised and ineffective when considering the poor, the marginalised. Second, a division between metropolitan and colonial societies – developed and developing (third world) – is sustained by dominant discourses of western modernity (Escobar, 1996; Santos, 2007). Furthermore, even in context like Colombia, a similar division prevails; the society is profoundly divided into a small, privileged

class and a marginalised population. Such a division is evident in education, culture, socioeconomic activities, and infrastructure. Human rights discourses have failed to capture the vicissitudes of life for the poor and provide a minimal account of what is needed. It is, as Santos (2015) put it, an instrumentalization that views the subjects of rights as objects of human rights discourses.

The ruralities of Colombia serve as an example of the failure of human rights, although not exclusively. Conflict zones have seen a deprivation of human rights and dignity and any effort to vindicate the communities have met violent resistance (Pareja Mejía, 2011; Preciado, 2006). As a result, silence and fear have become dominant in these communities (See section '*peace as restitution of voice*'). Nevertheless, education has made a significant contribution in subverting the order of things (Cf. Freire, 2017; Giroux, 2011). To do so, forms of education should help people interweave their identities through dialogical and collaborative processes in which dignity is upfront. This means that ideology, ethnicity, sexual identity, religious beliefs, socioeconomic conditions, or any other feature of difference do not cause aggression or discrimination. Furthermore, those elements constitute the richness of societies, and any form of essentialism should be overcome, which requires a disposition and work leaning towards pedagogies and educational activities able to foster identity formation and respect (Cf. Apphia, 2018):

'We can talk about what we want and we know we are safe. In the library, people respect your religious beliefs, political ideas, sexual orientation, which would not be possible in other places at all. (They say) 'you are red (liberal)!' 'You like men!', 'you are catholic!' Here you are accepted and respected. That's why I think people come to the library first (and then institutions). Then all the work is articulated, but this is something that cannot be done by just one person. The magazine was created by the group, same as the radio programme, we go to veredas in groups. If there is a person with a contract, that is good. But those who are free now will go and help with the activities' (Diana, volunteer).

The school is an institution that needs to be decolonised in a double sense; on the one hand, it needs to supersede the official curricula and hegemonic knowledge that most of the time perpetuate forms of exclusion. To do so, it needs to valorise diverse epistemological

experiences – this is particularly relevant in rural contexts where there are more diverse communities. In this sense, social movements and ancestral communities have ontological and epistemological visions that may nurture a more embracing approach to education, e.g., ecological visions actualised in actions and concrete initiatives (Cf. Escobar, 2013). On the other hand, a mission of the school is to promote forms of socialisation and formation of individuals who embrace others and respect forms of being (Botero, 2015). Here it is necessary to mobilise the school outside its physical boundaries. The communities need to be involved in the school and the schools need to be involved in the communities. The experience of Putumayo shows that such a mobilisation has been an effective mechanism to protect people's life in times of conflict and restore social bonds.

The school, a fixed institution, has the potential to mobilise itself and be an active part of the communities. Universities and other education institutions share the same potential – and responsibility, not from a perspective that views the other – communities – as an object of study, but as people who need to be listened to (Molano, 2001). Only through horizontal dynamics, will the communities have the strength to assume their dignity and pursuit their own destiny. It is here where education acquires a more humanising character that goes beyond knowledge transition or skills development. The work of the school, whenever possible, hand in hand with the communities is an opportunity to communicate and exchange understandings of social reality, but also to call for action and change. For example, the communities of Putumayo have seen artistic expressions such as theatre and dance – among others – where there is a clear call for self-reflection and reflection as a community. Art here is utterly compelling to interrogate their history and trace creative and reflective ways towards the future(s) (Bloch, 1977; Boal, 1979; Freire, 2017). There are countless strategies I witnessed during my fieldwork based on the principle of meaning and many-voiced conversation. The Freirean idea of '*nobody liberates nobody*' (2017) is present in their actions. The social struggle is shared, and the invitation is open.

4.3.2. Capacity to Aspire

Many people suffer from marginalisation and oppression around the world. However, this is even more problematic in contexts of war. The geographies of war are deprived of

alternatives, be it economic, social, or cultural (Cf. Oslender, 2008). Appaudurai (2013) states that poverty goes beyond materiality and includes desperation, lack of security, dignity, and victimization, which is even more so in the case of areas of conflict where precarity and depravation take place along with violence. The author also notes how 'the poor' develop an understanding of themselves as a group (p. 185). This is more complex for those who live in conflict; their situation has stigmatising connotations; on the one hand, they are often perceived as violent, even when they are the victims, and on the other, their own understanding of themselves is limited and conditioned by their living conditions.

However, such imposed precarity – by the state and the conflict – meets huge resistance by members of those communities who dare to challenge those structures of power and propose creative alternatives that engage with others (See Spaces of Adulthood). It is here where a work of conscientisation – *in Freirean terms* – makes room for liberation of the mind that serves two purposes: first, it constitutes itself a critique of institutions, norms, relations of power that restrain people's dignity and access to a variety of resources; second, it opens up possibilities to counteract precarity and engage with possibilities and actions (Freire, 2017; Giroux, 2011). Without this critical reflection, it would not be possible to aspire to any change.

A capacity to envisage possibilities – to aspire - is fundamental as it constitutes a tool to navigate the social world. However, the poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed do not have access to opportunities for aspiring. The relations, languages, cultural symbols, and even material resources in some cases are reduced or not available, which is an epitome of injustice (Lull, Pinardi and Quadros, 2021; Young, 1990). People with material resources, power and an unquestioned sense of dignity – where human rights are never withdrawn –, have more access and awareness of their potential and the many material and immaterial objects they can – and surely have the right to – aspire:

'Where these pathways to exist for the poor, they aren't likely to be more rigid, less supple, unless strategically valuable, not because of any cognitive deficit on the part of the poor but because the capacity to aspire, like any complex cultural capacity, thrives

and survives in practise, repetition, exploration, conjecture, and refutation' (Appadurai, 2013).

Such a portrayal is more difficult in the case of conflict-affected societies. Such relations and norms are constrained by violence and fear. People do not have the right to exercise their capacity to express, to dissent, or to propose trajectories that affect their destinies. Thus, educational settings have the potential and the responsibility to promote relational spaces in which people make use of their capacity to use their voice, to interrogate their reality and themselves, to participate critically in the construction of a better world – or worlds – and to think and wish for immaterial and material resources (Cf. Appadurai, 2013; Freire, 2017; Taylor, 1990). I mean to highlight the importance of the relational aspect of this potentiality in education; it is through relations mediated by language and interactions through which meaning, dissensus, problems, individual and collective visions and identities, historical accounts, social struggles, and knowledge of other kinds are negotiated:

> 'A necessary element for peace is dialogue, and the library creates spaces for dialogue through various means: reading activities, film clubs, conversations, photography, and memory work. There are various ways in which the library can generate such spaces, but it's not just about a peaceful coexistence in the moment. You get some elements and a more reflective and critical thinking approach to reality... You get other perspectives, and you are no longer blind. We still need to work with indigenous and afro communities and create more spaces to include them' (Leidy).

Once those educational places are open for dialogue and recognition of the other, self-discovery and self-affirmation are possible thanks to relations of respect (Taylor, 1992). It is through active dialogue that this is possible – horizontal in nature – where nobody liberates nobody, but everybody participates in processes where people make sense of their history and their possibilities despite poverty, oppression and precarity (Freire, 2017; Steinberg and Araujo, 2013; 2014). This has certainly been a problem in the political realm in Colombia, where there is an instilled idea that one person – *a politician* – is to come and bring about social change. I do not intend to portray this as an easy process – human relations are always

problematic; what is radically different here is that people have the possibility of relating to others and making use of the voice as an instrument of expression, demand, self-representation, dissensus, and construction of alternatives that connect to who they are: their voice is listened to and must be manifested in actions with some incidence (Appadurai, 2013).

This has been the case of social groups where, for instance, women have collectively organised. Such organisations have served as a mechanism for them to break cycles of poverty and mistreatment, be it perpetrated by the state, armed actors, or their families. Women have responded creatively to oppression and violence: workshops, entrepreneurial activities, educational alliances, and cultural activities are some of the strategies that help women and other members of the community to offer new conceptions of men's and women's roles, break patterns of poverty, violence, and silence (See Spaces of Gender; Smith, 2001; Salla, 2001; Skjelsbaek, 2001). The engagement with the community and other institutions is a crucial feature. For instance, the local library is a place that serves as a venue for workshops, courses, conferences, and other cultural activities. Sometimes women's groups accompany and support these activities while learning with other members of the community. This offers a valuable lesson on how important the work of these forms of education is and their contribution in the reconstruction of the social fabric and the aspiration for changes:

> 'When we started with all this we thought about how to talk about peace, and to give the youth spaces for a community experience, play, good use of free time. We saw this as a chance to think about peace. So, we invited them (children and young people) to come to the library and see a film here or at the park and then have a conversation. We offered alternative spaces for the youth and whoever was around. This is not only about a football court – because that's how it's been, like a canteen or a disco –. Maybe we (the community) do things like that because we do not have other things to do, there are no alternatives. And if there are alternatives, we just do not know about them. This is how we were raised, and then the circle closes. So, we thought, 'For people who want peace, it is necessary to conceive it from reading, writing, playing, dancing… in healthy ways' (Gloria, Library).

It is here in the construction of alternative spaces and non-violent modalities that the capacity to aspire is rehearsed: people – the poor, the marginalised, the subjected to violence – are invited to an encounter with different ways relating to others and new languages. Those new relational spaces and their languages constitute innovative forms of interaction and understanding oneself, others and the other (Taylor, 1990). What is more, a critical dimension is essentially present here; self-reflection and the ability to interrogate assumptions and (re)construct meaning is the aimed for, which constitutes a pedagogical act in itself:

'In this way, seemingly isolated events and experiences and our individual sense of our identity are placed within a larger and grander narrative –historical narrative, political narrative, cultural narrative, communal narrative, institutional narrative and so forth' (Gill, 2014, p. 75).

The novelty of these forms of open dialogue lies in the fact that they constitute a change in the social script (Taylor, 1990). It is dialogue in action that articulates transformative and – given the context of war – disruptive practices in which non-violent, creative respectful paths are explored. The school as a formal type of education has the potential to exceed its boundaries and work with the communities on different levels. This is not always easy, particularly in the face of armed conflicts, but there are multiple strategies that configure an amalgam of possibilities. Nevertheless, there are always frictions inside those groups, which is feature of human interactions. What seems to be different somehow is the way in which those frictions are managed. There is no violence, although sometimes aggression manifests itself in some members. Those disagreements are necessary and dispute any mistaken idea of uniformity. The challenge those communities face is the coexistence of diverting ideas and the achievement of common goals.

A good example of this is the school where different narratives coexist, and tensions often emerge between those in favour and against change. There are lots of initiatives aiming to help children and young people cultivate their own preferences, opinions, and aspirations through humanising interactions; however, there are also education agents who do not believe in a project of social change. Their discontent with the system is somehow an implicit compliance with the status quo, but it stems from a system that oppresses the teachers: the

education system is oppressed and oppressive. Some of them argue that change is not possible, and work as bureaucrats in a system that perpetuates relations of power and domination:

'It is Friday morning and pupils are gathered in the school theatre ready for the student president election debate. Ms. Enriquez, the social science teacher, explains the rules and its importance, being that it is a compulsory activity for schools countrywide and an example of democracy for students. There are 3 rounds of questions: general, specific and those asked from the floor, touching on subjects including leadership, rights, responsibilities, and resources within school, though some refer to national politics. Across the room I see one of the staff mocking the candidates' responses and a couple of other teachers follow her lead. She spots me taking notes and cautiously approaches to ask if I am a representative from the Ministry of Education. I explain I am observing the event for my Ph.D. research, which she dismisses as being non-threatening by returning to her place to resume her pejorative attitude. The debate has moved on - the candidates are now questioning how the school will support their presidency, fully aware there is no government support for the school itself. The students' mistrust of politics is revealing, but it was encouraging to see that they understood there was a need for change' (From fieldnotes).

There are two scenarios at play here; on the one hand, the school can potentially help students and their communities to encounter spaces for the development of their human potential. A powerful synergy has certainly been an example of how the school, social movements, and institutions like the public library work with the communities and bring about social change at difference paces, but the contribution is undeniable (See Spaces of Childhood, Adulthood, Gender and Future). On the other hand, the school can be – and often is – a place where conformity is rehearsed and reproduced (Saldana, 2013). Instead of being a place of radical hope and critical reflection, the school is co-opted by pedagogies of hopelessness and reluctance, which contributes to maintaining the order of things (Parra, 1989; Freire, 2017; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). The former constitutes an ethos leaning towards the restitution of bonds of trust and respect among the members of the school communities and the prevalence of human dignity:

In the activities, then, we all participated: parents, students, coordinators, and teachers. For them [students], it was very nice, and I think they still remember. There was an activity led by a teacher: we acted, danced, erm… if it was an outside activity to paint our faces like clowns, we did it. During the sports activities, teachers were running, jumping rope, being part of all the activities… that motivated students as they looked at us involved, don't you think? They said, 'Look, the teacher does that so we can do it too.' And it was the same with their parents, so It was more like using those extracurricular spaces. Not just like here I come to teach a lesson and you have to listen, no. Instead, it is more like relating to each other in a different environment where everyone has their own viewpoints, we are different. You come from a place, and you come from somewhere else in Colombia, but when we are in these events, we are all equal to each other' (Fernanda, schoolteacher).

4.3.3. Future-oriented approaches

Perhaps one of the more fundamental questions educators ask in contexts of conflict is related to hope: what *hope* is there in places where violence has taken away healthy forms of living together if they ever existed? Change is needed, aspired to, and wished for, and educational settings have the potential to embody such a change. Their practices can be transformative and reconfigure or construct, often for the first time, non-violent and humanising social dynamics. In contexts where precarity and violence prevail, peacebuilding education is to promote long-standing modalities of change.

The past of these communities is marked by the experience of armed confrontation, abuse of the state and violations of their rights and dignity. Likewise, their present is full of fear and uncertainty as the places they inhabit are co-opted by terror and state neglect (Cf. Oslender, 2008). Peacebuilding educational practices operate in a double temporality; on the one hand, educators and learners reflect on the present circumstances and their connection to the past insofar history has lessons to teach – if a critical turn is to happen. On the other, reflection and action are conjugated and anchored to the future(s); there is a discontent over the reality at a social, political, and even ecological level, which opens a multiplicity of alternatives (Escobar, 2018; Freire, 2017):

'**Fernanda:** we can talk about peace in school when we interpret students' realities and the issues they are undergoing. Reading and writing take place when, for example, - I speak of the armed conflict – we do research and students are asked to think of their reality and write about it. Because what isn't written gets lost. So, this allows students to see what is happening and its effect so that they can try to build peace. When we analyse violence, we notice there is no understanding, dialogue, we notice there is inequality sustained by the state, which causes conflict. So, if there is more equity, we can reach peace.

Luz: [understanding] peace from reading and writing is based on the word which is the medium through which people construct language and therefore forms of communication. Without language, without words, there is nothing' (Focus Group, urban school).

The capacity to aspire needs to be reinforced by a sense of possibility. What is available is need, fear and dissatisfaction. Therefore, the task of any educational endeavour seeking to build a sense of future is to work on those needs, fears and claims that condition the lives of people. Future oriented practices that contain a germ of hope are normally associated with utopianism and a sense of impracticality of even uniformity, among many other forms of criticism (Levitas, 2013; Popper, 1945). I am not going to engage fully with the concept of utopia, but some of the elements contained in Levitas' (2013) development are useful to illustrate how peacebuilding education contribute to configure multiple futures.

The idea of a better world(s) stems from discontent, which is evident in the context of conflict. People refuse to accept the project of violence imposed by others and the social, economic, political, and ecological consequences thereof. Levitas (2013) defines utopia as an element contained in a wide range of individual and collective human practices; such practices are creative in nature – cultural or political – and are reproduced and circulated (consumed). Education settings constitute powerful spaces where those practices are configured, shared, and replicated. There is a move from speculation and mere discontent to reflection and action – praxis – that is actualised in the social dynamics and interactions, which paves the way for the social and political pursuit of a better world (Bloch, 1977; Freire, 2017; Levitas, 2013).

That pursuit takes place is active dialogue, but it also has a performative character. Experience is a fundamental element provided by both formal and non-formal education in relation to peacebuilding. It is the experience of new forms of being oneself and being with others that configures longstanding possibilities anchored to new futures. Multiple and creative forms of expression give experience its form and specificity of direction – towards to future(s) (Conquergood, 1986). At the heart of this is human fulfilment: people create alternative configurations of their needs, desires, and expectations, which deepens and raises their aspirations beyond the present modalities of domination (Appadurai, 2013; Levitas, 2013):

> We worked with 'Corporacion Amazonia' and 'Warchild Holland' on a project called 'building a better future for the children of Colombia', in conflict zones. We teachers made part of it and, coincidentally, they asked the projects to include artistic expressions. Things like handicrafts, and there was another teacher working on dance, she knew a lot. They also want to foster theatre, so I was assigned to work on theatre. I had no idea, no academic formation or anything, and that was a godsent because I discovered how it changes lives and I could rediscover myself, too. We started to see creativity and then we created a group called 'Tierra Fertil' as a theatre group and it is now a foundation, at least administratively we have legal status. It has been 10 years now, such an extensive experience. Then I see how people can use their free time productively, on the one hand, and hone qualities and skills on the other... students and myself as a teacher. After some time of learning, we included the artistic component like theatre, storytelling, the artistic side to develop the academic aspect, right? So, we invented stories and used theatre to teach our lessons, and invented games. So, there we go despite the moves up and down... with good things, too, like having met '*Unidad de Víctimas'*(Victims Unit) that works on collective reparation and opened up unimaginable for us. That is a godsent, there is no other explanation. We performed in national venues, taking the guys to perform our plays in venues such as the Theatre Festival in Manizales, National Theatre Festival, Cali Theatre Festival, and all over our department with our message. And there you go, since we have a legal status now, we have had a constant process. There come new things like research project with ONDAS, teen

pregnancy campaigns, all of this under the frame of theatre, research and radio (Antonio, schoolteacher).

The educational experience is connected to new and better forms of understanding themselves, others, and their possibilities, which mobilises desire. If there is a new dimension of future-oriented – utopian in Levitas' terms – forms of education, that is in the terrain of desire. It is, as Thompon (1977) put it, to 'teach desire to desire, to desire better, to desire more, and above all to desire in a different way' (Levitas, 2013). The status quo has predetermined and very limited forms of desire and aspiration; education should not be a place that complies with the limitations imposed by dominant groups, which is a risk when implementing educational changes (Cf. Bloch, 1977). Wishful thinking, reflection and action constitute the starting point of many futures. People exercise their capacity to aspire and there is reiteration of reflection, practice, and action, which leads to concrete forms of change (Levitas, 2013).

In this sense, systematic violence and a de facto state neglect have configured forms of being, socialising and living on a political and economic level. This has been a sort of reiteration that sustains political terror and ideological domination (Cf. Althusser, 2008; Chow, 2010; Žižek, 1989). What is radically different here is a type of informed reiteration leaning towards new forms of being different from violent modes and discrimination. The varied relational spaces created and fostered by formal and non-formal education have the potential to consolidate repeated behaviours, diverting and open ways of thinking, respecting life and working towards varied and sustainable futures, which constitutes a psychic and social subversion (Butler, 1993; Chow, 2010).

It is through those many-voiced spaces that people – children, young people, and adults – have a sense of possibility. They see choices different from the available modalities of oppression and limited choices. Here sophisticated languages such as art, sports, ecology, and entrepreneurship among others come into play and become instruments to imagine and rehearse those new times to come. This is a type of education that moves from limitations and violent conflict to 'desire, desire better' and 'have better conflicts' in which human dignity comes first:

'You have to be persistent and never give up. You face a lot. I mean, you must rethink the concept of 'classroom' and some people have done it already. (…) being persistent is the key. The other aspect is creativity, and students help you with that, particularly children; they are good at it. So, it is about preparing a topic, how to do it differently, which is innovation. Sometimes it works and sometimes it just doesn't, but you need to be persistent. And you have a lot of tools, so innovation is about using the tools you have videos created by students. For example, 11 grade students are making a video, it is an Eco touristic strategy about the region. They are making this video with images of the region and [creating] an Eco touristic plan to sell – but this is a mock exercise -. I told them I would come with 15 people from Bogota. People say El Tigre is a dangerous town, but other people say it has a lot of flora and fauna to explore. So, the plan is for four days, and we need to collect the people at the airport in Puerto Asís. That is their job. [I say,] 'Go ahead!' Let's see what they come up with. Teachers must be creative and motivate students. It is not only the academic aspect, but students are also developing other skills, for example, communication, self-expression, and they are overcoming shyness and discovering things about themselves' (Antonio, schoolteacher).

4.4. What challenges/opportunities does this pose on education/ education policy for sustainable peace?

During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to talk to teachers, headteachers, and other education agents. I participated in many activities in schools, the local library and in distant *veredas* where both the school and other forms of education arrive. Those conversations and activities gave me insight into what they struggle the most with and how, from a political and structural perspective, things could be different. This third research question aims to reflect on what needs to be done from a policy perspective to contribute to sustainable forms of peace beyond the dominant 'security approach' and state-building that have evidently failed to bring about sustainable modalities of peace.

Here I propose two lines of action based on my ethnographic experience. I have followed the perspective of the Colombian sociologist Alfredo Molano who suggests an

attitude open to listening to people's experience and views rather than to take a detached and academic perspective in which persons become mere objects of study (2001). My participants and the experiences they have shared with me lead me to propose the following challenges/opportunities:

4.4.1. Access to Diversified Forms of Formal and Non-formal Education in Rural Areas

Much has been said about the role of schools in peacebuilding in Colombia. After the 2016 Peace Agreements, the word peace seems to be present in varied educational discourses that see they can contribute to the peace project. This includes the work of schools, disciplines (e.g., TESOL), university courses, digital content, and work of NGOs (Cf. Breaking News English, 2016; Ochoa, 2018). However, beyond academic production and disciplinary approaches, an important aspect is to support education in zones of (post)conflict/ post-agreement. What seems to remain unclear is the level of commitment to providing alternatives in those regions that have been historically marginalised and affected by the conflict.

Putumayo has been historically neglected by the state, and this is also the case in other rural regions of the country (Cf. Atehortúa, 2020; Oslender, 2006). Education is one example of such neglect. Schools do not have the necessary resources and sometimes rely on donations by private institutions – primarily oil companies. There is still no sign of intention to provide an option for higher education in Putumayo, which also makes the most of the biodiversity and contributes to knowledge. Thus, not only has the armed conflict caused damage in these regions, but also the lack of solid policies and efficient state presence that support social and economic progress. What is more, this region has been exploited because of its natural resources and the prolific coca production (Bello and Cancimance, 2011; see previous section). What would be radically different is a policy approach – and political will – that provides economic resources, technical support, and good use of the natural resources available; in this sense, different forms of formal, non-formal and informal education can potentially help to articulate projects that involve the communities and bring about socioeconomic change.

There are urban and rural schools – urban is just a way of describing schools in three main cities of the department (Mocoa, La Hormiga, Puerto Asís), although in essence they are all rural. There is a huge historical debt to these communities that have not received a dividend of their resources and their contribution to the nation. What is more, it is often the case that petrol companies provide some sort of sporadic financial support to distant rural schools, which is used to build a dome or a classroom – there are schools that after twenty years of being run still lack basic infrastructure. Those financial aids come from the 'good will' of companies, but that is responsibility of the state. In this sense, after the Peace Agreement, there have been initiatives to strengthen the infrastructure of Putumayo under the framework of post-conflict, and projects have been submitted to the local government, but this is rather slow and still insufficient (Cf. Catalogo Logística, 2016; MinCultura, 2019; Secretaría Dept. Putumayo).

Likewise, the allocation of resources to schools largely depends on the number of students they obtain, which often may create tensions and some sort of competition between small schools that are nearby. This is evidence of the poor planning of the national and local governments in relation to education provision and support, which is doubly unfair considering the revenues obtained from oil exploitation in the region. Furthermore, considerations such as ethnicity and the environment as such are not taken into account, which creates a type of uneven educational provision. The challenge this poses on education policy is to articulate the interactions between 'social, economic, and environmental conditions' that allow people to enjoy education and have opportunities of progress and therefore contribute to peacebuilding (Cf. Latour, 2004):

> We now advance the bolder claim that foregrounding material factors and reconfiguring
> our very understanding of matter after requisites for any possible account of coexistence
> and its conditions in the 21st-century (Cooler and Frost, 2010).

Cooler and Frost present their analysis of new materialisms in which there is a call to widening the notions of the material beyond dialectical oppositions. This is pertinent to the present analysis insofar as the lack of resources and an extraction-based relation to nature in this region have paved the way to poverty and conflict. This is also problematic because it

ignores ancestral indigenous traditions and other forms of relating to nature and people that are not necessarily mediated by economic imperatives and that have been present as a constitutive part of the social makeup of the region – e.g., cooperation as in the case of Mingas. The state has not been able to capture the diversity of this region in terms of resources, people, and opportunities. It is here where those material factors together with people would bring about that dynamism of forces leaning towards sustainable forms of peace (Barad, 2007).

There is a strong disconnection between the governing spheres and the regions, which is partly the cause of social and economic problems. For example, as an alternative to control illicit drugs, the government has responded by fumigating coca fields with glyphosate in Putumayo and other regions of the country. This happened for the first time in the 1970s and stopped because of national and international pressure (a national environmental agency and the US congress). In the1980s, fumigations were resumed under pressure from the US government and up to 2015 it was part of the Colombian government strategy – e.g., *Plan Colombia* – to eradicate coca crops (PARES, 2020; Collins, 2020; Walsh, Sánchez-Garzoli, and Salinas, 2008). However, this strategy has repeatedly proved to be inefficient and counterproductive for the environment – soil, crops, and water – and people's health. This has become understandably a part of the social struggle for dignity and recognition. As a matter of fact, discourses on human rights have also been inefficient in protecting people's wellbeing and access to basic goods like water.

The government has failed to understand – or perhaps it has been a political and ideological decision not to do so historically – the needs of the peoples and have opted for a 'warlike' strategy against them. Seen in this light, some forms of education have epitomised a struggle to vindicate their rights by means of raising awareness in their communities and mobilising their concerns to other social and political spheres; oftentimes, they have been able to establish networks with national and international social groups, particularly in the case of social movements. Furthermore, those forms of organisation are usually nurtured by ecological notions and ideas that seek to protect human and non-human life (Lyons, 2017):

Peace needs education ultimately. We cannot be competitive if there is no education. any outsider comes and easily diddle us or any peasant from round here, because these are incipient economies. Without education, a business-oriented formative process, vision, or leadership, peasants are easily cheated. So, cassava or pepper are not profitable. Some time ago you could see on social media: 'I have sacks of rice, but I don't know where to sell them. Share this info, so somebody can help me.' (…) That peasant might say next year that as nobody buys rice, they will grow coca. This becomes a circle, and we all lose trust: peasants don't believe in the government. The government doesn't believe in peasants and fumigates the fields, which destroys legal crops, so they start growing coca. Here they have grown cocoa, pepper, and malanga. There's none of that now except for cocoa. There was a centre for collection and processing those crops, but not anymore. And if levels of corruption in our society don't decrease, peace won't work. Peace can't continue. There are people making efforts. This is an effort to build peace. But these are small efforts, and our society gravitates towards other things (Antonio, schoolteacher).

I see that there is a type of consciousness in the people in the library, particularly Estela. She is the one who's always here and the people working with her. They are different from the rest the people, even teachers. They care about others and what happens to them. They are observers and engage in dialogue, which I have seen in the 7 years I have lived here. For example, my uncles live here [and experienced the conflict], but they tell you about it frivolously, in an unreflective way. So, there is no dialogue in our family, something like 'this is what happened, and we were affected in such and such a way. There is no room to think what to do next, how to build up our community. They went through it and don't say anything. If there's something in their mind, it remains unspoken. They don't do anything about it. They just keep going on as if nothing. I speak for my family. Instead, here, Estela is worried about this village on strike because of fumigations. [The government] don't commit to help the peasants, the police force may attack them, so let's better hurry up and say it on the radio and let's tell the mayor. That is to say, they are more attentive to the community, because they care, and they talk about it. You don't see that in other people because they are indifferent. So, being here [in the library] you see there are people who care, others write and talk in the radio, and that makes you acquire that level of consciousness (Diana, Library volunteer).

Now more than ever approaches that valorise ecological concerns are necessary due to the challenges of global warming. New forms of thinking that emphasise the material dimensions of social existence are not only possible, but also urgent (Cooler and Frost, 2010). Here formal education, for example, has a key role. Putumayo does not have a university, and people who want to study need to move to other regions or opt for distant or online learning – although connectivity is extremely deficient in the region –. What is more, libraries do not have materials to support university education or research. Education can contribute to bridge this gap: a university and a robust school system could articulate forms of learning, research, and entrepreneurship, where ecological concerns and approaches are at the forefront. Moreover, exchange with other higher education institutions would be beneficial for the region since it would integrate this part of the country traditionally isolated for geographical and socio-political reasons.

Seen in this light, the formal education system – if present and robust – has the challenge to mobilise itself and reach other spheres of the communities. A good example of this is how some cultural programmes from local schools and the library have involved with the communities; through theatre and communal activities people have been able to strengthen their social bonds and find non-violent modes of relation to others, but also forms of conscientisation that allow them to explore their human potential and exercise their capacity of agency. Both formal and non-formal education has the task of weaving forms of interaction with the communities and provide them with opportunities to develop their potential on cognitive and relational ways to overcome a historical and problematic money-driven mindset, which is the legacy of illicit drug dealing back in the 80s and 90s and still persistent given the difficult and not yet resolved socio-economic conditions of the region.

All this, nevertheless, presupposes two main aspects worth considering. First, a huge investment in infrastructure that will be beneficial for the communities in many senses. Forms of non-formal education here are also valuable since peasants need to find alternatives to acquire skills in relation to their work and financial education. There are centres for technical and vocational education, but the scope of these institutions and the networks to strengthen their practices and articulate productive projects is non-existent. Second, any fruitful policy

approach must necessarily listen to people's views and concerns. Also, informal learning in the form of social organisation is vital in these communities and has contributed to overcoming patterns of violence associated with macho culture and other forms of violence. In this sense, Unidad de Víctimas is an example of an effective strategy to help communities affected by the conflict. This institution has led initiatives that seek to 'understand and make integral reparation to victims,' which is an interesting point of departure that does not take for granted what those affected persons and communities need.

There are some other institutions like the Centre for Historical Memory that have provided some support and incentives to members of communities affected by conflict. However, the intermittence of such interventions and the fear that still prevails in some communities make it difficult for some people to participate actively in processes of memory, reconciliation, and reparation. Thus, these institutions have the potential to contribute to those social movements to make sense of their own exitance with some assistance and orientation without imposing views or ideological constructs. Another case in point is the question of indigenous groups who are marginalised – some more than others – and do not count on help regarding the preservation of their identity and cultural values, e.g., communities like Embera Chamí in Putumayo claim to have the rights of a territory, education, health, and access to basic goods among others. These people have historically suffered from oppression by the state and armed groups having to displace themselves and live trapped in the midst of the armed conflict:

> I went to the indigenous reserve La Argelia. Getting there is really difficult. The road is partly bumpy, and humidity makes it harder to get there. There are only two choices to get there: bus (two or three a day) and motorbike. It takes more or less 40 minutes to get there, and it takes a lot of agility to ride on that road. The reserve is fresher than the town, presumably because of the many trees around (the urban area and large areas are deforested, and cattle-breeding areas are growing). The reading programme is part of another programme that seeks to provide health assistance and nutrition. The aim of this initiative is to help the indigenous community with children's health and community education. There is a group of around 20 women and their children. They sing, read and children paint and play all

day, which happens every two weeks. There is also a follow-up process and psychologists visit homes and make sure families have wellbeing (or they do as much as they can). In this meeting the governor of the reserve talks about the need of an Embera Teacher/assistant (Embera is their language), referring to the differential approach. He argues that this would help the process because sometimes women do not speak Spanish well, and an assistant would help as a translator and facilitator of the activities (Field note).

Education policy needs to provide avenues for equal access to education and legitimization of peace materialised in concrete practices both in decision-making and implementation. For instance, according to the 2010 census, only 50,8% of the population has completed primary school; 25,8% has completed secondary school, and just 5,4% has completed higher education. Likewise, 11,4% has not completed any level of education (DANE, 2010). Increasing education coverage also presupposes a well thought planned implementation that recognises ethnic diversity and people's concerns. Thus, any effort to implement a robust and fair education system in the region has to consider cultural diversity and infrastructure (e.g., buildings, mobility, school meals, teacher training, etc.).

The Peace agreement, for example, states in its first point that peasants must legalise landownership so that taxation can be possible, which is underpinned by a vision of capitalist state-building (See Acuerdo, point 1). It is understandable that housing leads to taxation, but these communities need support on issues like financial education and perhaps more importantly, prompt governmental responses that help these communities transition towards better conditions at all levels:

'There are no opportunities for people (in rural areas). Nobody thinks of going beyond primary or perhaps secondary school. And why is that? Poor people don't have the chance to go to university. It is absurd, but can you imagine it was the dear parents who paid to teachers when we started in 'veredas'? They could afford that because of the coca business. But this is absurd since educational provision is the government's responsibility, not the peasants. The government neglect these areas, they just don't care about this place, so people here don't have access to the education they deserve' (Wilson, schoolteacher).

Finally, development programmes based on a territorial approach necessitates mechanism that ensure people's participation (See Acuerdo, point 1). Likewise, it needs to valorise and consider people's views of the world and respect their choices – whether it be industrial or territory-based forms of development. This is an enormous challenge and partly the root of the conflict itself, and educational provision and spaces of dialogue have the potential to contribute to this enormous task.

4.4.2.   Continuity in Terms of Policy Implementation

One of the main issues in relation to policy with an educational aspect and its failure is the lack of continuity of projects. The implementation and success of any policy is somehow trapped in political conjunctures, e.g., private interests, alliances, and ideological rigidities. A case in point is *Catedra para la Paz*, a law that promotes peace culture by means of transversality (See Lit. Review). The decree outlined some strategies that included school participation, human rights approaches, tackling bullying, and conflict resolution (Cf. Law 1038 of 2015; Law 1620 of 2013). However, when a new government is in place – e.g., this has been the case of policies related to bilingualism – new decrees and programmes are implemented. What seems to matter here is the so-called leadership of political figures or parties. This is profoundly problematic and perhaps not just a case of Colombia, but rather a political game. However, it is important to root policy changes not in political and temporary leaderships, but in the experience of communities.

Velásquez (2009) understands public policy as 'a process that integrates decisions, actions, inactions, agreements, and instruments undertaken by public authorities and individuals' (p. 156). In this sense, education policy that seeks to bring about change needs to be informed and produced by means of participation – local and national (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017). However, local representation seems to be absent in relation to policy making and decisions. Whereas school governance, management and involvement seem to remain contained within the boundaries of education institutions (e.g., schools and universities), decision making is exclusive of politicians who often lack the knowledge of what

happens inside the communities or the workings of education institutions and pursue their own interests.

Thus, education policy that aims at sustainable forms of peace must necessarily recognise cultural diversity, languages, issues of gendered relations, sexuality, and history of the communities (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017). Unfortunately, as Young (1999) noted about the American society, 'for many groups social equality is barely in the horizon,' which is also the case in the Colombian context; many regions struggle to preserve their traditions, indigenous languages, and cultural identities – although some groups are more solidly organised (e.g., Indigenous in Arauca, state oppression and neglect are prevalent). Thus, recognition goes hand in hand with possibilities of representation for the communities, which is materialised in spaces of equalising dialogue leaning towards decision-making. This is undoubtedly a challenge for education and policy making, but there are examples of initiatives from within formal education that valorise and respect cultural differences and have a close look at the communities and their needs (See Lit Review on Peacebuilding education). Nevertheless, political action – policy and decision making – needs to guarantee participation and redistribution of opportunities, which demands greater methodological approaches that ensure:

'the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society's major institutions, and the socially supportive substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realise their choices' (Young, 1999).

This requires, according to Rueda (2015), the creation of solid plans for educational and cultural transformation of the state bureaucracy and consolidation of networks of social sectors that work based on arguments of justice and flexibility that includes a wide range of education agents (NGOs, young people, academics, activists amongst others). In other words, this process necessitates 'people-based deliberative decision making' (Hoyos, 2012; Rueda, 2015). The challenge is then to facilitate community participation, particularly in (post)conflict zones where there is an urgent need for collective processes leaning towards reparation. For example, the Peace Agreement propose the creation of sixteen seats in the congress for victims of the conflict. they are to be democratically elected, and their participation seeks to

mitigate the effects of war and contribute to a more participatory and equality-based ethos in politics (See Acuerdo Final, point 2). However, this point of the agenda has been controversial and its implementation – as many of the points in the accord – has not happened.

Thus, policy must be informed by local needs, education agents, institutions, initiatives, and national and international discourses. Furthermore, another dimension in relation to peacebuilding is reconciliation, so policy making and implementation need to address historical and current issues of economic, social and political injustices that have caused conflict (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017). This is an enormous challenge and a historical debt if the society want to move towards forms of sustainable peace. A good example of participation is provided by Novelli (2010) when he describes the work of unions, academics and the community in the anti-privatisation struggles in Cali, Colombia. This offers a vision of what could be carried out in terms of community participation engaged with experts. Communities in former conflict zones would benefit from community councils and other sort of organisation that seeks to propose policy changes anchored to the experiences of communities – e.g., Baquero (2014) illustrates how community councils have been a powerful strategy to counteract the effects of the conflict and presence of armed groups –. However, this is not an easy task considering the ideological disputes that are still in place:

> Many people constantly try to change the social world. An explanation of their failure more plausible than that of inertia is to be found in the great number of people who are vigorously trying to frustrate social change' (Ringen 2013 quoted in Barber, 2016 p. 113).

> 'So, we wondered what this was about… as if everything was about some selective killing but never a context of conflict. And that's what we are going through right now… conflict. So, who is accountable for our killed relatives? When you start questioning this and other things you realise you could never normalise this situation. Oh, but only until it happens to some, do they really understand and stop thinking that's normal' (Gloria, Librarian).

Teaching about the conflict, its causes, the effects on the present and the challenge for the future is a necessary element in peacebuilding (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017). This is undoubtedly a difficult terrain since there is a strong ideological contestation at play. Some of the initiatives of memory work and recognition of the conflict have been partially erased from official discourses. The relevance of the quote by the librarian resides in the fact that the government in office after the peace agreement have attempted to render discourses of peace and reconciliation invisible. An example of this is the spread of the idea – by those political sectors in power – that there was never an armed conflict. This has clashed with the facts and the social mobilisations at a social, cultural, and political level (Calle Aguirre, 2020; Torrado, 2020); furthermore, the initiatives in the case of schooling are connected to subtle forms of sociality and conflict resolution, which avoid a serious approach to the causes of the conflict and how to adopt non-violent modalities (Directiva 5, marzo 5 de 2020). Thus, there are social movements and education agents working to maintain alternative discourses that give account of the conflict and propose alternatives from a critical perspective (See Spaces chapter).

Sánchez-Meertens (2017) explored school students' perception of the armed conflict. his study shows that the knowledge of the conflict from a historical point of view is limited, although socially speaking all the sectors of society have been affected to some extent. Here the political, its discontinuities and ideological and economic battles are interwoven. However, this is a part of the picture, since the institutional, i.e., schools, universities, other forms of education have the capacity to address peace despite the macrolevels. What this portrayal reveals is that there are multiple elements at play that render mechanisms for peacebuilding possible. On the one hand, the political dimension that enshrines laws and facilitates the allocation of resources, planning, and evaluation; on the other, the processes of interpretation and implementation on an everyday basis:

> Politics refers to the 'ontic' level while 'the political' has to do with the 'ontological' one. This means that the ontic has to do with the manifold practices of conventional politics, while the ontological concerns the very way in which society is instituted' (Mouffe, 2005).

Likewise, processes of redistribution, for instance, entail the analysis and examination of vertical and horizontal inequalities present in education (Novelli, Lopes-Cardozo and Smith, 2017). Furthermore, the authors illustrate how reforms and policies need to be carefully analysed to determine to what extent they are redistributive once in place. Thus, elements of recognition and representation are essential for the success of policies, but they are intertwined in the political in the double sense as stated by Mouffe (2005), i.e., it depends on the practices on the level of policy making and the institutional and particular of each context.

Following the capacity to aspire as a goal of peacebuilding education (Appadurai, 2013; See Conclusion chapter), redistribution of culture is vital in this case. Cities have traditionally enjoyed the coexistence of cultural diversity, e.g., cultural programmes, museums, sports, bilingualism programmes, among others. Former conflict zones' peacebuilding necessitates access to cultural resources, not just economic in the sense of infrastructure. This is perhaps a reminder that distinctions of education in terms of formal, informal, and non-formal are useful for some conceptual work and policy, but education in general has an enormous potential that is manifested in its diverse avenues. This is a historical debt to these communities and a key element in the construction of a society that transitions towards more sophisticated forms of conflict in which more horizontal relations are in place.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored the experiences of education agents in both formal and informal settings in La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia. After the signing of the Peace Agreement in 2016, political discourses were in favour of education as a contributing factor in peacebuilding. In this sense, the Peace agreement recognises the importance of education as a contributing factor to sustainable peace. However, despite such acknowledgement, little has been done in rural areas historically affected by conflict and state neglect. Some efforts have been efficacious in terms of education for demobilised combatants and their integration, but this is still problematic, and many ex-members of the FARC have been killed since 2016. The ideological fight reflects the convenience for some political and economic sectors that benefit from armed conflict, which is the platform to perpetuate forms of politics connected to oppression and inequality.

Education has been seen as a central element to recover rural areas, but policy making with an educational aspect or others that might strengthen the aims agreed on in the agreement are far from being a reality (See Acuerdo Final, point 1). In this study, a broad notion of education has been used to explore the scope of education – beyond the conceptual dichotomy – in relation to peacebuilding (Cf. Foley, 1999; Novelli, 2010). In what follows, I present the conclusions of the study and some methodological and conceptual limitations. Finally, I suggest areas for future research into a vast and rich field of peacebuilding and education.

5.1. Peace from Multiple Voices

Colombia has lived more than five decades of conflict rooted in issues of inequality and ideological rigidities, which has caused more than 8 million victims (Unidad de Victimas, 2016). This is the result of enduring continuities from colonial times in which a clear divide between Indigenous and Afro descendants and Spaniards and Criollos has (re)produced a system of exclusion and oppression that refuses to cease up to this date. New faces, new social structures and social dynamics mimic the injustice of colonial times, while condemning generations of people to poverty and violence. However, in the face of war and oppression,

many voices raise and dare to think of possible worlds in which exclusion is overcome and replaced by fairer and non-violent modalities.

It is in the context of conflict that education agents – although not exclusively – exercise their critical capacities: they read social realities, its challenges and power relations (Giroux, 2011). What follows is reflection and action, which is mediated by the word (Freire, 2017). Thus, education settings constitute powerful scenarios where people have the opportunity to own their humanity; teachers, librarians and social actors have the enormous potential and strength to create relational spaces that prefigure and constitute non-violent alternatives, but also opportunities for better conflicts and the construction of other forms of being oneself and with others (Cf. Freire, 2017; Taylor, 1992; Zuleta, 2011). This is not always easy, because education can also be a 'place' where inequalities and discrimination are perpetuated (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Colombia is not the exception, forms of discrimination based on education, place of origin and race are still in place, which poses a big challenge in light of the so-called and long-sought peace. Furthermore, it is often the case that educational settings experience contestation; there are people who believe and act on possibilities of change, while others do nothing or discredit any effort towards social change. This is however, as Freire (2017) noted, the consequence of internalised oppression refusing new forms of being outside the status quo.

The dominance of the global discourses on peace often renders local experiences, concerns, and needs invisible. Methodological approaches informed by global and even national notions of peace are often connected to state-building, security, and liberal democracy, which fails to reconcile with the views of peoples deeply affected not only by armed conflicts, but also by structural violence rooted in time (Cf. Bell, 2003; Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Visoka and Richmond, 2016; Richmond, 2006; 2010; 2013; 2014; Richmond and Mitchell, 2012; kjelsbæk and Smith, 2001). In the context of this research, some understandings of peace were revealed by education agents working in both formal and informal settings.

My methodological approach, critical and multi-sited ethnography, allowed me to explore three main locales: schools, the local library, and social movements (women's

associations). Those three education settings revealed a multiplicity of understandings and practices informed by both their experience of the conflict, their critical awareness and – to some extent – outside discourses on peace, whether as a response or as an insight. Peace is spatialised and actualised in practices inside schools, local libraries, and organisations, but are also mobilised to other places where remote communities are listened to and supported. This is a conceptual element that was explored in this research and has potentially more elements for future research: spatialising peacebuilding. This gives account of a multiplicity of elements that interact leaning towards peace(building) in the realm of education. In the theoretical considerations of this study, I presented an attempt to conceptualise space in relation to peacebuilding education by providing ontological and epistemological reflections on space (Lefebrve, 1991; Harvey, 2006; Soja, 1989; Massey, 1994). This has been pertinent in that it offers a visual representation – by means of a matrix gathering two modes of presenting space (Lefebrve, 1991; Harvey, 2006; See also Robertson, 2010) – that widely illustrates the many elements, process, and people that partake in such process (See Lit Review).

Such conceptualisation has been helpful to understand the activities, discursive practices and their effects across space and time in the communities of La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia. My research revolves around the question of space and time: my participants' accounts tell stories situated in the middle of the conflict, at the moment of the research -e.g., observations and focus groups addressed this temporality -, and with the future in sight. In this sense, the construction of my themes in the findings section responds to both my theoretical reflections and my participants' input. Following this, *peace* is understood as the return of people's voice, recognition of human dignity, emancipatory action, and determined by material factors (See Discussion chapter). Such visions of peace are created and rehearsed in relational spaces that allow people to express their views and concerns and make sense of their existence (Freire, 2017; Taylor, 1990). The word constitutes a powerful tool through which *what is* moves towards what *could be*, i.e., people are invited to co-create non-violent modalities and while exercising their capacity to aspire (Appadurai, 2013).

In contexts of conflict what prevails is silence and scarcity – both material and cultural. Formal and informal forms of education create spaces where people have access to new

forms of understanding themselves and the world, mediated by cultural elements and dialogue. Thus, people's voice is encouraged to manifest itself and enter a dialogue with others, which restores the image of the marginalised and restore non-violent channels of communication and cooperation. Here consensus and dissensus are accepted and necessary, i.e., there is a transition towards better conflicts that is rehearsed (Zuleta, 2011). This configures dynamic relations in which human dignity comes first. As a result, not only is diversity accepted, but also necessary, and creative forms of expression – arts, sports, memory, literacy, spoken word – consolidate non-violent modalities that vindicate the humanity of oppressed communities and open up possibilities outside the rigidities of violence and political ideologies.

It is in the word and action that change starts to happen (Freire, 2011). It is through dialogue with oneself and others that imposed images of the social and the oppressed are called into question, which subverts the status quo. Once human relations begin to be restored, children, young people, adults, and the elderly are able to exchange ideas and articulate alternatives that resist any systemic project of violence, which is contained and specialised in varied forms of activities and knowledge production, e.g., a wide range of work on literacy, educational activities, artistic and cultural expression, memory work, political participation, social activism, and entrepreneurial initiatives, among others. Likewise, there is a material dimension embedded in peacebuilding. It is the conjunction of material factors, policies, discourses, networks, human experiences, and the non-human that renders peacebuilding possible. As Escobar (2018) put it, it is legitimate – and in this light pertinent – 'to conceive of reality as a compound of networks, actors-nets, assemblings, where the human and non-human interact in intricate and ever-changing ways in the sociocultural arena.'

Bush and Saltarelli (2000) outline the goals of peacebuilding education based on local experiences that illustrate the potential of education – but also its risks if not done well. The authors identified seven goals:

'demilitarization of the mind,

problematization,

articulation of alternatives,

changing the rules of the game,

delegitimation of violent force as a means of addressing problems,

re-membering and re-weaving the social and anthropological fabric, and

nurturing non-violent, sustainable modalities of change' (p. 27-31).

This study intends to contribute to this debate presented twenty years ago. There are new elements provided by local contexts and their peacebuilding efforts. In light in this research, some goals are present in their educational actions and pedagogies:

(Re)humanisation of the mind: persons do not always militarise their minds when living in zones of war. People's responses are varied; many of the actions and ideas underpinning pedagogies of peace reveal the need to restore confidence since oftentimes people experience resentment, mistrust, fear, and silence to protect their lives. More than a warlike mindset, what needs to be recovered is the capacity to use voice and listen to others' voice. As simple as it might sound, it is a *sine qua non* of peace (See Galtung, 2011; Freire, 2017). Once people have the capacity to use their voice and listen to that of others, there are opportunities for self-reflection and dialogue, which constitutes an important part of the human dimension: in relational dynamics with others, we (re)discover our identities and make sense of ourselves (Cf. Taylor, 1990). For instance, rural schools have carried out activities with the communities in which people have the possibility to encounter their neighbours. This is disruptive in that it helps people restore bonds of trust and respect and, in the context, it has been an initiative to tackle paramilitary action and killing of civilians (See Spaces of Adulthood). People learned others' names which created a sense of recognition towards others in an environment dominated by silence.

Appropriation of human dignity: while it is still relevant to think of articulation of alternatives as a goal of peacebuilding education, it is also necessary to explore the dimension of human dignity as an explicit and direct goal. Some of the current conflicts in Colombia, for instance, are conditioned by issues of illicit drugs and economic imperatives that positions an instrumental view of material possessions over human and non-human life. Thus, human dignity needs to be a goal constantly worked at, which implies addressing issues of

discrimination, gender, religious beliefs, social class, and a purely instrumental materiality. The local library exemplifies forms of recognition of human dignity. It is a place where people are welcome irrespective of any category that could serve as a pretext to discriminate. There is clear rejection to war and weapons, for example, but the emphasis is more on the acceptance of people for their humanity. Such outspoken acceptance implies a two-way process: a sense of community is fostered, and persons are invited to accept themselves and others beyond differences of any kind.

Capacity to aspire: any armed conflict deprives people of opportunities to live their lives with dignity, which also includes material and non-material elements that are curtailed. For example, the Colombian conflict reveals and is caused by the injustices and inequalities mainly – although not exclusively – in rural areas. What becomes immediately available is a normalisation of logics of war and aggression that are often accepted or tolerated – some other times it is the cause of displacement of people to urban centres –. A goal of peacebuilding education is, given the contexts of sociocultural and economic deprivation, to nurture not only non-violent modalities, but also the capacity of persons to aspire to new worlds in which they are co-creators (Appadurai, 2013). Such capacity needs to be provided by means of cultural, educational, and relational inputs that motivate sustainable forms of change. This capacity is also disruptive and critical as it seeks to subvert poverty and marginalisation. Although there are structures of oppression, there is also potential to undermine the effects of institutionalised violence and marginalisation (Cf. Young, 1999). An example of this is the use of theatre; some schools have created theatre groups, which has been a platform for school students to travel to other regions of the country and know other people, forms of producing art, new languages, and diverse professional and vocational paths. This has motivated students to look for alternatives beyond what is offered in their immediate context and overcome cycles of violence and poverty.

A very important aspect – a critical one – is the realm of policy making. The peace agreement stated the importance of creating strategies to mitigate the impact on the conflict whereby plans of action in areas such as agriculture, health, education, and political participation among many others (Acuerdo Final, 2016). The implementation, however, has been highly contested as there are political sectors that have traditionally benefited from the

conflict. The (post)conflict areas are still neglected, and the new challenges emerge from the void left by the FARC, the presence of dissidents, illicit drugs, and criminal groups. This study has analysed the importance of assuming the role of education in peacebuilding beyond traditional assumptions of education in terms of schooling and vocational training. It is necessary to create an education system that offers school, university, vocational training, and forms of community learning articulated to the needs of the communities. To do that, the state needs to guarantee resources allocation and administration. Additionally, policy making has to endure administrations and 'temporary political leaderships.' This is possible if people are involved in decision making processes. For example, the final agreement states that there must be eights seats in the congress for victims of the conflict who are to be democratically elected. An initiative of this kind is pertinent but has met huge resistance by some radical political sectors.

6.2. Lessons, Limitations of the study, and Areas for Future Research

In what follows I intend to address some of the lessons I have learned from this research journey. First, I present some considerations on methodological aspects and what lessons I keep for future research. I also reflect on the writing process of this thesis and some elements that were relevant in terms of the decisions I made throughout. Then, I present some of the limitations of this study and how I came to terms with them while learning. Finally, I reflect on possible new paths for future research.

When I was at secondary school, my Spanish language teacher shared an essay he had written about humanizing research (*investigación humanizante*). I do not remember the essay lines, but the little kept resonating for a long time. Twenty years later I found myself conducting research in a (post)conflict zone and the words from that title that had installed in my mind would make sense. The first lesson – or perhaps a reaffirmation – is that social science research needs to be underpinned by a profound respect for humankind. It is necessary to rethink the idea of studying people as if they were objects (Molano, 2001) – e.g., Santos (2015) speaks of human rights as a discourse that has assumed people of objects of study –. I presented myself as a learner/researcher and this helped me establish a positive rapport with participants.

However, such a process takes time and other lessons have arrived. In my pursuit of what I considered 'good quality data,' there were a couple of times in which I tacitly thought some conversations were not providing substantial input or that they were contradicting other information I have previously found. A second approach to that 'data' with humbleness helped me understand what I was missing. I learned to listen to people, which constitutes an action that helps enter a more human dimension of our existence. I encountered otherness beyond political views, contradictory positions, and histories. This is a lesson I treasure and hope to keep cultivating such understanding in my daily experience of being in the world with others.

La Hormiga, Putumayo, Colombia is a region with valuable lessons to when approaching peacebuilding education. Many initiatives come from the will of people who decide to stand up in the face of adversity and go against the odds. Those efforts are rooted in a profound belief that human and non-human life supersede warlike, individual, or corporate interests. Notions of ecology, for instance, circulate and actualise in practices that prefigure new modes of understanding and interacting with others and nature. In everyday conversations, some of my participants would say that peace is found in the smile of children, which understandably translated into playgrounds in which children were invited to reinhabit their childhood and abandon the rigid logics of war, where there is no space for tenderness and spontaneity. The generosity of people when telling their stories is unbounded, which is compelling in times when people reveal hurtful stories. There were times when silence, as a gesture of respect, was more than enough, or the only resource available. Gratitude then moved me to keep talking about their enormous effort to make this region a place where peace inhabits and constantly reinvents itself in the voices and hands of people.

One of the questions I asked my participants was what they would recommend to people working on peacebuilding education. Now I take turn to answer this question about conducting research on peacebuilding: I think it is important to listen actively and engage in respectful dialogue, which in turn constitutes the possibility of being. I noticed my participants were expecting me to teach them how to do things. Although I appreciate their openness to receive training and guidance, I also think some NGOs, researchers, and policy makers do not

fully understand that people working on peace in the territories of conflict have a lot to tell us. They have made sense of their current situations and their place in the world in manners that people of out situations of adversity – in terms of war – do not experience.

The writing process was enriching on many levels. Listening to the conversations, transcribing, and translating was a task that implied intense listening. There was a sort of appropriation of the conversations to the extent that some of the ideas resonated with meaning during the writing of this thesis. It was during that process that some of my assumptions were debunked. I found contradictions and tensions to be a vital part of peacebuilding. As the Colombian Philosopher Estanislao Zuleta (2017) suggested in 'In Praise of War', what constitutes a mature society is the capacity to move towards better conflicts. I found this in the making in La Hormiga: new conflicts, better conflicts are taking place. It is still a huge task, but the efforts of people are bearing fruit already. However, those contradictions have nurtured my understanding of how peace is thought of and enacted.

In one of the supervisions meetings, I presented a version of the limitations of my study in which I described the reduced scope of research. I explained that the scope of my research was reduced as this is an ethnographic study. I had access to three locales and, whereas I had first-hand information from my participants, there is many schools I did not have access to. This is a limitation in that those other institutions constitute contexts with their own experiences and lessons to offer. However, it is also part of my methodological design and a constitutive feature of ethnographic work. Thus, I acknowledge this can be conceived as a limitation, but I also respect my methodological choices. I do not intend to generalise, but rather explore and learn from the people I encountered and the diversity and energy of their actions and struggle. This has allowed me to reflect on how education constitutes a powerful tool to contribute to peace-building processes.

During the fieldwork experience, I found some tensions and contradictory views on peace that are worth exploring in more detail. For example, I noticed a deeply gender-oriented conception of peace in women's associations, and quite rightly so considering the oppression women have suffered from various fronts: state, armed groups, and macho culture. The idea that peace has a female's face is both fascinating and worth questioning. I

found that many women disagree with such a notion and their view is as valid as the well-established feminine face of peace. Some educators advocate a rather degenderized character of peace that appeals to the human and non-human. I am interested to explore conceptions of gender and peace and how it is negotiated, constructed and the contradictions thereof.

Another element that draws my attention is the realm of policy making and implementation in relation to (peacebuilding) education. In this study, I explored notions of policy in terms of definition, implementation, and the material impact. I have come across theoretical considerations on new materialism that suit this theme; I also included some of those reflections in the discussion section, which was useful to link my participants' input to theoretical debates. The 4 Rs is a good conceptual framework that I attempted to use in the discussion chapter (Novelli, Lopes-Cardoso and Smith, 2017). I also think that such an approach is worth exploring with methodological approaches to policy making and evaluation, but also a necessary dimension that must be widely open: political participation for the communities. This is a process that is happening in many places now since some communities and groups do not feel represented by political parties now. This is an interesting phenomenon that is connected to issues of social justice.

Taking a brief look back to twenty years ago, the idea of humanising research – *investigación humanizante* – resonates with more meaning and experiences now. I have learned countless lessons on many levels. I went to La Hormiga and encountered lots of people who taught me valuable lessons of perseverance, ecological commitment, respect for human dignity and strength in the face of adversity. A very stoic approach was indeed in front of me, and a sense of hope that is realistic and therefore tirelessly active. I am honoured to share this experience with my readers, students, friends, and people who ask me with interest. The humanising character of such education I witnessed – and received as well – in my fieldwork is now an invitation for me to do my share.

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Appendix A: Letter to Gatekeepers

Enero 21 de 2019

Sr. Álvaro Sánchez:
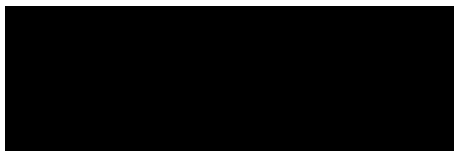Coordinador Opción Legal
Colombia

Mi nombre es Raul Yesid Páez Cubides, soy candidato al doctorado en educación de la universidad Bath Spa en el Reino Unido. Mi tesis doctoral gira en torno a la ecología de comprensiones de paz desde agentes educativos en la zona del Putumayo, puntualmente del valle del Guamuez. Asimismo, desarrollo mi trabajo en torno a consideraciones de justicia social y un modelo de paz que involucra cuatro elementos (Redistribución, Reconocimiento, Representación y Reconciliación) propuesto por Mario Novelli en 20016.

Tal y como lo expuse en nuestra conversación la semana pasada, para mi trabajo es de vital importancia contar con la orientación inicial y apoyo de agentes educativos que hayan trabajado en el área y que posean una vasta experiencia en el campo que intento desarrollar. Por esta razón, solicito poder contar con su ayuda en esta etapa inicial de mi exploración. Estoy seguro de que su orientación y experiencia me brindarán la posibilidad de realizar una aproximación pertinente y bien informada, además de toda la información que me puedan proporcionar.

Adjunto a este documento encontrará un breve resumen en español de mi trabajo y el documento presentado a la universidad como parte de mi evaluación de primer año.
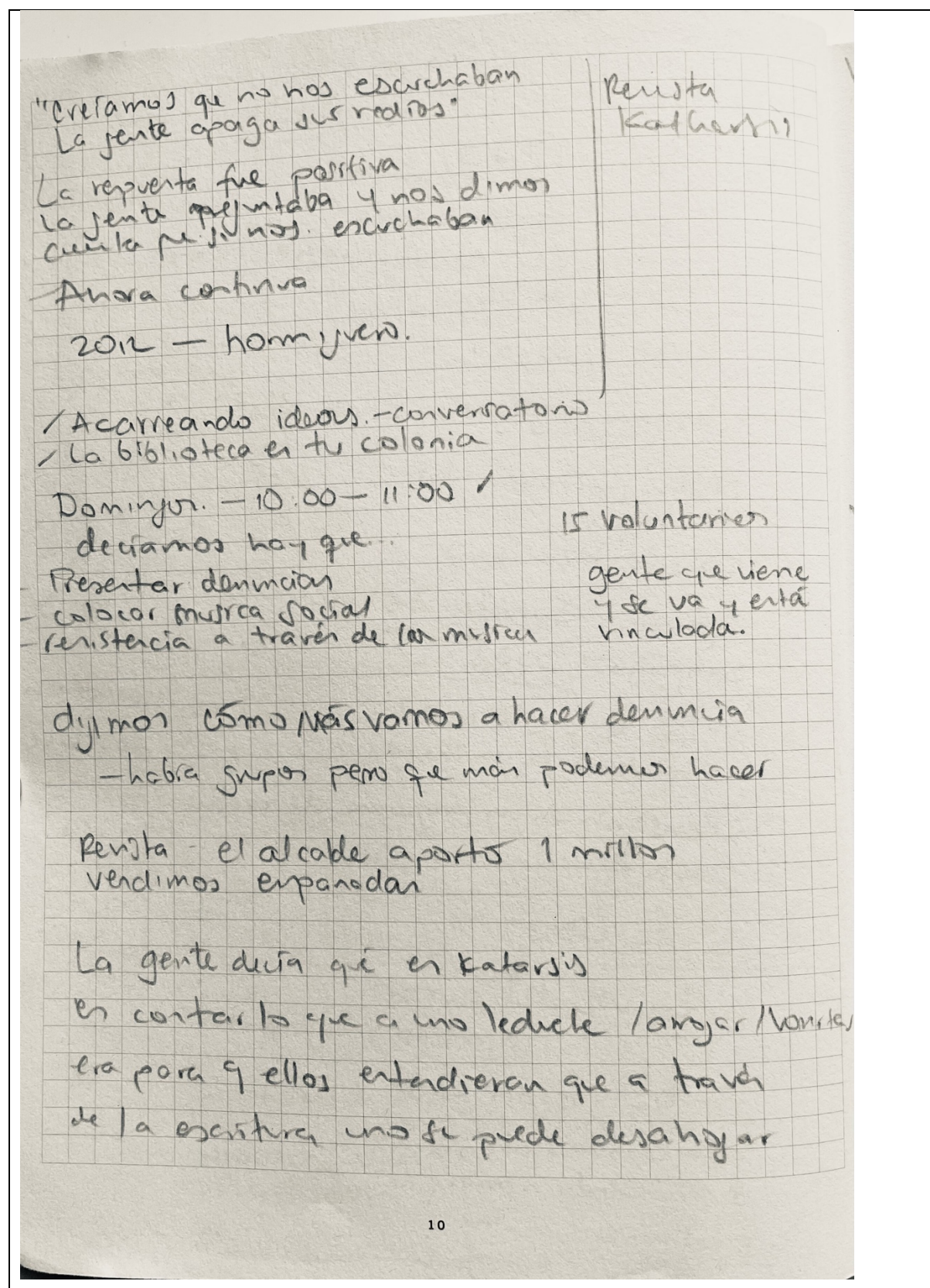
Agradezco la atención prestada y su ayuda para que yo pueda realizar mi trabajo.

Saludos cordiales,

Raúl Yesid Páez Cubides
Candidato a Ph.D.
Universidad Bath Spa

Appendix B: Field notes

"Creíamos que no nos escuchaban
La gente apaga sus medios"

Revista
Katharsis

La respuesta fue positiva
La gente preguntaba y nos dimos
cuenta que sí nos escuchaban

Ahora continúa

2012 — hom y ven.

/ Acarreando ideas -conversatorio
/ La biblioteca en tu colonia

Domingos. — 10:00 — 11:00 /
  decíamos hoy que...
- Presentar denuncia
- colocar música social
- resistencia a través de las música

15 voluntarios

gente que viene
y se va y está
vinculada.

dijimos cómo más vamos a hacer denuncia

  —habra grupos pero que más podemos hacer

Revista - el alcalde aportó 1 millón
  vendimos empanadas

La gente decía que en katarsis
en contar lo que a uno le duele / amgar/ ronster
era para q ellos entendieran que a través
de la escritura uno se puede desahogar

10

Maravelez

guerrilla y 64.

64. 2003 3 Feb - Paramilitares → Pensaban que
El juevo   hubiera alejado.
Unidad de Victimas   mataron al
                  Presidente — [Rector]
                         ↓
Vereda el cruze entre   Juramento
maraveles y paraiso
   Paramilitar vela

• Reinado — hay que crear una estrategia para
              conocernos
            campeonato 6 veredas
            micro femenino y masculino

Reinado ecologico   2005
Para la integracion   — desfile de candidatas
maravelense   — descripcion

                        * Colegio hizo que
   — niñas   los lideres de
   — mamitas   las veredas se
   — vestidos   asociaran
   — nos centrabamos en
   el vestido
   — campeonato relampago

   — Hubo ocasiones en que la
   violencia / recursos economicos

   no nos dejan

2001 Proyecto transversal de paz
Juegos belico
gestion de riesgo — Opcion legal. naturaleza
              29
   — simulacro. no se inmutaban

Luz Enerda   25 anñ.

— había que ganarse la confianza.
= era normativo enseñar gramática
— a meterme más en el contexto

↙ conocerlos
⇙ el nombre
— sus familias y situaciones

2001.

"Droga"
guerra
conflicto

Parte de
coca
Cocaína
Narco   Escuela <———> escuela
                                         espacios diferentes

El desfile de flora y fauna
— Nocturno 94/95
hombres parados al frente de
la escuela. Hombres escuchaban
las clases

→ 'espacio de
reconocimiento'
→ la anécdota de
la epístola
— Dhablar escucharlo
10 m.

— La guerrilla ~~tomaba~~ usaba
las instalaciones. Ellos tenían
que salir temprano

— La guerrilla / Los paras
              SS' influencia
— Imaginación y el asombro (perdieron esa capacidad)
(desconexión) — no dibujan / no pintan

X un estudiante / flia disfuncional / con imaginación
le dije: 'te están explotando'
lo hice leer ~~Garcia~~ El Quijote (estaba en décimo)
La historia lo conmovió. Le gustó el lenguaje

El estado estuvo ausente. Lo más cerca era
la secretaria de educación anualmente.

41

Reconstruyamos esto, pero nunca lo hicimos.

Appendix C: Interview preparation (Some notes)

Interviewing

What is seen, heard, and experienced in the field, these are 'the nuggets around which you construct your questions'

> -Corrine Glesne, Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An introduction (1999).

The Patton Model (Soyini, 2012 p. 31):
1. Behaviour or experience questions: it is about asking not for the why but (more) information on action or behaviour. *Can you describe other ways of behaviours in which it is evident the normalisation of war by students/people? (Library) Can you describe*
2. Opinion or Value questions address a conviction, judgement or belief: e.g. *in your opinion, what is the value of this initiative? How does it help students/the community change their contexts? What changes have you seen in the community since you started working on…?*
3. Feeling questions address emotions, sentiments and passions (how do you feel about…?): e.g. *how do you feel about…?*
4. Knowledge questions, e.g. *what do you think are the main obstacles to the work do you? How would it be more effective?*
5. Sensory questions address the senses and human sensations
6. Background/demographic questions: e.g. *what is the social background of students in this school? How about students from other schools you've work for?*

The Spradley Model
1. Descriptive questions
   - Tour questions e.g. *Can you describe how you teachers work on school elections? /Can you describe how you work on mediation and other strategies to mitigate violence at school?*
   - Example questions e.g. *Can you recount an example of*
   - Experience questions: e.g. *how do you feel about it? (Experience recounted)*
2. Structural or explanation questions: e.g. *can you help me understand how you came up with the idea of the pageant? (School)*
3. Contrast questions
   - The use principle
   - The similarity principle
   - The contrast principle

More models
1. Advice question: e.g. *what advice would you give to other libraries that have similar contexts? How can they help their communities?*
2. Quotation question
3. Once-Upon-A-Time descriptive question: e.g. *would you tell the story about the radio programme?*

Initial brainstorming and puzzlements
Reread your questions and problem → If this is what I am to understand, then what is it that I need to know about it to answer the questions and address the problem?

Lofland and Lofland (1984): what is it about this thing that is a puzzle to me? What is it that I see before me?

Kvale (1996): seven stages of an interview investigation
1 thematizing
2 designing
3 interviewing
4 transcribing
5 analysing
6 verifying
7 reporting

Ethics form:

- **Unstructured interviews:** interviewing implies a dialogue in which the researcher and the interviewee construct memory, meaning and experience together (Soyini, 2012). This is particularly relevant to my research insofar as I am looking to investigate <u>education agents' perspectives on peace and the potential of education in the construction of **just peace**</u>. I understand that interviewees are subjects with agency, history and their own command of a story (Soyini, 2012), therefore interviewing constitutes itself a good channel to my participants' views.

  I will have dialogues with my participants in which they will have the opportunity to position themselves. I am aware of power dynamics that may emerge in the interviewing process and the research engagement in general. In this sense, my own process as a researcher will be supported by constant reflection (reflective journal keeping, readings, tutorials with my supervisor and guidelines as appropriate) that will remind me of <u>my role as an active listener</u>. I will bear in mind that my participants are subjects with a historical self, with a presence in and of a particular world. I will witness my participants' discourses and practices and so will they, that is, my research will create the space for them to acknowledge, *'I am in the world under particular conditions that are constructed and thereby open to greater possibility'* (Soyini, 2012). For example, if a participant wants to share a story with me, I will make room for a conversation and be attentive and assertive in my responses.

  I will follow participants' cues and directions in order to cover diverse topics and demographics, as I regard my participants as part of other webs and therefore citizens with the potential for collective and involved action (Soyini, 2012); interviews here are synonyms with conversations and will be serendipitous and organic. However, interviews are anchored in a clear methodology and theoretical reflection that will orientate my research.

I am about to start the interview process. So far I have had interesting and open conversations with the library staff and volunteers (a social worker student, an assistant, the librarian and a psychologist). These conversations have been fruitful since they have provided me with interesting cues and information that helps me get a better picture of 1) what the library has done regarding peace initiatives and 2) how they themselves have faced the conflict on a personal and communal way. All this has given me the opportunity to think of initial questions for the interviews.

I have been given the opportunity to do activities regarding the reading programme and a workshop with schoolteachers on 'the use of short stories as a pedagogical tool'. These activities and conversations have helped me reinforce the idea of the 'multiple' in my research: including people from different education backgrounds and life experiences who would

normally be not listened to. These conversations have been based on listening to their stories and acknowledging their efforts to contribute to peace building in the community. They have also provided cues for me to think of questions for the interview, although I have also asked questions in our conversations, which has been useful because they have noticed I appreciate their work and see the value of their initiatives.

Taken from Sherman, B. 2001, Ethnographic interviewing, in Atkinson, P. et al., (2001) Handbook of Ethnography. Sage: London

Levels of empowerment of interviewing

Informants and Reporters

Research Collaborators

Learner/Actor and Advocates

'The researcher as advocate promotes the interests of those connected to their projects (Erikson, 1976; Mies, 1983). This shift allows the interviewees numerous opportunities to benefit directly from their involvement in the research through <u>learning more about their circumstances, including possible alternatives to their situation, and then acting on this new awareness.</u> 'Participatory action research', as well as emancipatory research in feminist and critical ethnography are several forms of research where the researcher's efforts are focused on empowering individuals involved in their projects (Carpecksen, 1996; Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994; Lather, 1991; Reason, 1994; Roman, 1993; Thomas, 1993; Whyte et al., 1989).

Appendix D: Interview transcripts and translation (Sample)

Entrevista en la biblioteca. 06/03/19.	**Extract from an interview at the librarian. 06.03.19.**
En nuestra conversación hablamos de la normalización de la guerra…	
Gloria: yo creo que como persona consciente diría de hechos uno se indigna siempre le duele. El hecho de que uno se indigne y le duele no quiere decir que uno la normalice así tanto. Pero sí el hecho de que tiene que quedarse callado porque puede ser que sea su familar el que siga o uno mismo (…)	
Aunque no la normalice es.. uno dice, ah aquí es común decirlo así, pero sí como que uno por miedo calla. Y no se atreve a muchas cosas y lo otro como lo evidencié de cómo la comunidad lo hacía en muchos casos o cada vez que se escuchaba que murieron tantos, murió uno o como está pasando en esto momento que son escasos lo días que no haya muertos y eso está pasando en este momento, y la gente su decir 'ah no, por algo ha de ser, en algo debe andar metido y entonces así están justifcando a quién matan y uno dice eso es empezar a normalizar y decir si está metido en algo que así sea para uno cuando son los familiares que caen ahí porque yo le conté que tenía un hermano que también mataron los paramilitares y amigos pues también no solamente por paramilitares sino también por la guerrilla uno dice bueno si la gente dice por algo a mí ese algo no justifica que le quiten la vida. Y quizas los demos lo suponon o lo saben pero uno sabe qué es ese algo, entonces uno dice bueno cual fue ese algo y nadie se lo responde.	Although you don't normalise this, you say, 'Oh, here it is common to say that,' and you go quiet for fear. So you don't dare too much. And the other thing is, the community did this many times, let's say when you heard that many were killed, or one, or as it is happening now that there is no day that somebody isn't killed… And this is happening now. And what people say is 'oh, well, there must be a reason, they must have been up to something, so in doing this they justify the killer, so you say that's how you start normalising things and saying that it is alright if the person was involved in something. But when it somebody from your family who's killed –I told you I had a brother who was killed by the paramilitary and friends as well not only by the paramilitary, but by the guerrilla. So you say, 'If people say there's something (behind the killing), to me 'that something does not justify assessination.' And perhaps other people know why, but you don't know why. Then you ask why and nobody answers.
Entonces yo decía bueno los demás lo normalizan pero cuando le toca a uno jamás lo puede aceptar y es duro cuando entonces cuando ya tenemos un poco de conciencia sabemos como fue esa guerra, esa guerra que incluso ahorita yo creo que desde este mismo gobierno quiere decir que nunca hubo conflicto en colombia, que lo que hablan los medios de esa guerra interna que	We said ok, everybody normalises this, but when it happens to you it is impossible to accept it, that is hard. But when we are a bit more conscious, we know what the war was like. Even now this new government want to pretend there was no conflict in Colombia, so what the media show did not ever exist. So, what was all that then? (A child interrupts asking for help since there is

hubo eso nunca existió y entonces qué era lo que pasaba [a child interrupts asking for a computer with internet connection] sí entonces qué era lo que pasaba dice uno y siempre le queda a uno como esas cosas o sea que lo que pasó fue como una muerte como muy selectiva y no era en un contexto de guerra que se está viviendo en colombia. ¿Entonces quién nos va a responder ahora por esos familares? Entonces cuando uno empieza a hacer esa cantidad de preguntas uno dice: no, tal vez uno nunca pudo como normalizarlo. Pero sí hay muchos que hasta que no les toque es como 'ah eso es común' Otra cosa que la gente decía… Y yo creo que ya le te habré contado por ahí… hubo una fiesta ah no pero es que ni siquiera muertos hubo… ¡Imaginate! En carnavales, en fin de año, decían: 'ah estuvieron mala porque ni siquiera muertos hubo. Ah? Esa era una cosa que la gente estaba como tan acostumbrada a mirar eh, mirar que de pronto caía alguien o le pasó alguién allí, se pusieron a pelear, le dispararon pasó algo no eso Y llega y decir, bueno recójalo y la fiesta sigue para mí eso es normalizar la guerra. O sea si yo soy conciente este no es lugar para mí.

Un trabajo de conscientización…
En primer lugar con el grupo amigos de la biblioteca fue hacer una actividad en el parque de desarme de juguetes bélicos invitar a los niños a jugar. Los niños que iban tenían que llevar su juguete belico, su arma de juego y depositar en un costal antes de pasar por un tunel hecho de costales y los niños pasaban por ese tunel. Al entrar al tunel tenían que entregar su arma y al pasar los recibíamos con un aplauso, con un fresco, un arroz con leche, e invitarlos a jugar. Ese era nuestro proceso y de ahí en adelante fue a través del programa de radio diciéndoles a los padres que si ibamos a regalar algo no alimentemos más la guerra. O sea regalemos algo que sea últil. Su niño siempre se hace una imagen de lo que le dan y lo que le dicen. Los niños siempre tenían la costumbre de jugar al policía o al guerrillero o al ladrón, al bueno al malo y

no internet connection)… So, we wondered what this was about… as if everything was about some selective killing but never a context of conflict. And that's what we are going through right now… conflict. So, who is accountable for our killed relatives? When you start questioning this and other things you realise you could never normalise this situation. Oh, but only until it happens to some, do they really understand and stop thinking that's normal. I think I told you this before… people used to say, 'There was a party, but nobody was killed' Just imagine! In the carnivals or New Year's Eve people used to say, 'Oh, it was bad because there wasn't anyone killed.' Can you imagine? It was so common to see someone fallen on the street, people fighting or shootings, and people just said, 'Ok, collect them and the party goes on.' That was never normal for me. I mean if I am conscious this is not a place for me.

Gloria: With the group of friends of the library, we did an activity in the park to encourage children to give up their toy weapons and play instead. The children who went had to take their toy weapon with them and put into a bag before they passed through a tunnel made out of 'fique' bags. They would give up their toy and we waited for them at the end of the tunnel with a round of applause, a drink, rice pudding, and then we played with them. That was our process and from that moment onwards we had the radio programme in which we told parents to give their children something that did not fuel conflict. I mean, let's give something that's useful. Your child always gets an idea of that they're given and what they're told. Children always used to play the cop, the guerrilla member, or the thief… the bad and the good, and it was normal for them to have a toy sword, a toy gun, and

parq ellos era como muy normal que lleven su espada, su escopeta y entonces no uno decía si los veo les cambio su juguete por… y aquí a la biblioteca también venían los niños con su arma de juguete en el bolsillo. O uno los miraba bueno en la biblioteca no nos gusta la guerra ni en juego ni de verdad. Por lo tanto, eh… yo te voy a decomisar esta arma y si viene tu papá(mamá) te la entrego. De lo contrario, yo te leo un cuento, te regalo un dulce o te enseño un juego a cambia de esa arma.

Y cómo reaccionaban los chicos… Hubo algunos que se enojaban, entonces vaya a su casa y deja su arma y regresa. De lo contrario, si pasas del portón hacia acá, acá mandamos nosotros. Era como decirles, como que aquí nosotros somos los grandes y estamos mandando y estamos sentando nuestra (opinión) que eso es como maluco pero lo hacíamos así. Entonces, ve y deja tu arma en la casa que allá sí te la admiten, pero acá en la biblioteca no la admitimos. Entonces algunos lo que hacían era ir a esconderla, otro no. (otros) me la entregaban. Los niños siempre volvían, los niños no son resentidos. O sea que uno diga que un niño se fue y nunca volvió no! (Volvían) porque uno les planteaba otras opciones como que juguemos, te enseño un juego, mira hay otros chicos, miremos una pelicula, cosas de ese estilo. Hay niños que vienen a buscar una película de guerra y uno les dice eso no es para niños, cortemos acá esta película y yo te muestro opciones. Y si eran niños grandes bueno mijo eso lo puede ver en su casa puede buscarse otro lugar. Los más grandes sí tienden a enojarse, así como ellos dicen esas cuchas sí cansan pero uno luego les explicaba. Pero hubo niños que recuerdo mucho.. uno llegaba a la biblioteca a pelear, a quitarle las cosas (a otros), a molestar y yo lo regañaba y ahora me lo encuentro y me dice gracias profe de usted aprendí mucho -dice-. Usted me enseñó a ser sociable, porque en la casa era normal agarrarme a cada momento con mis hermanos, pero en la biblioteca ud no me dejaba pelear. Y el día que yo peleaba ud ni

then we said, 'No, if I see them [with toy weapons], I will swap the toy for…[pauses]' And children used to come with their toy guns in the pocket. And we looked at them [and said], *'Well, in the library, we don't like war either in play or in reality. Therefore, erm, I am going to seize this toy gun. If your parent comes for it, I will return it. Alternatively, I could read a story for you, I could give you a sweet or teach you a game in exchange for that toy gun.*

Yesid: How did children react? **Gloria:** Some children got upset. [I said] *'So, go home and leave your toy gun and come back. So, if you come here, we set the rules.'* It was like saying, 'here we are the grownups, we set the rules and we have ours [beliefs], which was sort of wrong, but we did it that way. [We said,] *'So, leave your toy gun at home as it is ok there, but we do not accept it in the library.'* Some children used to hide their toy, some others didn't. [Some children] gave it to me. Children always came back because children are not resentful. We can't say that a child went away and never came back; they always did because we always proposed alternatives… things like 'let's play'; 'I can teach you game'; 'look! there are other children, let's watch a film, things like that. There are children who come to see a film about war, and we say, 'That's not a film for children. Let's stop this film now and I will show you some other options.' And if they were youngsters, 'Ok, you can watch that film in your house or find another place.' Youngsters tend to get upset and they say, 'Oh those old ladies are so annoying.' But then we had to explain, but I remember children. There was one child who used to come to the library to fight and take things away from other children. And I used to tell him off and now we bump into each other and he says to me, *'Thank you, teacher. I learned from you.'* He says, *'You taught me to be sociable because at home it was OK to fight all the time with my brothers, but in the library you didn't let me fight, and when I did, you didn't even talk to*

siquiera me reparaba y no me ayudaba a hacer las tareas. Y yo le decía, profe es que… El día que ud se comporte bien en la biblioteca ese día le ayudo y lo aprenden. Y él me dice gracias he aprendido mucho de este espacio.

me or help me to do my homework. I used to say 'teacher, it is just that…' [You replied], 'When you behave well in the library, then I will help you.' And they learn and he says, *'Thank you, I have learned a lot from this space.'*

El programa de radio
Nosotros decíamos… nuestro objetivo era poder extender esa voz de la biblioteca, de la literatura a los rincones más alejados del casco urbano. Sabiamos que la emisora la escuchaban en todas las veredas entonces nosotros no era que ellos sepan que hay una biblioteca **que a través de las historias se den cuenta que de pronto el problema que ellos tengan alla otros ya lo vivieron o que a traves de una historia.**
Esa fue la idea y de ahí fue surgiendo que se escuchen otros ritmos musicales no solamente el vallenato, el reaggeton o la musica de tomar eran los unicos ritmos del mundo si no que había muchos ritmos más. Pero pues nosotros tambien en nuestro proposito y como se estaba en una epoca complicada fue como imponernos decirnos: en nuestro programa no vamos a poner esa música. Entonces era colocar otros ritmos, colocamos como qué ritmos nos gusta? La musica social tiene mucho en su contenido y era como invitar a la gente a que se podía protestar con el sistema o con lo que estaba sucediendo a través de una canción y eso era nuestra forma de decir me duele lo que está pasando por lo menos con la musica de Mercedes Sosa 'gracias a la vida', con la música de Victor Heredia, mmm con mucha música de Silvio Rodríguez, con música de Victor Jara.. era invitar a la gente a que podíamos hacer otra forma (de protesta?). Nosotros decíamos la música de tomar lo único que intenta es sumir a la gente en su dolor en su nostalgia y depresión, por qué no un ritmo que nos invite a alzar la voz, a tararear una cansión y si no podemos cantarla en público en mi casa lo haga y empiezo a reconfortarme y a decirme tengo palabras, tengo voz. Lo mismo el Rock, en

Our goal was to extend the voice of the library, and take literature to the most remote areas. We knew people listened to our radio programme in all the villages, so we wanted them to know that there is a library. We wanted to tell stories that were similar to the difficulty they were going through. That was the idea and then, we included more musical genres… not only vallenato, reggaeton or music for drinking. We wanted to show there were sorts of music. But also, as we were going through such a difficult time, we felt strongly about not playing 'that type of music.' So we played other musical genres, we wondered what we wanted… protest music has a lot of social content and we were like encouraging people to protest agaisnt the system or what was happening through music. It was a way to say it hurts me to see what is happening. For example, Mercedes Sosa's music… 'Thank you to life', music by Victor Heredia, erm.. Silvio Rodríguez, Vitor Jara… we wanted to show that there were other ways…
We knew drinking music just plunged people into their sadness, nostalgia, and depression, so we said, 'why not listen to music that encourages us to raise our vioce, to hum a song, and if we cannot sing it in public, we can do it at home and feel some comfort and then say, 'I have words, I have a voice'. It was the same with rock, it was viewed as the genre for vagabonds and drug addicts… So, it was like confronting and talking to ourselves through music. Those were our goals. When we played the music we were scared of what we would be told, but people said, 'it was nice, but it had a very strong message.'

su tiempo era visto aquí como el género de los vababundos de los mariguaneros. (…) entonces fue como confrontarnos y empezar a decirnos cosas a nostros mismos a través de la música. Así fue que esos eran como nuestros objetivos. Cuando uno las colocaba a uno le daba miedo porque uno decía que nos van a decir, pero la gente decía estuvo bonita pero tiene un mensaje muy fuerte.

Creíamos que no nos escuchaban…
Nosotros decíamos bueno venimos acá pero la gente ya sabía que trabajabamos en la biblioteca. Y nos regañaban (nuestros familiares) por la música que colocabamos. Pues uno decía, ellos están pendientes y la otra gente qué. Y luego nos llamaban a la emisora y decían quénes están en el programa, diganles que saludos y que la musica esta bonita. Después de eso cuando empezamos a entrar a las veredas la gente le decía a uno ay ud fue la que habló, qué chevere lo que dijo, el cuento, o la música que colocaron, regáleme el título de la canción, quién es el cantautor. Del tema que trataron, Chevere que cuando vengan nos vengan a hablar de ese tema. Entonces a veces hablabamos de convivencia, de cómo la lectura, la literaturan nos ayuda como forma de terapia, de utilización del tiempo libre, un elemento como para empezar un diálogo. Y venganse preparados para que la proxima vez vengan preparados en ese tema.Y sí, la gente estaba escuchando y siempre siempre …

We thought people did not listen to us. (Find the fieldnote)
People knew we worked in the library. First, our relatives reprimanded us for the music we played, so we thought, 'they are attentive, but what about other people?' So, suddenly a phone call in the radio station saying, 'send my regards and tell them the music was nice.' But they never said who they were. Then, when we started going to the villages, people told us, 'Did you speak on the radio? That was a nice message or a good story, I liked the music. what's the song title? Who's the author?' They also asked to expand the topics we talked about in the radio. Sometimes we talked about sociability, or how reading literature works as a form of therapy, how to manage free time, how to start a conversation. Or sometimes they said, 'Next time prapare such and such a topic and tell us about it. So, we realised people were listening to us. And then people would call the radio station or our phone to ask for song and we told them to send their suggestions and we would see if that was possible. And we explained that it had to be within the music genre we would select, and it was fine.

'invitamos a una revolución desde el pensamiento'

'We invite people to create a revolution of thought'

'con el proceso de paz sentimos alivio. Decíamos sí hay esperanza. No era sólo que volaran el acueducto, sino persecución a una gente y no sabíamos por qué. Y se volvió a reactivar desde junio de 2018'

Acarreando ideas

Acarreando ideas

Nosotros elegíamos un tema y lo investigábamos y siempre invitábamos a alguien que manejara el tema. Alguien de alguna institución. Llevábamos las preguntas y la investigación pero siempre llevábamos alguien de bienestar, la alcaldía, muchachos universitarios. Eran 15 minutos de conversatorio con preguntas claves o ellos eran los que desarrollaban el tema. Los muchachos del municipio que estaban en la biblioteca al llegar acá siempre se vinculaban con la biblioteca y llegaban y (decían) bueno, qué hay… Y nosotros lo primero (que decíamos) era la radio, el tema o tenemos este tema y formúlese un programa de radio donde usted nos cuente algo nuevo que haya visto en la universidad, o como podemos nosotros solucionar este lío del pueblo o de alguna comunidad (de la) que a veces nos contaban… herramientas para la convivencia, crianza de los niños y nosotros decíamos, ayúdennos a investigar y lo que desde su conocimiento universitario nos puede aportar. A la gente le gustaba eso y le sigue gustando porque eso se hace todavía.

We would chose a topic and do some research or invited somebody who knew the topic, somebody from any institution. We had questions and information but we always had people from the mayor office, university students, or any institution at hand. It was a 15-minute talk with key questions, or sometimes they addressed the topic. University students who were part of the library retuned on holiday and asked what they could do. The answer was always the radio programme. So, we told them to think of something new learned at university, or a solution to a problem people had in town or any rural community, because people told about their issues. Things like healthy social coexistence, children upbringing. They could help and use their learning at university. And people liked it and they still do because that programme is it on.

Hacer denuncia

Cuando había desapariciones, cuando uno sabía que cogían a un familiar de alguien, a un conocido del pueblo uno o a alguien de una vereda o de cualquier sitio y le sabía el nombre era como pasar por la radio y decir 'supimos que tal persona está desaparecida, la persona vestía de esta manera, o hace poco miramos que en un carro iba la persona tal, que llevaban a tal persona en un carro. Uno se atrevía a lanzar esas cosas allí (en el programa de radio) y pues sí era como ese miedo. Entonces decíamos si están escuchando por allá en otros lugares, en las veredas, que se riegue la voz que sepan que esa persona no está sola. O decir por ejemplo hubo un tiempo -que esos son temas bastantes complicados- cuando amenazaban al sacerdote. (Decíamos en el programa de radio) cuentan que están amenazando al padre por decir las cosas directas por defender los derechos humanos

When people disappeared, as it were, someone's relative or an acquaintance from the town or a vereda – anyone – and if we knew the name we would go the radio staion and say that that person had disappeared and give information about how they were dressed and were they were the last time they had been seen. We dared to do that, and we were scared indeed. So we thought in doing so the word would spread and people would know they were not alone. Or for instance, - this is a sensitive topic – a priest was once threatened. [We said on the radio] 'People say the priest is menaced because he defends human rights. He's not doing anything wrong, so we need to support him. We spoke and knew people from outside would also listen, even when here we would pretend to be deaf and blind. For instance, somebody who was in the USA listened to

entonces pedimos que la comunidad lo apoye si el no estaba faltando la norma tenemos que brindarle como el apoyo. Para nosotros era decirlo y saber que en otras partes nos escuchaban aunque aquí así lo escucharamos nos tocaba hacernos los ciegos y los sordos. Por ejemplo, no sabiamos que alguien que estuvo en USA colocó la emosisora y nos llamó y nos dijo que fuerte. Nos han escuchado en chile a traves de internet. Entonces ellos dicen este tema uno lo escucha y lo comunica a otros porque no es la voz de un periódico o alguien haciendo documentales sino uds mismos reclamando sus derechos. Aquí han pasado muchas cosas con los niños. Advertirle a los padres, qué está haciendo la policía. Están matando a los animales y qué estamos haciendo estos días, que al río tal le echaron veneno. Entonces era como decir uno no sabe ni quien pero era decir esto está pasando y sembrar consciencia de lo que estaba pasando y también denuncia pública. Esto está pasando y qué estamos haciendo como institución. Y yo comom biblioteca qué puedo hacer, seguir hablando del tema, pasando mensajes sobre cuidado del medio ambiente. Hay cosas que uno aborda y pasan desapercibidas ante los violentos pero siempre va sembrando en quien escucha. Una vez en una vereda no sabíamos que nos escuchaban y colocamos una canción sobre los chicos asesinados en Mexico, los estudiantes de ayusinapa, y la colocamos así. Y yo dije tenemos que hacer algo, que la gente sepa que por allá también está difícil. Eso fue un lunes y el domingo vino la gente a decir cuéntenos qué es lo que pasa allá. Y yo vengan y miren en internet lo que está pasando y lean lo que está pasando. No soy ni siquiera yo, y estas personas son unos líderes que están muy pegados de la biblioteca.

El liderazgo sabemos que viene de la biblioteca. De algunos líderes comunitarios no sabemos pero muchas mujeres líderes muchas dicen que la biblioteca les dio las ganas de hablar, salir, de leer y de decir no solamente yo tengo que estar en la cocina

the programme and called us. They were impressed. People from Chile would also listen to us on the Internet. So, they said they would share this with other people, because it is real and it communitated by the community and not a journal, as it were. It was the community demaning their rights. We also warned parents about their children and incidents with the police. Or animals are being killed, and that river poisoned. So, we condenmed publically what was happening, although we didn't know who was behind that. So, this is happening and what can we do as an institution? What can the library do about all this? [We can] Keep talking and invite to care for the environment. We talk about things and the violent [groups] disregard it all, but this has an effect on those who listen. We played a song about the killing of students from Ayotzinapa in Mexico. So I thought I had to do something so that people knew that things are difficult over there, too. Then people came [to the library] and asked about this. They read about it on the Internet. It is not even me, it is the leaders that are connected to the library.

Leadership comes from the library. We don't know much about (male) community leaders, but some female leaders said that the library encouraged them to speak out, read and understand that they could find other places beyond the kitchen. They said

hay otras cosas que puedo hacer, dicen leyendo me he dado cuenta que puedo hacer otras cosas.

Revista…
Eso nace después de estar conformado el grupo amigos. Es un proyecto contemporáneo de la radio. Las dos, fueron las dos ideas como que algo vamos a hacer. Cuando se conformó el grupo amigos de la biblioteca dijimos qué vamos a hacer. Dijimos qué más vamos a hacer para no morirnos y ahogarnos aquí con lo que está pasando. Entonces estaba un chico, Ítalo, él había estudiado hasta tercer semestre creo en la universidad eh estudiaba derecho por su rebeldía se salió. Estaba aquí en la Hormiga allí bulteando sin hacer nada porque un muchacho como de unos 19 años tal vez o 20 máximo y él era como por qué no hacemos una revista pero cómo nosotros vamos a hacer una revista con qué plata y él decía entonces pero así no sea un a revista que la gente escriba entonces nosotros (pensamos) será que eso se puede? Y le llevamos como la idea al señor alcalde. Pues no sé en ese tiempo estuvo un señor que se llamaba Fabio en la alcaldía y dijo pues hagan el proyecto pero toda la plata no les puedo dar. A ver por cuánto les sale y tal vez les doy la mitad. Nosotros dijimos bueno si él nos da la mitad podemos conseguirnos la otra mitad. ¿Y cómo la vamos a conseguir? Pidamosle al comercio, pidamosle a la gente y arrieguemos, es una época toda divertida porque nosotros en primer lugar dijimos eh coloquemos una cuerda en la calle y pidamosle plata a la gente, lo que nos quieran dar. Y en agradecimiento, no sé era como darle una ramita de un sueño con una cintica o algo así como que gracias! Y sí empezamos y yo creo que la primera vez que reunimos logramos como 200 mil pesos y nosotros dijimos ¡Uy 200 (mil pesos), ya es harto, claro! Toda la revista nos costaba 2 millones quinientos creo que eran los 500 ejemplares en ese tiempo sí porque la imprimimos acá no más. Despues empezamos a vender empanadas y decir no hagamos empanadas

that reading they have come to understand other things.

Magazine…
With the group of friends of the library, we thought of the magazine and the radio at the same time, because we wanted to do something. We thought we had to do something so that we didn't give up given the situation at the time. Then, Italo, a guy that was in third semester at uni, but dropped out rebeliously, was working and not doing much. He was 19 years old, I think. And he suggested we could create a magazine. We thought it was impossible, because we didn't have money, but he said it would be nice to do something for people to write. We wondered if that was possible, so we talked to the Mayor, and he told us to formally write the project and he would help us with half of the cost. And what about the other half? We asked small businesses and people for help. It was exciting. We used a thread in the street and asked people for money. In return we would give them a little paper branch or a ribbon that was symbolic. That is how we started.

When we started with all this we thought about how to talk about peace, and to give the youth spaces for a community experience, play, good use of free time. We saw this as a chance to think about peace. So, we invited them (children and young people) to come to the library and see a film here or at the park and then have a conversation. We offered alternative spaces for the youth and whoever was around. This is not only about a football court – because that's how it's been, like a canteen or a disco –. Maybe we (the community) do things like that because we do not have other things to do, there are no alternatives. And if there are alternatives, we just do not know about them. This is how we were raised, and then the circle closes. So, we thought, 'For people who want peace, it is necessary to conceive it from reading,

contratemos una señora con lo que tenemos ya la contratamos a ella y vamos a vender al comercio también. Decirle al señor del supermercado, mire colabórenos con unas empanadas, 4 empanadas por 2 mil pesos entonces sí era como que yo decía si tienen más nos colaboran es para una revista si la gente aportaba. Y de parte de cada uno de nosotrso pues era: si hay que traer algo yo aporto yo traigo bueno si las empanadas van a ser con carne yo aporto un kilo (de carne), yo aporto esto y todos iban aportando.	writing, playing, dancing… in healthy ways.

Focus group: Rural School

La paz tiene rostro de mujer?	Does peace have a female face?
Wilson: Podemos ver las zonas donde el conflicto armado ha gopeado tanto y tan duro a las comiunidades. Despues de la masacre del Tigre quedaron muchas mujeres solas, hijas, madres, esposas y que ellas tomaron las riendas de la casa, del cuidado de la familia e hijos y ellas han sido las que han estado al frente y han hecho que esta comunidad progrese. Que los hijos crezcan sin que les falte lo necesario, han sido quienes exigen los derechos y no les da miedo enfrentar a los entes que han propiciado la guerra. Entonces pienso que la paz tiene esa cara de mujer es porque ellas han estado al frente procurandola siempre por encima de cualquier acto violento. Freddy: Tal vez no directamente, sería un rostro oculto, si? Por qué? porque han estado luchando, han estado opacadas por mucho tiempo, ha llegado el liberalismo que trata de cierta manera de la igualdad de derechos. La mujer surge y ellas han estado ahí ocultas, es una cara oculta. Epifania: ¿A qué se refiere eso? Tal vez porque las mujeres inspiramos dulzura, será por eso? Porque no todas. Yo lo veo en ese sentido, entonces quizá las mujeres son las que al final -lo que más se pierde en la guerra son hombres- entonces quienes quedan con el peso encima? Las muejres, las madres que deben luchar por sus hijos - en esta época sobre todo- luchar por unos chicos que la mentalidad es distinta.	Wilson: we can see the communities that have been affected by the conflict more intensely. After the massacre in El Tigre, many mothers, daughters, wifes were left alone, and they had to be in charge of homes, families and children. They've made progress possible in this community. They have looked after the children and demanded their rights without fear of any perpetrators. So, I think peace has a female face, because they (woment) have always been working towards peace amidst violence. Freddy: perhaps not directly, it is a rather concealed face. And why? They have been struggling, invisible, for so long. Liberalism arrived with ideas of equal rights. So, women emerged and have been there (struggling). It is a concealed face. Epifania: What does that mean? Is it because we (women) are tender? Is it so? Not all of us. I think that women at the end of the day –men are the biggest loss in war– have that responibility when men are gone. Women, mothers have to raise their children alone, particularly at this date when the mindset is so different. Nubia: Maybe it is what women represent in society. They are mothers and always ready for dialogue. Women are generally less aggressive. Yesid: So, peace does not have a male face?

Nubia: de pronto por lo que representa en sí para la sociedad la mujer. Ese amor maternal, la persona que siempre trata de conciliar a las buenas las cosas. Por lo general es la mujer que es menos violenta, menos agresiva. Siempre trata de ir a conciliar con esto u otro grupo.

Y entonces la paz no tiene rostro de hombre?

Wilson: es como contradictorio, porque generalmente quienes se enfrentan y han sufrido más la guerra son los hombres. Diariamente murieron más hombres que mujeres al frente de la guerra. Los sacrificados son hombres. En la masacre de aquí no murieron mujeres, fueron hombres. De pronto porque al morir los hombres las afectadas eran las mujeres, por eso tal vez se dice que la paz tiene rostros de mujer.

¿Cómo responde la escuela a este desafío?
Nubia: lo que pasa es que cuando se programa reuniones, quiénes asisten? Las mujeres, y tal vez por ese mismo hecho. Los grupos que promueven la paz la mayoría son mujeres. Aquí en este pueblo, las promotoras de paz son mujeres y…
Epifanía: Ellas salen a llorar sus pérdidas, cuando hay marchas sociales, quiénes están ahí? Las mujeres.
Wilson: La institución como tal (tiene el desafío de) educar y creando consciencia sobre la importancia de la paz. Entendida la paz no como la ausencia de guerra sino como la obtención de todos esos beneficios y derechos que nos merecemos por ser parte de un país. Esta es una lucha de nosotros los profes, poder sensibilizar al nucleo familiar donde no solamente sea la mujer al frente de las situaciones educativas sino tambien los padres hombres. A veces no saben ni como van sus hijos ni en qué grado están. A parte de educar y enseñar para vivir la paz y exigirla como derecho, podamos sensiblizar a las familias para que todos sean parte de ese derecho, que se conozcan, que todos sepan qué se hace y qué hacen sus hijos. Los papitos hombres son muy ausentes de los hijos y pensamos que solo es darles lo

Wilson: it is a bit contradictory, normally it is men who fight and suffer from a war more. More men than women died in this war, men are the sacrificed. Men, not women, died in the massacre of this town. And women were affected by this, so maybe that is why they say peace has a female face.
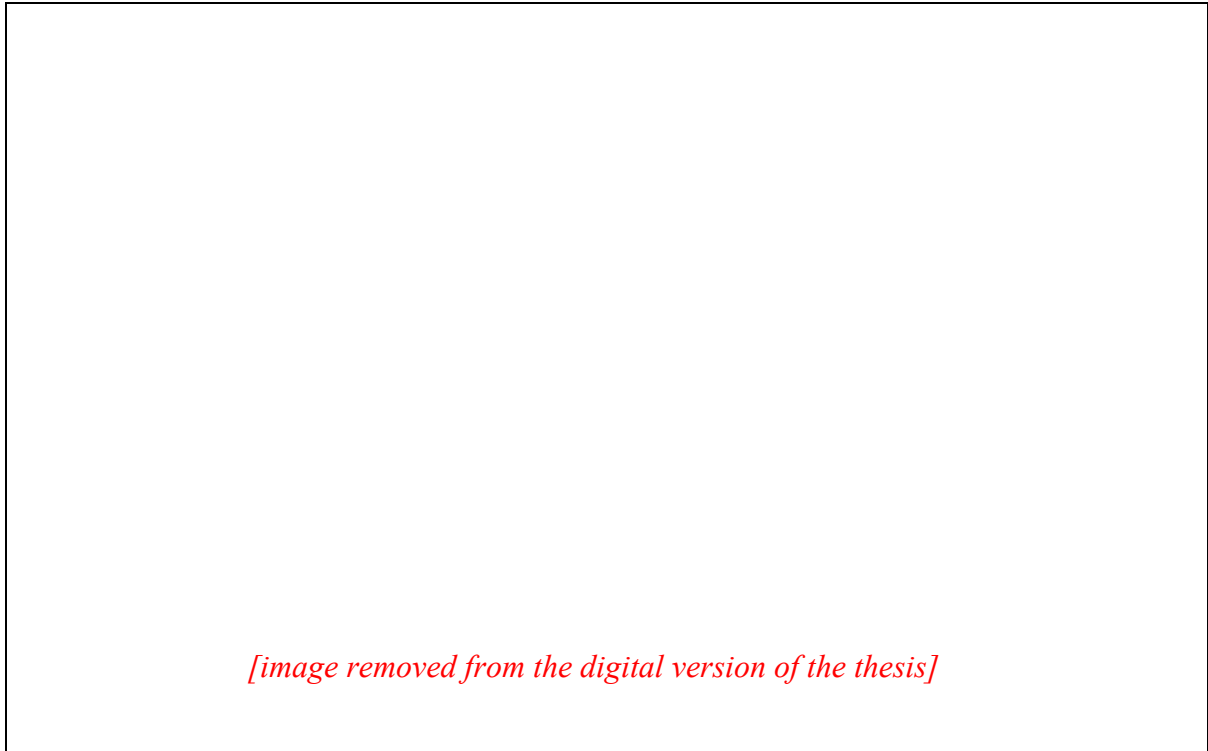
Nubia: Who attend school meetings? Women! That says a lot. Groups working on peace are mainly women. In this town peace promoters are women, and…
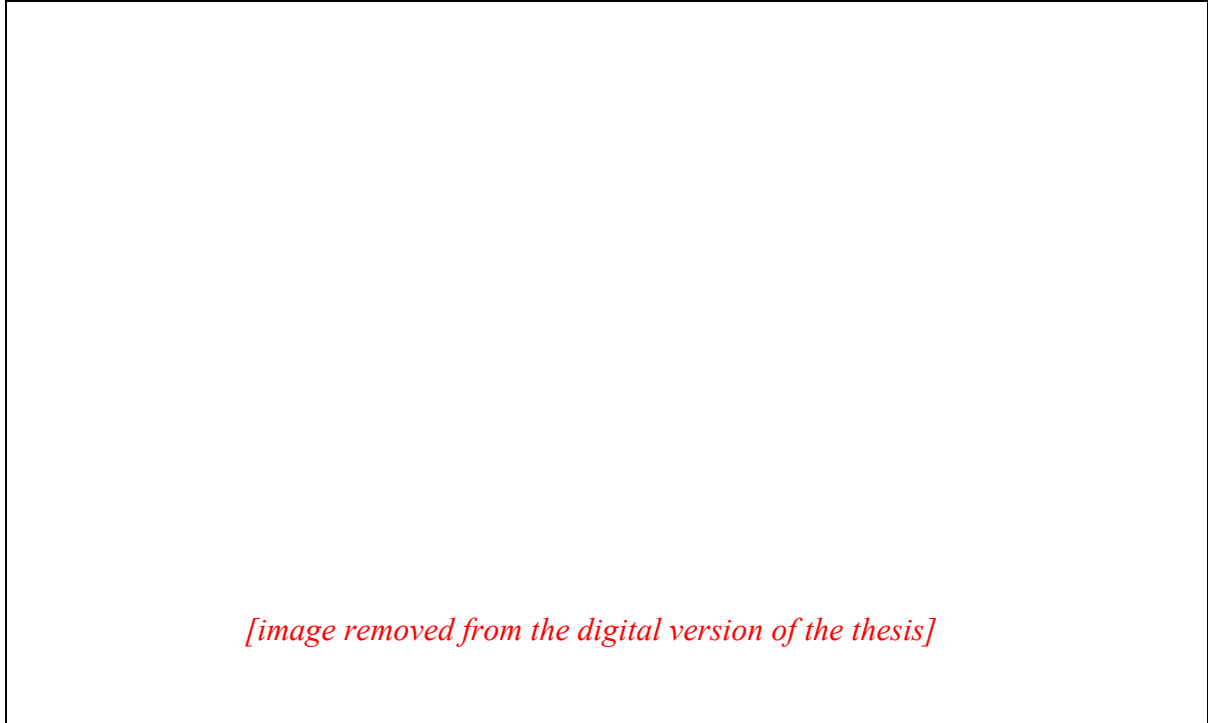Epifania: women cry their losses, in demonstrations, who can you see? Women!
Wilson: The school (has the challenge) to educate and create awareness about the importance of peace. Peace should not be understood as absence of war, but our rights and benefit for being citizens of a nation. This is the struggle of every teacher, to raise awareness in families, so that men and women are involved in the education of children. Sometimes male parents don't know their children's grade or progress. So, we have to teach children to experience and demand peace as a right. Everybody should be part of this, so they need to know what to do and how to demand this right. Male parents are absence in their children upbringing thinking they do enough just providing material things, and mothers do all the rest. Women are at the forefront of the whole education process of children, not the male parents. So, first of all, education (is our challenge) and, second, raising awareness so that education process can be balanced between mothers and fathers.

que necesitan a cuanto vestido, comida y todo lo que necesitan y dejamos que las mamitas de ellos sean las que están al frente de todas las situaciones. Las mujeres se han ganado ese protagonismo porque están al frente de los procesos, de sus hijos en la escuela, van a matricularlos, no van los padres. Primero la educación y la segunda es un proceso de sensibilización con las familiar para que el proceso de educación de sus hijos sea equilibrado entre papá y mamá.	

Appendix E: Photos of Fieldwork

[image removed from the digital version of the thesis]

School Theatre Group

[image removed from the digital version of the thesis]

Women's association: Tejedoras de Vida in the Commemorarion of the Massacre in EL Tigre

[image removed from the digital version of the thesis]

A rap group is at the library. They have been given some recorders provided by a NGO in partnership with the library.

Local Library

[image removed from the digital version of the thesis]

Urban school: Teachers' meeting. I was asked to run a session.

[image removed from the digital version of the thesis]

Indigenous school

Appendix F: Book Campaign

I came to Bogota to work on the Book collection campaign for La Hormiga. The GAB group (Amigos de la Biblioteca), the librarian and I worked on the video in order to have something to motivate people to donate. We came up with ideas and worked together. Finally, a member of a foundation helped with the editing of the video.

I went to Universidad Nacional and talked to the director of the language department. He liked the initiative and referred me to the director of the editorial centre (Human sciences Faculty). I visited him and had a conversation about my research project and the motivations of this campaign. He said he would help me, but he asked me to send him a text with the conceptualisation of the initiative in conjunction with the overall project. This was an interesting exercise since I could talk to an academic from my Alma Mater and explain my project and motivations.

I explained why books are a powerful tool for change. I described how the library had carried out different activities such as reading in further areas, hospitals, schools, parks, amongst others, which had helped communities establish a positive relationship with an institution representing the state, but perhaps more importantly, this has helped create a sense of community around the library: 'the library organised this activity'. I also talked about the ethos of this library since they conceive of themselves as a place where 'no discrimination exists'. Instead, there is a wide range of non-violent alternatives for people, which is innovative insofar as different actors have imposed violence.

We had a couple of conversations that somehow helped me explain why this is a vital part of my research. After this, I wrote an official letter that is in the university now in order to get the books (attached). This is a fragment of my first message:

The Library of La Hormiga

The Library of La Hormiga is an educational space that has reached the furthest communities from El Valle del Guamuez. Since its official creation in 1999, the library has carried out activities aiming at peacebuilding processes through reading and alternative discourse of peace in programmes such as film clubs, radio programme, healthy reading in hospitals, reading groups, reading in veredas, further communities, and the magazine 'Katharsis' amongst others. This has been achieved thanks to the creation of the GAB group (Amigos de la biblioteca), a group of volunteers that support these activities.

The library has established positive relationships with the communities of Valle del Guamuez. In fact, the library has been the only institution through which the state has related peacefully and effectively to some of the furthest communities in the region. Moreover, armed actors have somehow respected the library and its activities, which locates the library in a space from which it has exerted resistance against war through non-violent alternatives.

The library is a space for peacebuilding, because 'no discrimination exists here'. This is a place whose ethos is recognition and conscientization of others. The activities of the library offer alternatives, possible worlds that build human relationships based on respect and recognition of others and the other. The library is a space for reading and playing for children

and young people, as well as for learning for university students signed up in blended and distance undergraduate programmes. In this sense, the most common programmes for students of this community are:

Social work
Psychology
Education
Sociology
Accountancy
Environmental engineering
Industrial engineering
Computer science

However, by looking at the needs and potentialities of the community, we can identify other programmes that would contribute to Valle del Guamuez and Putumayo in general:

Anthropology
Linguistics
Architecture
Occupational therapy
Biology
History
Medicine
Agricultural and Agro-industrial engineering
Forest engineering (this is something the director asked for. He wanted me to mention other possible programmes that could contribute to the community)

All these disciplines can potentially aim at recognition of others from various conceptual domains, as well as the good use of natural resources and the development of infrastructure. All of these initiatives could lead to the benefit of the communities and, therefore, sustainable peace. For this reason, we want to collect books in order to help the library achieve this multidimensional process. University students, schoolteachers, and other professionals would benefit from academic material and, therefore, inform and invigorate their processes and practices.

The GAB group and I are collecting 1) books for university students that help them in their academic process and 2) children books to strengthen the many reading programmes carried out by the library.

I also visited a very popular bookshop in Bogota and talked to the manager about his initiative. She liked the idea and asked me to send her an email explaining the activity. I am still waiting for a response. This is a very busy time since the international book fair is taking place, but I am still confident they will help. *(The book fair is over now, so I am still waiting. I send Elena (the manager) a text message but she hasn't replied yet)*

Centro Colombo Americano has said they want to help us (the librarian), but I have to wait at least this week until the book fair is over. On the other hand, I also talked to some of my

friends and explained what the library is doing for the Communities of La Hormiga. Some of them have helped me with some books. I already have 50 books with great academic content related to areas such as psychology, sociology, and education, amongst others *(Some friends and other people are interested and said they would help with some books. Now that I am going to be here for a month, it is easier to talk to them and agree on a time and place for the book collection.*

Books donated by Universidad Nacional

Title	Area	Number of books
Investigaciones sin fronteras: New and enduring issues in foreign language education	Education	3
Feminisms and gender studies in Colombia. A political and academic field in motion	Gender studies	2
Academic amphibians	Education	5
Every human being is free	Psychoanalysis	3
Do no harm, public policies and peace building (1989 – 2010)	Social work	3
Do no harm approach in the process of land restitution	Social work	3
Witness psychology in insurance fraud investigation	Psychology	3
Development psychology and phenomenology: in pursuit of an articulation	Psychology	2
Issues and topics of human geography	Geography	2
Recognising conflict	Sociology	2
Colombian journal of geography Vol. 27 N2	Geography	2
Colombian journal of sociology Vol.41 N2	Sociology	3
Colombian Yearbook of culture and social history Vol.44 N1	History	2
Colombian Yearbook of culture and social history Vol.37 N2	History	3
Journal Maguaré Vol. 32 N 2	Anthropology	2
Journal of Social work Vol. 20 N2	Social work	2
Total		**42**

Books donated by friends (so far)
- Discourse on Popular Education (Education)
- Nets: Languages of links: towards a reconstruction and strengthen of civil society (Social Work)
- Other possible is possible: walking towards transitions from Abya Yala/Afro/Latin America (By Arturo Escobar)
- Community (Sociology)
- Consuming Life (Sociology)
- On Education (Sociology)

Appendix G: Letter to John Williams Montoya, Universidad Nacional

Bogotá, D.C., abril 30 de 2019

Señores:
Rubén Darío Flórez
Director Centro Editorial Ciencias Humanas

John Williams Montoya
Vicedecano de investigación y extensión

Asunto: Solicitud de donación de libros para Biblioteca La Hormiga, Putumayo.

Mi nombre es Yesid Páez, egresado del programa Filología e idiomas: inglés y candidato a doctorado en educación en la universidad Bath Spa en el Reino Unido. Mi trabajo doctoral gira en torno a iniciativas de construcción de paz en escenarios educativos formales e informales en el Valle del Guamuez, Putumayo. Por esta razón he conocido el trabajo que desempeña la Biblioteca de La Hormiga, cabecera municipal, en torno a iniciativas que han aportado enormemente a las comunidades que allí habitan.

La biblioteca en cuestión constituye un espacio educativo que ha logrado llegar a los lugares más distantes del Valle del Guamuez. Desde su creación oficial el 1999, la biblioteca ha desarrollado actividades encaminadas a generar procesos de construcción de paz a través de la lectura y la creación de alternativas en torno a la paz a través de programas como: cine foros, tertulias, lectura en las veredas, revista literiaria Katharsis, programa de radio ''El Hormiguero'', y lectura saludable en el hospital, entre otros. Esta labor la ha llevado a cabo con la creación y fortalecimiento del grupo Amigos de la Biblioteca (GAB).

Esta biblioteca ha logrado tejer relaciones positivas con las diversas comunidades del Valle del Guamuez. En este sentido, para muchas de las comunidades apartadas de la cabecera municipal, la biblioteca ha sido la única entidad a través de la cual el Estado ha logrado llegar a ellos de forma pacífica y efectiva. Además, actores armados han respetado la biblioteca y sus iniciativas, lo cual la ubica en un espacio desde el cual ha podido hacer contrapeso a la guerra desde la propuesta de alternativas no violentas.

La biblioteca es un espacio de construcción de paz, ya que no ''discrimina a nadie''. Es un lugar cuyo *ethos* es el reconocimiento del otro, pero también su concientización. Los procesos de la biblioteca ofrecen alternativas, mundos posibles que construyen relaciones basadas en el respeto y el re-conocimiento del otro y lo otro. La biblioteca es también un espacio de lectura y juego para niños y adolescentes, y de consulta para jóvenes de universidad en modalidad semi-presencial o a distancia en su mayoría.

Con el propósito de contribuir a los procesos que se adelantan en la biblioteca, la biblioteca y yo *–como ciudadano e investigador social-* buscamos acceder a más libros. Los estudiantes universitarios del Valle del Guamuez, los docentes de los colegios y los profesionales que allí trabajan se beneficiarían enormemente de material académico y, por ende, podrían dinamizar e informar sus procesos y prácticas. Todo esto contribuye a creación de espacios de no violencia y de narrativas de construcción del otro y lo otro que favorezcan la construcción de paz en la comunidad e iluminen otros procesos en el país.
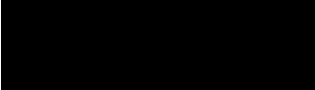
Por esta razón, el grupo GAB y yo estamos trabajando para recolectar libros 1) de consulta universitaria que apoyen los procesos de los estudiantes de la comunidad y 2) libros infantiles para fortalecer los procesos de lectura en las veredas y programas de lectura al aire libre.

Como egresado de la Universidad Nacional, reconozco el aporte inconmensurable que la Universidad ha realizado al país, así como el llamado a quienes estamos en la academia a llegar a espacios recónditos para aprender, aportar y humanizar nuestras prácticas y reflexiones intelectuales. Es por esta razón que solicito a ustedes un aporte de material académico desde las ciencias humanas con el fin de apoyar los procesos de la biblioteca, en particular los relacionados con el apoyo a estudiantes universitarios.

Para efectos de envío, contamos con el apoyo de la alcandía del Valle del Guamuez. Así mismo, esta iniciativa ha sido avalada por Gloria Estella Nupán, bibliotecaria, y el grupo de amigos de la biblioteca GAB, quienes han participado en el proceso de reflexión sobre la necesidad de libros, un video campaña sobre la biblioteca y consultas sobre las características y necesidades de la población y sus usuarios.

Agradezco la atención y el interés que desde el principio ustedes han mostrado en esta iniciativa.

Saludos cordiales,

Yesid Páez
Candidato doctoral

Valle del Guamuez
TECA PÚBLICA
CARLOS GALÁN

Bibliotecaria Municipal

Appendix H: Book Campaign Photos

Books donated by the Faculty of Human sciences of Universidad Nacional

Books donated