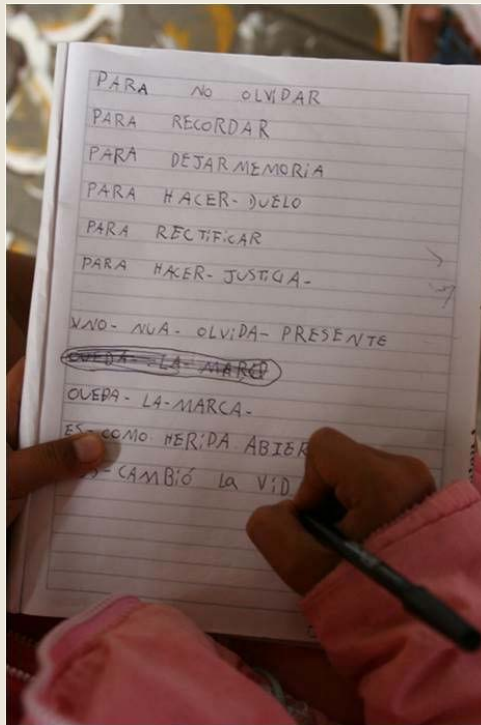


# Chapter C

## C

### THE METHODOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF MEMORY WORK: WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

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This section introduces a methodological framework and a set of methods to work with narratives and storytelling to reconstruct historical memory. The *methods* outlined share a common characteristic in that they allow for the exploration of the ways in which people elaborate, construct, change and interpret the events they experienced. That is to say, how people give meaning to the past, and how their individual memories are intertwined with collective or group memories.

A first key aspect in the construction of historical memory is the articulation of questions to guide the exploration of the past, the violent events and their impacts. These questions seek to not only ensure that facts, events and testimonies of what happened are fully documented but also to ensure that the way they were experienced and interpreted by those who lived them are included.<sup>3</sup>

These questions can be grouped into four areas:

- *Reconstruction of the past*: identifying what, how and why specific events happened and how they were experienced.
- *Assessing the impact of the war*: reconstructing the context and situation of the community at the time of the events, the changes and damages resulting from the violent events and their impact on people's lives and the community as a whole.
- *The present of the past and of the future*: identifying who should be remembered, how, and why (to dignify, set the record straight, etc.).
- *Perspectives on the future*: how is the future seen by those affected by the violence, and what action can be taken to achieve a sense of justice.

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<sup>3</sup> These questions are designed based on the guiding questions for collection of data and testimonies for the work of the Colombian Historical Memory Commission, the Guatemala: Never Again - Project for Reconstruction of Historical Memory (1996), and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Peru.

**Reconstruction of the past:** What happened? How did it happen? Where did it happen? Why did it happen? How was it experienced? Who were they? Why did they do it? Why did it happen here and not somewhere else? Why right then?

**Assessing the impact of the war:** What was happening in the community or region at that time? What and who was changed by what happened? What personal, family and community losses did it cause? What significant economic, cultural, emotional and spiritual damages did it generate? How was what happened dealt with? What was the response when the violent events happened? In what ways were they resisted?

**The present of the past and of the future:** What and who do we remember? How should we remember them and preserve their legacy as men and women, family, friends, members of the community?

**Perspectives on the future:** Who are we after what happened? What makes it difficult to live together today? What actions can be taken to restore the rights that were violated? What should be done to prevent this from happening again? What are your demands? What are your hopes for the future?

The methods outlined below can be used in memory workshops (see description below) to facilitate the construction of historical memory, but can also be used outside of a workshop context as part of the work of researchers and memory workers.<sup>4</sup>

Given that war tends to fracture whole communities, sow distrust among neighbours, and close off public social and meeting spaces, memory work may seek to be a place where, not only are the individual marks of suffering reconstructed collectively, but so too are the contexts and the logic of the perpetrators that triggered these emblematic events.

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<sup>4</sup> The presentation of these methods and content, as well as the memory workshops, has been structured by the goals and type of work developed by the Colombian Historical Memory Group, and builds on the previous work and design of the memory workshops that Pilar Riaño has been developing since 1997, which are outlined in several of her publications (Riaño, 2008, 2006a; 2006b and 1999).

Since our narratives about the past describe events and also offer explanations of them, we suggest that memory workers complement the narratives of community participants with information from other sources, such as interviews with regional political and social leaders, ex-combatants and, to the extent possible, a review of personal and institutional archives, newspapers, and other existing databases.

Historical memory work may provide interpretative frames on the dynamics of regional and national wars that are the product of the review of various sources - from those developed by the community itself to the consultation of archives - so that the individual experiences expressed during the workshops can be understood and placed, through these exercises, into local, regional and national historical contexts.

The memory workshop methods use the tools of oral history, memory work, and the verbal-visual arts for the documentation of individual and social memories of certain historical periods. While the methods for recovering historical memory begin with tracing the ways in which memory is symbolized in the local context, its application in a workshop and/or in a group dynamic seeks to activate a group process of historical memory construction that will dignify the memory of the victims and render visible voices from affected groups.

A central feature of these methodologies, with the exception of the individual interview, is that they document both episodic<sup>5</sup> memories of individuals about these events or periods, as well as the various shared narratives, senses and experiences and some of the multiple versions that form the social memory.

This combination allows for an exploration of the ways in which the processes of violence, terror and resistance cross from the public sphere to the realm of individual experience, to be inscribed or registered in individual and communal bodies under certain practices of remembering

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<sup>5</sup> Memory that recalls specific events in the life of a person or group, in contrast to those that reconstruct autobiographical sequences, and the ways in which subjects are constructed within specific relationships and events.

and forgetting. At the same time it allows for an exploration of the ways in which these enter into certain collective records of what happened - some hidden and silenced, others public.

The other central element of these methods is that they evoke individual memories in a group context. In this sense the construction of memory includes both a narrative dimension, communicating the memory of an event or series of events through a narrative that organizes and reconstructs the past (Ricoeur, 2004), as well as a dramatic-performative dimension. In telling the story to others there is a performance, which includes gestures, pauses, accents, and the use of the body. Attention to these elements will provide memory workers with a better understanding of what individuals are seeking to communicate and the affective and embodied dimension of their testimony.

According to the sociologist Paul Connerton (1989), groups and societies remember in three ways:

- Through inscriptions in cultural texts (myths, monuments, sacred books)
- Through commemorative rituals
- By incorporating social memory in the human body.

In addition to these traditional modes of inscribing social memory in the environment and in the body, in contemporary society individuals and groups remember through inscription in visual and dramatic media such as video, photography, or television.

When we recognize the *material, symbolic, dramatic, temporal and embodied dimensions of memory*, each of the methods described below allows for the exploration of some of the ways memory is constructed from a specific axis. The following sections illustrate how to work with these dimensions and axes using different methods of reconstruction of historical memory. In the workshops and interviews these methodologies are used to respond to each of the four areas introduced

above (reconstruction of the past, assessment of the impact of war, the present of the past and the future, and perspectives on the future).

Different methods will be more appropriate depending on the questions that are being asked. Another issue to consider when choosing methods is if you want to foster remembering beyond words. Games, theatre, dance, drawing, collage, quilts, photos, video, memoryscapes and other verbal, visual and performative methods can help to build connection with one's self and others, as well as build trust and safety. Creative techniques can be more accessible to the less literate and can allow for sharing stories in non-linear ways and for sharing them more widely. They can also serve to share things that cannot be easily (or safely) expressed in words. Theatre and drama, for example, have been used in Burundi as preparation for more formal [institutional] scenarios of storytelling.

### **C 1. THE GENERATIVE QUESTION(S)**

Each memory activity begins with the asking of a question that activates individual and group memory. The content of this question requires careful attention during the preparation phase, as it will trigger certain memories and certain details depending on how it is asked.

Thus if the question is an open-ended, such as “and what happened here?”, it will lead to a broader narrative and a more comprehensive account of a series of events from the perspective of the narrators, in contrast to a question that asks each participant to evoke personal experiences during a period or about a particular event.

The common characteristic of the type of initial questions that may be asked to activate memories is that they are open-ended and intended to recall past experiences (they are not evaluative in their formulation).

The other crucial element of the “effectiveness” of a question is that it manages to “hook” participants, and in the case of a memory activity this has to do with establishing a bridge that activates personal

memory, the remembering of a certain type of life experiences, and the construction of a story about them.

In considering an inclusive construction of plural memories, pay special attention to differences in ways of telling, remembering, and what is remembered, according to gender, sexuality, generation, ethnicity, race, caste, class, physical ability, language, religion and region, to ask: Who does and says what in these narratives?

## **C 2. PLACE BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY**

Mapping using mental maps, environmental maps, or walking maps (each described below) is a method used to evoke and record the memories of a group that takes into account the close relationship that exists between people, their environment, and memory.

In particular, mapping as a method to construct historical memory explores the ways in which individual and local memories are anchored in places (that are reminiscent of death, destruction, resistance and membership), and how places are at once made of memories. That is to say, memory also has a cartography, and people are able to evoke the changes and marks of the past through a spatial mapping of the environment and their memories.

Through the construction of maps participants can also explore the marks that violence and armed confrontation have left in the physical environment (destruction, damage to the environment, mine fields, mass graves, and places of terror), and the ways that such violences have transformed their relationship with and perception of the physical environment (the neighbourhood, village, landscape, and natural landmarks).

The construction of maps facilitates the narration of the ways in which violence leaves its mark on the individual and on the lived environment, and also allows for the visualization and the localization of its impact, and the changes it produces. That is to say, it provides a method by which participants can construct maps of memory landmarks.



- ▲ Map on the traces of violence in the town of Trujillo and its surroundings. Elaborated by a group of women from Trujillo, Valle, Colombia in a memory workshop. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

### Memory and place

Places are physical, social and sensory arenas for our actions, but likewise for our memories and imaginations. Our experience of the physical environment is based on our sense of space, i.e. the way human beings invest certain parts of our environment with meaning, and how places acquire a symbolic, sacred and historic significance for those who build this relationship, as individuals and as a community.

The analysis of places in memory work acknowledges the ability of places and landmarks (the tree, the monument, the corner, the river), to unleash individual and collective memories and connect an individual's olfactory, tactile and visual senses and their emotions with a sense of local history and its marks of identity. These perceptions and experiences of the physical environment are marked in our bodies as place memories.



Through the development of maps one can identify and track a variety of processes, memories and events, such as:

- Traces of violence in the environment, the places marked by violence: where certain emblematic violent events happened (see photo: map of Trujillo and box “Memoryscapes”)
- Places around which historical memory turns: emblematic and mythic landmarks, those which are part of the local oral history, the uses and associations of certain places by certain groups (e.g. street corners for urban youth) and the changes in these places.



▲ Route of mass displacement followed by residents of the Barrio el Salado, Comuna 13, Medellín. Map elaborated by women of the barrio, 2010.

- The territorialities of the violence: armed checkpoints, presence of armed groups, travel or supply routes, and routes of displacement.
- The geography of suffering and its traces in the environment: the places where memory survives, places of commemoration, those which evoke certain people, as well as differences in the memory of the place according to group (gender, age, ethnicity, race, caste, class, sexuality, language, religion).
- Local initiatives of resistance and their marks in the environment: the routes of marches, the places that are recovered or reclaimed from armed actors for the civilian population, those places where memories are fought over or disputed.
- Sacred sites and cultural landmarks: from churches to graveyards to traditional prayer sites.



▲ Historical traces and cultural landmarks in Bahía Portete. Map elaborated by a group of Wayuu Women in Guajira, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Pilar Riaño

- Natural resources: such as minerals, oil, and lumber. Mapping these can be a way to trace the connections between resources and violence.
- Land tenure: changes in land tenure and use, its expropriation, and displacements can also be mapped.

### **C 2.1 MENTAL MAPS**

The mental map captures images, symbols and landmarks of memory that individuals have of their environment, their perceptions, spatial location, and sensory reaction to the environment. The group identifies a landmark (e.g. the river, the plaza, a statue) that everyone in the group recognizes and which everyone can use to orient themselves. This landmark is taken as a reference point for drawing a mental map that traces individual and group memory marks on the basis of the question asked. A mental map can begin with a blank piece of paper, or can be done on inside a previously mapped outline of an area.

For example, in a workshop on the Caribbean coast of Colombia we asked: What are the significant marks in the region that reflect your memories of violence and suffering? Starting with this question and the identification of a landmark (for example a river or a monument), the group decides what to draw, what to include, and how. The marking of these places on the map and the histories that are then told by each individual, paint a mental map of the region, a picture of how individuals see the space. This is then further developed in narratives about specified periods or topics (e.g. land).

For more detailed description of how to run a mental maps activity see Appendix 3.

### **C 2.2 MAPS OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

The group can also work from a previously prepared conventional outline map of the region or place, and on this map they can trace marks and routes of the violence, and places that are key to memory (sites with a story for telling, that are referred to in stories, or are places of resistance). One can also create maps that illustrate historical changes

and transformations of space (such as maps of the place “before” and “after” the violence).

These maps can be used to start discussion in smaller circles, but can also be put on the wall at large events for many people to write on and share in this way.



- ▲ Children in a rural Guatemalan community, identifying the massacres committed during the internal armed conflict, photo courtesy of Brenda Pineda

### C 2.3 WALKING ROUTE MAPS - WALKABOUTS

Walking maps, like mind maps, identify locations (points, landmarks in the physical and natural environment) that are significant in the memories of individuals over a specific period or set of events.

The particularity of this method is that the recognition of these places and the construction of these memories is done “while moving”, as the group takes a journey and goes to the places identified by group members as important, while sharing memories and stories.

For these walks one aims to have participants plan a tour of significant places and routes of their experience and for the case in question, of places that are emblematic of their experiences of violence and suffering.



▲ Walkabout during a memory workshop. Monument to the victims of the massacre of Trujillo, Valle, Colombia. 2008. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

During the tour at each site, the stories of what happened and how it was lived are shared and can be documented both visually –with a map and photos or video – and orally, that is through recording the stories told in each location. These tours also make it possible to reconstruct information about context (what happened, when, where), actors (who was where, who did what, where) and resistances (who did what, where).

For more a more detailed description of how to do this, see Appendix 4.

## **C 2.4 INVENTORY OF THE MEMORYSCAPE**

Memory practitioner Aaron Weah from Liberia and Louis Bickford (International Center for Transitional Justice, ICTJ) developed this conceptualization of memoryscapes<sup>6</sup> and the inventory of memoryscapes

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<sup>6</sup> In April 2008, sites of massacres, mass grave and other sites of conscience were inventoried in Monrovia and surrounding districts. The concept of memoryscape was introduced by Louis Bickford and applied and tested by Aaron Weah. In its original design, the function of the memoryscape was divided into the three categories defined above. However, application of the concept over the past four years (including the over 150 massacres and mass grave sites documented in the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Report, TRC Report) have shifted from what was initially understood as memory as fixed into the three categories

activity. The term *memoryscape* captures the “universe” of memory as inscribed in the landscape. This universe is comprised of places, street names, sites of massacres, mass graves, symbols and foundational legends (Weah, 2010). Both the visible and invisible markers tell a story about what happened or provide an historical interpretation (or context) to some of the root causes to the violence and/or war. Weaved together they capture the public imagination of what happened, and help to reveal the source of peoples’ pain, agitation, and desire for accountability.

The inventory of *memoryscapes* helps to understand how a social group wants to remember the past and how they “feel” about such a past. It is also helpful in pointing to what the majority of the people remember and to discover silenced or forgotten memories and events. It also helps to determine issues that people are less interested in remembering. This approach enabled the Liberian group that used it to discern “transitioning” in memory processes. That is, issues of less significance today were felt strongly in the past but have been de-emphasized now as a result of renewed conflict.

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above to transitional memory. It is transitional in the sense that so long as a context remains locked in the vortex of renewed hostility, new markers and sites of atrocities will emerge and compete for public space. Accordingly, markers or sites of massacres may shift from points of higher intensity to low intensity. In other words, such shifts could alter the *memoryscape* in ways that make markers change from visible to invisible or invisible to visible. In other words, the *memoryscape* can function as a barometer of how the past is being remembered, or suggest positive and inclusive ways for post-conflict societies to remember the past.



▲ Former rebel checkpoint “God Bless You Gate” in Monrovia, Liberia.  
Photo by Louis Bickford, 2008

The notorious rebel checkpoint of the God Bless You Gate was located on the Eastern outskirts of Monrovia. In mid 1990 rebel fighters used this checkpoint to check ethnic identity. Those ‘guilty’ of belonging to a rival ethnic group were tortured and summarily executed at this place. In postwar Liberia, God Bless You Gate is invisible as there is no physical marker indicating the atrocities that occurred here, but very visible to those who endured torture and near death.

Memoryscale identification can be done using any of the three mapping techniques described above or simply by brainstorming a list of:

1. *Visible places of memory that are invisible:* these are street names or places (including monuments or memorials) that no one cares about or notices;
2. *Invisible places of memory that are visible:* Unlike the above-mentioned category, these are places that are unmarked, yet everyone knows what they are and what they mean. For example, Old open spaces previously used as military check points where many of the killings took place.
3. *Visible places of memory that are visible:* this was the main purpose of the inventory exercise as done in Liberia. Examples include: names of stadiums, major streets, national symbols (including National Seal and foundational legends), and sites of massacres, especially those that people notice and have strong feelings about.



This monument is a commemorative marker by the Samay Community, located in central Liberia. On October 1994, the community lost 37 of its residents in a horrific massacre. In 2001, a few years after the election of President Charles Taylor, the community decided to commemorate the events of October 1994. Two reasons led to this decision. First, those massacred were repeatedly appearing in the dreams of the town people, making appeals not to be forgotten. In one of the dreams, it was indicated that the town would win no further football matches (a local passion) if the massacre was forgotten. Second, the town believed that future generations needed a way to learn from the horrors of the civil war so that they would be less inclined to repeat them.



▲ Monument to victims of massacre, Samay, Liberia. Photo taken by Aaron Weah, 2008.

### C 3. TIME BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

The specificity of these methods is that they evoke narratives and chronologies that organize the tellings of the experiences of individuals and groups within a particular understanding of time and sequence. These methods identify what events mark a before and an after in the lives of individuals and communities. These events break the temporality of the war or mass violence into discrete events and shape the reconstruction of the past and the continuities that are established between events.

Timelines and visual biographies are done in groups that share a certain history or common characteristics in order to identify a sequence of events that mark their lives and the social biography of a specific place (e.g., a town), or a specific period (e.g., the upsurge of violence) from the point of view of participants.

#### C 3.1 TIMELINES

A timeline introduces a sequence of events and marks of the past that are constructed according to the lived experiences and sense of history



of a group of people.<sup>7</sup> These are placed on a time line that is drawn on a surface (i.e. a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard) and represented generally by tracing a line on which events are then sequentially placed. They can also be done in different non-linear forms. Making a timeline involves the selection, within a continuum of events, of some key events which take place at specific times and places, and then their placement in a temporal chronology. The selection criteria are determined by the individual or the group, and take into consideration both significant events in the individual's lived experiences as well as those that mark and make an impression on their group or community or region.



▲ Timeline of milestones of violence and resistance to war in the Middle Atrato Region, Chocó, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Camila Orjuela

<sup>7</sup> These methods are reviewed in Slim and Thompson (1993).

### The event in memory

The event is a unit of time and a reference point from which memories are organized and structured. The stories of individuals and collectives about the past are built around certain key events. According to the Italian historian Alessandro Portelli (1991:21), an event serves ... “to break down continuous time into a sequence of discrete events, grouped into periods around certain key facts (“before the war”, “after I was married”...).”

The analysis of events, notes Portelli, makes it easier to identify how the memory of specific periods is organized along certain temporal chronologies, but also the “modes” (cues) in which each narrator tells and gives coherence to their stories.

Portelli refers to three narrative patterns which the narrator may use to organize their narratives and select the dominant mode for organizing their recollection: the sphere of politics, community life, and personal experience. Women, for example, may censor their own memories of violent events that happen to them in private space.

You can begin making a timeline by asking each participant to name significant events in a particular region during a specific period. Significant events include dynamics and acts of violence, as well as community resistance and organizing. The timelines, the events and their stories, are shared. The group then builds a broader network of events (the larger conjuncture) which the individual events are a part of. For this exercise of locating larger events the group must decide on both a beginning and an end date. These dates are significant in that they speak to the group’s perceptions of the dynamics of violence and resistance. The analysis of the group can point to both the key dynamics of each period as well as the conjunctures which they consider critical and which have influenced the course of local events.

For a more detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 5.

### C 3.2 VISUAL BIOGRAPHIES

A visual biography is a way to facilitate tracking what events, chronological sequences and stories are present in the memory of individuals using a narrative and graphic tool to express them in a visual manner.

A biography reconstructs the “life” of a period in the life of a person or community, i.e. the milestones and marks that characterize it or make it memorable for individuals. This is about life in the sense of a close history: its events, characters, places.

The visual biography begins by identifying an event or a date which participants see as marking a ‘before’ and an ‘after’, or even a continuum in their lives. This event is placed/written/illustrated on the paper on the wall. Each participant then locates (by drawing, writing or somehow representing dates/names) events or specific memories of their life experience or local experience that they consider significant. Each participant shares their narrative or memories of key events. At the end of the testimony or narrative of each individual the group is invited to reflect on what they see in these timelines and social biography.

For more a detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 6.

### C 4. BODY BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

As has been well noted in the large body of literature on violence and trauma, traumatic experiences of violence and terror that directly attack the human body (e.g. rape, sexual abuse, torture), often make it difficult or impossible for an individual to verbalize, communicate or narrate the experience and pain.

Body based ways to work through memory offer ways to communicate that are not necessarily verbal and to represent what is frequently inexpressible, experiences that are held in the body as trauma. The images that are constructed can become symbols and representations of

the experience, responses, and emotions of the individual and the ways in which these inhabit the body.

Body based ways of working through memories can become vehicles to explore not solely traumatic memories but also resistance to violence or discipline, or pleasure and creativity.

### **C 4.1 BODY MAPS**

Maps of the body register the body as a place of, and vehicle for, traces of memory. In this method individuals use a variety of tools, artistic practices and materials (paint, markers, paper, clippings, fabrics) to create a visual representation of their bodies. They record marks and traces of experiences of suffering and violence (e.g., illness, wounds), as well as traces of resistance and pleasures.

In the same map emotions associated with traumatic experiences are symbolized (Galuska, 2007), as well as places in the body that are vehicles and receptors of memory.<sup>8</sup> This method explores body memory - memory as it is embodied in physical, emotional and symbolic traces - by tracing the outline of bodies on a surface that then becomes a canvas and means to explore and express feelings and perceptions.

Body maps allow for exploring aspects of sexual and reproductive violence, disease, and physical violence. It is based on the premise that the body remembers, i.e., that social memory and lived experiences leave their mark. It is a method which can be used with mixed groups to represent suffering or to trace its marks on the body. However, it has been used particularly with women and LGBT communities to track their experiences through the recognition and repositioning of the body as a place of memory and a testimonial vehicle, which at the same time recognizes it as the object of crimes and sexual humiliations.

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<sup>8</sup> This method is inspired by the pioneering community work of “the Memory Box” project, through which women living with HIV / AIDS, organized as the Bamabanani women’s group, drew up their body maps with the support of the artist Jane Soloman. Long Life - Positive HIV Stories, is a collaborative book based on the Body Maps. Soloman then also did body maps with men.

This is a method that challenges the separation between the body as a place of emotions, feelings and memories, and the mind as a rational sphere. It attempts to capture and allow for a means of expression and construction of memory of those events and actions that infringe directly on the body and sexuality (reproductive and sexual violence such as rape, sexual humiliation, prostitution and forced pregnancy and torture), and which tend to be silenced and not socially recognized.





▲ Body mapping at a memory workshop, Cartagena, Colombia, 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

Women tend to reconstruct the events of violence against their loved ones in detail, but tend to silence the history of sexual violence they have personally experienced (Das, 2008). These violations, however,

remain inscribed in social memory as public secrets - and in the bodies of individuals as individual memories that are not shared publicly (Riaño-Alcalá and Baines, 2011).

The body map method makes it possible to trace the marks of violences on bodies in their multiple effects, marks and dimensions - including the ways in which the body remembers, resists or survives. In considering the body as an active site of memory and not just as the passive receptacle of violence, the body is also considered as a place of resistance, hope and pleasure.

The process of making maps is one of self-exploration and remembrance through artistic expression, which begins with the individual decision of what position they want to take as another participant traces their body, as well as the colors, images, symbols and stories they choose to represent and inscribe in the traced body outline.

The process of body mapping involves an individual process of tracing and recognizing the body and, subsequently, a group process of looking (directing the view towards) and particularly seeing (perceiving with meaning), thus moving to an analysis and collective deconstruction of similarities, contrasts and differences in the way in which suffering is represented and the type of marks that the traumatic experience has left on individual bodies.

Once the map is finished participants construct an oral or written narrative about the map and the process of preparing it, or they share their body maps with other members of the group. According to group dynamics, safety and comfort, participants decide what they share and how. The visual product of the bodymap becomes a visual testimony of how social violence enters into and marks the individual body, and serves as a means to engage in collective dialogue.

For more a detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 7.

## C 4.2 NARRATIVE THEATRE

Narrative theatre has been used in Burundi as an approach for dealing with a variety of issues pertaining to the legacies of violence, poverty and trauma from war and to prepare communities for memory work.<sup>9</sup> Burundi is preparing (as of 2012) for setting up transitional justice mechanisms in order to deal with the legacy of violence, massive violation of human rights, and past atrocities. This brings about mixed feelings of hope and fear. It will be a context reopening past wounds. Discussions held in communities impacted by the war in Northern Burundi showed that community life as a whole was negatively affected by war, additional to the individual's suffering. Narrative theatre starts with the narratives of people – acknowledging that they know their story and what they need.

Opportunities are created for people to meet to share their stories and explore their problems together. The idea is that once these stories are shared, through means such as narrative theatre, people can then find their own creative solutions and build the environment that can help strengthen the social fabric. Narrative theatre then serves to link the stories that are told to the life, community, and development projects that participants propose. It aims to link past, present and future. In contexts of impunity where governments and politicians have promoted forgetting and have refused to foster mourning ceremonies as a way to avoid moral and political accountability, narrative theatre is an approach that can prepare people to conduct memory work. Because impunity is a constant source of frustration and trauma, it is crucial to develop mechanisms that increase personal and social psychological wellbeing in order to avoid further outbreak of acts of violence (vengeance). The longer individuals and communities suffer this lack of justice; sentiments of hate, fear, and vengeance tend to dominate the social. In narrative theatre process, stories told become the source of

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<sup>9</sup> Narrative theatre was developed within the specific local and cultural context of the Great Lake Region by Dr. Yvonne Sliet (War Trauma Foundation) and in partnership with the Centre Ubuntu of Burundi. See Yvonne Sliet, "Collective Healing: a social action approach, supplement to support sustainable use of Narrative Theatre" and "Healing Communities by strengthening social capital: A Narrative Theatre Approach; Training facilitators and community workers." War Trauma Foundation, Diemen, the Netherlands, 2009.



transformation that help individuals and communities live through the effects of this violence and healing.

### ***Narrative theatre***

*As described by Father Emmanuel Ntakarutimana from the Centre Ubuntu<sup>10</sup>*

The group maps' local resources (e.g. schools, health centres, NGOs, the market), evaluates how these resources are accessed or used (e.g. children have to walk a long way to get to school), and reflects on whether resources have increased over time.

The group discusses what the problems in the community are and reflects on what issues people consider a problem for them (e.g. poverty, domestic violence, alcoholism) and which ones have been long term (poverty) and which ones have not (killing and war). The idea with this discussion is for the group to understand how some community problems are symptoms of war trauma (alcoholism, domestic violence).

Once the problem is mapped, the group is asked to act it out in an improvisational play. As we are dealing with people rooted in oral tradition, there is no need for special training in theatre techniques. The crucial methodology is to help the participants in the forum understand the mapping of the problem, who is affected, and what are the effects on the various categories of people living in the community.

When this is understood, most of the community members can perform a play. The facilitator just gives the players a five minute consultation about their respective role in the play. And it works.

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10 The Centre Ubuntu "is a laboratory of analysis and social action for the promotion of peace and reconciliation in Burundi and the Great Lakes Region." They see development as an integral process and based on the values of Ubuntu (understood in the Centre as "the synthesis of all the values that make a human person unique in her/his humanity and different from other creatures)." Activities include drama projects, psychosocial counseling, peace education, and media programs. They have recently introduced socioeconomic development ventures like housing and goat farming, and the centre also conducts research on ongoing sociopolitical events in Burundi, supports grassroots communities, and offers training in project management." Taken from: <http://centre-ubuntu.bi/?q=en/node/86> and <http://www.insightsonconflict.org/conflicts/burundi/peacebuilding-organisations/ubuntu-centre/>

Participants reflect on what happened while they were acting. Then a shift is made from the problem story to the desired story in the community. The community then acts that one out too and then discusses if the desired story is realistic. This process in general strengthens trust. “You see trust coming back in the community, and a sense of solidarity in the community which had been destroyed,” says Father Emmanuel.

A community forum can then express the main problems community members wish to see changed, do the mapping of the most worrisome one, analyze the root causes and the effects on individuals (children, young girls, young men, women, men and elderly people), and externalize the problem through plays (narrative theatre).

In the application of this method in Burundi the facilitators have seen participant groups start to demand accountability from their leaders on important issues in their community. It is at this stage when the community confronts issues of leadership, conflict resolution, trauma and that they start doing memory work, because “safety has come back to the community, and people become ready to talk, because they feel it is good for healing themselves and their community” says Father Emmanuel.

## **C 5. MATERIAL AND VISUALLY BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY**

### **C 5.1 THE MATERIAL WORLD: PHOTOS AND OTHER OBJECTS OF AND FOR MEMORY**

Groups provide individuals with the frameworks with which they can locate their memories, and memories are localized through a sort of mapping. We place our memories in a series of mental spaces (social frameworks) that the group provides. But these mental spaces require the material support of objects.

The sphere of material objects –photos, decorations, altars, coats of arms, seals, newspaper clippings, those objects that we keep around us– is ordered in certain ways which we rely on to give us a sense of continuity, and to serve as markers of temporal changes (Radley, 1990).



- ▲ A leader from Mampuján, a rural town massively displaced by the paramilitaries, shares a photo mural created in his community to reconstruct the memory of the violence and the responses and resistance to displacement. Cartagena, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

Some objects (keepsakes/memorabilia) play a particular and powerful role in shaping the past and maintaining the memories of a collective past. Some objects (e.g., a candle, emblems) are significant for evoking cultural beliefs and feelings, which gives these objects a political character.

We remember or recount with the support of the world of objects (keepsakes). Memory is also shaped by the ways we organize and locate this world of objects (in photo albums, on walls, desks, or on shelves). Objects are also part of a material world that is ordered to sustain certain myths and ideologies about both individuals and cultures.

Once the subject disappears, the leftover clothes become evidence of one's existence there in time and place. Objects thus carry with them aspects of the person who is no longer there and that, in daily life, point to a certain presence of someone now gone. Objects bridge the material world we live in and our memories. They are not meaning per se but carriers of meaning. Insignificant or mundane as they may appear, their eloquence in the broad social narrative, in the demand for justice, is undeniable.

From the public art project in Medellín, Colombia  
"The Skin of Memory."  
Barrio Antioquia. Past, Present and Future"

**Photos** (individual photos and albums) are central cultural artifacts in our management of the memory of the past, and serve as reference points for connecting to many possible pasts. Looking at or organizing photos is an act of recognition of the past. When the photo records an individual, family, or community event this register becomes part of the event, because even though the experience may or may not have been not very satisfying, the photo will project the emotions toward the future.

In memory workshops or interviews the photos and objects that the participants bring and collect, or which the facilitators select, can serve as triggers of memory and establish a dynamic of look-tell-listen between the narrator and interviewer (who may be the memory worker, the interviewer, or another participant). This relationship promotes recognition of the past and the reconstruction of the story.<sup>11</sup>

In these cases participants or interviewees are asked to select a meaningful object or photo that signifies their memory. They then recreate their memory on the basis of what the object or photo evokes.

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<sup>11</sup> See other examples of activities with photographs in the book *Afirmación y resistencia: La comunidad como apoyo*, *Affirmation and resistance: the community as support*, Beristain and Riera, 2002.



▲ Photo brought to a memory workshop in Magdalena, Colombia. 2009. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

This work of selection involves recognition of the past, but also a process of assessing the importance of certain events and people and the reason why the object is saved. The purpose is to explore the objects as forms and traces of memory and their potential for reconstructing the past.

Similarly, the use of cameras by the participants to document their environment, significant objects and the traces of memory in their immediate and local setting offers another method for documenting memories, as well as a means for participants to represent the past from their perspective.

## **PhotoPAR as a resource for remembering, healing, and transformation**

*By Brinton Lykes, Boston College, USA*

PhotoPAR is a participatory action research process through which local communities have sought to document social injustice and develop processes for personal and social transformation through visual documentation of a wide range of inequalities (Wang and Burris, 1997), including gross violations of human rights and participatory action research. The women in Chajul, Guatemala, responded enthusiastically to the idea of undertaking a project using photography and storytelling to focus on re-remembering their community's story of more than 36 years of armed conflict and their strategies for survival and recovery in their own voices.<sup>12</sup>

Twenty women out of the more than 100 in the local women's organization, Association of Maya Ixil Women – New Dawn, deployed visual resources and storytelling through a variety of group activities and actions to re-present experiences of violence, loss, economic exploitation, racial discrimination and early initiatives toward social, economic, and political healing. Through collaborating with them in this process I hoped to facilitate (1) an increase in local women's listening skills, (2) recovery of local or indigenous knowledge and traditions, and (3) the development of critical thinking skills while creating spaces wherein historically marginalized women who had suffered gross violations of human rights could (4) identify their feelings, (5) share sorrows, (6) voice their varied and even contradictory understandings of the causes and consequences of historic and contemporary violence, and (7) develop action-based responses. Each woman was given a point and shoot camera. In initial workshops we practiced using the cameras, role played ethical dilemmas in 'taking pictures', and discussed the strengths and limitations of formal versus spontaneous photography. Each woman then took 24 photographs per month, focusing on themes that we were identifying through participatory exercises. After

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<sup>12</sup> For a more extensive definition and discussion of Photo PAR, see Lykes, 2001a; 2001b; Women of PhotoVoice/ADMI & Lykes 2000. For a documentation on how these Mayan women have documented their community stories and their survival strategies, see Belenky et. al., 1986 and Lykes, 1997.

each roll was developed and returned to the photographer, she picked 4-6 pictures that she 'liked' or that she thought 'best represented the month's theme' and recounted a story about each picture. The stories ranged from verbatim accounts of what the pictured person had recounted to the photographer's story about taking the picture or her memories of 'similar' experiences that she had represented in the photograph. These stories were transcribed and yoked to the relevant picture, generating what they called a photovoice. I, or one of the other internationalist collaborators in the project, facilitated workshops wherein Maya women selected from the photovoices that had been previously generated and gathered in small groups of 3 – 5 women who then developed a second level of analysis. Specifically, an individual photovoice (story + photo) was presented to the small group of women spanning several generations to elicit additional ideas. Finally, participants in the small groups shared their hopes or wishes for the future. The original photovoice and texts transcribed from these small group photoelicitation processes were the core of the final 56 photonarratives that were published in *Voices and Images of Maya Ixil Women* (Women of PhotoVoice/ADMI and Lykes 2000).

Through seeking permission, taking pictures of and interviewing co-participants, local townspeople, and others in adjacent villages, and subsequently storying these photographs, the participants documented human rights violations in their own words and images, re-membering the past, and overcoming a legacy of fear and shame as well as anxieties about 'speaking in front of' and 'to others' about their her-story. The workshops were contexts wherein Maya women began to think comparatively about women's oppression, recognizing diversities in experiences between the town and its rural villages. Through creative dramatizations and dialogue women performed emotional, non-verbal, and oral representations of their social suffering, experiences that were then re-storied in the texts and images that they combined. Over time they constituted and performed new subjectivities as photographers, oral historians, bookkeepers, project coordinators, and marimba players. Maya co-researchers thus embodied and performed their rights as indigenous women.

## C 5.2 IMAGE AND MEMORY QUILTS

Quilts reconstruct memories through image making in the same way that *molas*, *arpilleras*,<sup>13</sup> and other textile traditions are used by their creators in diverse cultural contexts for storytelling, i.e. as a means of socio-cultural communication and oral tradition.

This method seeks to activate remembering on the basis of image retrieval, i.e. of memory as image. Thus the memory is constructed by appealing to time as a painting: the colors, smells, textures, rhythms, shapes that make, transport or tell of the significant moment or traumatic event. The process is one of image-making in the present by re-remembering images of the event(s) and by simultaneously working through imagination and re-presentation of these events using materials of various colors and textures.

This work can be done using papers of different textures, colors and sizes and color markers.<sup>14</sup> Each individual works on a square of paper on which they evoke a significant event of their life in reference to the specific topic of the workshop, or a scene they experienced that they want to document-narrate.

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13 Mola's are a traditional textile art of the Kuna people of Colombia and Panama which uses several layers of different coloured cloth in a reverse appliqué. Arpilleras are fabric appliqué collages made throughout the Andean region.

14 This method is based on the pioneering work of Cynthia Cohen (1999), who was then with the Oral History Center of Boston, who takes up the tradition and artistic production of African-American women quilt makers. Her description of the process is available online: here <http://jonah.eastern.edu/emme/1999summer/cohen.html>.





▲ Memory Quilt elaborated by a group of women in Trujillo, Valle. 2008. Photo by Jesús A. Colorado

During the preparation of their images, participants have the opportunity to share or tell stories amongst each other, or to work separately if they prefer. Once the individual images are done, each person puts their image in any of the quilt spaces (see pictures) and shares their memories with the group. At the end of this process a memory quilt has been created. It is a form of collective yet plural narrative “woven” with images and individual memories.

The collective story is not just the sum of the individual images but the way in which these images are related and are sewn, spatially, in the patchwork quilt, and the various ways these can be seen: individually or together, in vertical or horizontal rows, or diagonally (see photos).

That is, the quilt becomes a visual metaphor of the collective memory and of the different ways in which individual memories and events that mark the lives of people in times of war are related to those of others (e.g. similar pain and suffering, affected by the same event, common languages or symbols of memory) or may differ from each other.

The literature on the artistic tradition of quilts by African American women sees quilts as a collective art that validates the expression of

individual memory (there is no one pattern for the design of the quilt but multiple options, designs and styles in which every square contains the stamp of the individual creator) and creates a collective product and a collective telling of multiple stories (Dyer-Bennem, 1994).

Both image quilts and body maps (described above) are methods that can be used as an activity that begins and ends during one collective memory reconstruction session, or as a project done over a period of time and in multiple sessions. These methods can also be customized according to the community, local skills and knowledges, e.g. using fabric or embroidery for the quilt of images.

For a more detailed description of how to do this activity see Appendix 8.



▲ Memory workshop in El Placer, Putumayo, Colombia, 2012. Photo by Maria Luisa Moreno

## C 6. NARRATIVE BASED WAYS TO ELICIT MEMORY

In our daily lives, we use narratives to tell others about specific happenings, to capture our experiences as lived and remembered and to link a series of events in a particular way. When we narrate something that happened either because we experienced or were told about it,

we arrange it in a particular sequence to describe what happened, how, where and why. The work of the narrator then is to recount the events, sometime turning them into a story (a sequence of events with a beginning and an end), and to convey particular stress and meaning through verbal (tone, volume, speed) and performative (position, use of body) means. We use narratives in everyday life contexts, in the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and cultural repertoires and also when we write, to provide historical explanations about a period of time, answer questions (from a researcher, a judge or a friend) or provide testimony about something that happened. Overall, narrative based ways to elicit memory engage with the verbal, embodied and performative way of any telling. Narratives can be oral, written, visual or performative.

### **C 6.1 INTERVIEWS**

An interview in the context of memory work is a conversation between two people in which the interviewer seeks to create a humane and respectful environment which allows the respondent to testify in their own voice. In-depth interviews seek to reconstruct individual narratives of for example (a) those who have lived, suffered or witnessed various forms of violence, (b) those who have had experience in the ranks of some of the armed groups and their political networks of support, (c) those who have participated in initiatives of resistance to war and armed domination.

The interviews and the questions asked are structured so as to enable a safe and respectful listening on the part of the interviewer, and telling or bearing witness by the interviewee.





▲ Documents shown during a family interview. Monteria, Cordoba, Colombia, 2010.  
Photo by Pilar Riaño

The strategy used in Colombia by the Commission is to conduct interviews with victims, former armed combatants, social and political leaders, government workers, and workers of non-governmental organizations. These interviews seek to shed light on the events and dynamics of the conflict, the social and political contexts surrounding the events, and the ways events are remembered and made sense of. Interviews with each of these people of different backgrounds seek to answer different questions.

The specificity of an interview for the construction of historical memory is that the questions and interviewer's attitude should inspire the evocation of memories and the building of a detailed account about certain events in the past, what happened and how, but also of how the events were felt and lived, i.e., a story from the interviewee's perspective and ways of remembering and making sense of the past.

The interview complements and deepens the more episodic nature of memories that are shared in the workshops, and allows for a more detailed and thorough reconstruction of the events and their impacts<sup>15</sup> and allows the interviewer to listen to that history and those aspects of the history or memory of the individual that tend to be silenced.

Given that in the work of constructing historical memory we have considered a memory that attest to the different voices of victims, we suggest that in the interviews differences (of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, language, caste, religion, region, generation and physical ability) are noted and inquired about. Specifically, there can be a focus on the ways that violence and the actions of armed or repressive agents affect or are experienced differentially by individuals, in their responses, emotions and ways of remembering. See Appendix 11 for a more detailed discussion of how to do this sort of interview.

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<sup>15</sup> The interview guidelines included here are not directed to the documentation of cases for judicial truth. For documentation of cases for this purpose see Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris, 2008.

## Language: Using translation and interpretation

*By Sara Koopman, Spanish for Social Change, USA*

Even if someone speaks two languages, they may feel more comfortable speaking about traumatic events or their resistance to violence in their first language, so consider using translation and interpretation. Translation is written, interpretation is verbal. When doing memory work you may need to use both, which may mean using two people since these are different skills which require different talents and training. Even when using an interpreter it is ideal to have a bilingual facilitator or at the very least have the facilitator offer a welcome, say, in the indigenous language. This can help make everyone feel welcome to speak in the language of their choice.

When working with limited resources you may be working with an interpreter who does not have much professional experience with interpreting and there are things you can do to support them and improve your communication through them.

If using consecutive interpretation, rather than simultaneous (which generally requires equipment unless the interpreter is whispering into only one person's ear), be sure to speak in short phrases and then pause for the interpretation. In group discussions some will want to respond immediately, so the facilitator needs to insist everyone pause between speakers for the interpretation. Pauses between every speaker are also required if using simultaneous interpreting, since the interpreting is actually a sentence or two behind. Ensure that the interpreter always has paper and pen to take notes while you are speaking. Even in simultaneous mode this will be necessary for names and numbers.

Talk to the interpreter beforehand about concepts that may not translate directly and strategize about the best way to convey them. For example in many languages a concept like justice does not have a single word to describe it.

Be not use 'tell her' or 'ask him' when speaking, as this establishes you as speaking to the interpreter, rather than directly to the person you are trying to communicate with. To establish more connection it is also important to *look* at the person you are speaking to, rather than looking at the interpreter. Likewise, be sure the interpreter does not use 'he said' 'she said' but instead speaks directly as if they were the person they are interpreting for. If they need to speak as themselves they can use the third person, e.g. "the interpreter needs to take a break." Do be sure to give them regular breaks because interpreting accuracy plummets after half an hour. Ideally interpreters work in pairs and take turns every 15 minutes.

Interviews allow for a deeper and more intimate conversation, and as such they are an important place for the interviewer to listen, facilitate, and validate the telling of those aspects of memory, emotions and stories that tend to be silenced or not elaborated because these may be outside what are socially considered to be significant or acceptable memories.

— One form of interview is the life story interview, the purpose of which is to narrate the life of a person according to a sequence of events that can be organized both chronologically (from childhood to adulthood) or thematically. In the context of a historical memory project these interviews generally seek to link the individual story, and the social relations of this person, to larger events and social contexts in which they were placed. The next section of this document elaborates on life stories as a method for the reconstruction of historical memory.

## **C 6.2 LIFE STORIES OR SOCIAL BIOGRAPHIES**

As noted in the first part of this material, the work of reconstructing the historical memory of traumatic events that occur in a specific place and time generally seeks historical clarification and the documentation of voices that have been excluded from histories about the conflict or mass violence. It may also seek to dignify these voices and the memory of the victims, the territory and their community.

The methods of life stories or social biographies contribute to the task of reconstructing historical memory and, in particular, to the dignification of the memory of the victims.

The reconstruction of a person's life is a means by which their memory is conserved and rescued from the silence, or from the segmented versions about who they were, what they were like, what they did, or thought, or what they suffered.

In this document we also refer to life stories as social biographies, to emphasize how in the broader work of historical memory it is necessary to place the life of an individual in the various contexts in which it unfolds (family, social, political, organizational, local-national, the conflict) (Burke, n.d.). A social biography in this way seeks to understand the life trajectory of a person in relation to broader processes affecting the development of these trajectories (e.g. the emergence of the women's peaceful resistance movement, the consolidation of territorial control by an armed group, or the failure of a national peace process.)

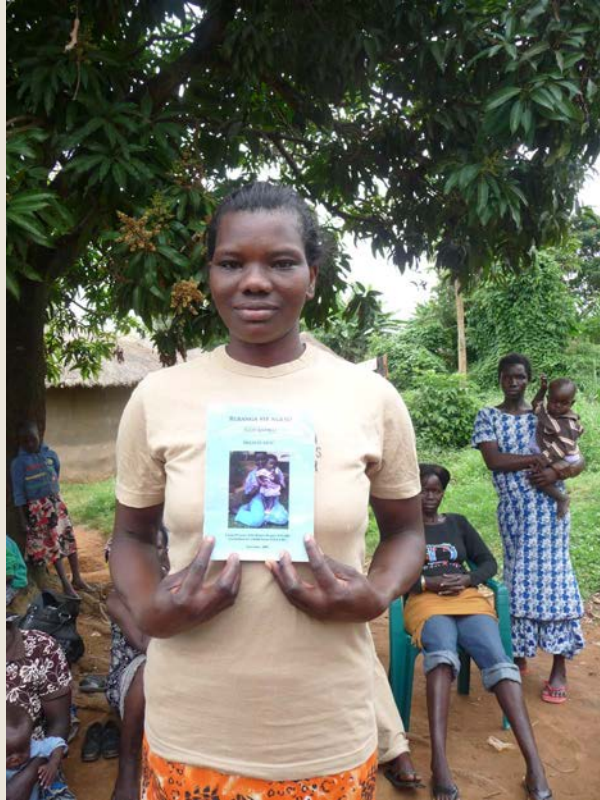
To remember the person not only as a victim or a witness of an event, but as a woman or man with a face, with certain ways of doing and being, the small or large actions they took in the community, tastes and pleasures and personality traits - all this rescues a person from the silence or the stigmatization and dehumanization of their memory.

In short, narrating a life and its social biography recovers the identity of the individual and their legacy for the future (Portelli, 1991). The life story is a story about the life of a person that is told to another, either by that same person or by others who knew them (Angrosino, 1989).

Pierre Bourdieu (1990: 29) notes that to talk about a life story "is to at least assume, and this is not superfluous, that life is a story and that (...) a life is inseparably the joining of all of the events of an individual existence conceived of as a story, and the telling of that story."

In this same text Bourdieu notes how in ordinary language life tends to be described as a path with crossroads and traps, or as a process, a path which is traced and a route that is followed.





▲ Life history books in Northern Uganda. Justice and Reconciliation Project. 2010.  
Photo by Pilar Riaño

The methods of life history seek to explore and find those clues that are both temporal (critical or emblematic times of change and transition, as well as those that mark the beginning and end of periods) and meaningful (events or situations because they are emblematic of who we are, the paths taken, their challenges and pitfalls), both from the point of view of the person about whom the life story is told, as well as of those who remember them.

Two possible types of reconstruction of life histories or social biographies are: (a) the reconstruction of the life stories of people who were victims of lethal violence, based on interviews and discussions with those who

knew them and through the collection of materials (photos, archives, documents, memorabilia and objects ) about this person, and (b) life stories of people who are alive and whose history is reconstructed on the basis of their own account and the collection of materials and objects that symbolize their life.

In both types of life history, the reconstruction covers some specific areas:<sup>16</sup>

- The biography of the person: biographical data (date and place of birth, immigration history, cultural roots, occupation), the key or critical events in the life of the person (events that mark the beginning and end of a period in their life, or which are emblematic of the successes and challenges they experienced and the path they took), the emblematic memories of that period, the features that identify this person and the way they are remembered (way of being, personality, ways of relating to others, dreams, aspirations and ideas) and the feelings evoked in those who remember them.
- Their world of family and friends: the composition of their family over the years, the people (family and friends) that were or are significant to them (in each major period) and those who were or are an important influence in what they did or do.
- Their social roles: their organizational history (what activities, initiatives and organizations were or are they involved in), the most important activities, successes and challenges; their hopes, wishes and ideas and the path they traced in the community; the events they witnessed and that shaped their life; and how gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, caste, language, region, religion, physical ability, class or other differences shaped their initiatives and the opportunities they had.

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<sup>16</sup> Several of the questions and components that are included in this section are based on the guide "Remembering so as not to repeat" produced by the Corporación Nuevo Arco Iris in Colombia (2008).

- Their legacy: the way they want to be remembered or how others want them to be remembered, the legacy left by this person.

The life story of a person can be either a full reconstruction of their life, or the reconstruction of a significant period of their life, or a kind of biographical silhouette in which certain periods and events are covered more generally and others in more detail.

### **The Life History Project (Gulu, Uganda)**

*By Ketty Anyeko and Erin Baines, Justice and Reconciliation Project, Uganda*

This project was originally started by a Canadian professor as part of a research project to document the life stories of women who had spent ten or more years in the rebel group, the Lord's Resistance Army. It later received support of a local NGO, the Justice and Reconciliation Project, to sustain the interest women who participated in the project had in forming their own advocacy organization. Between 2009 and 2011 the Life History Project documented the life stories of 25 women who were forced to marry senior level commanders and bear children in the rebel group's bases in Sudan. After their escape, women attempted to rebuild their lives in the outskirts of Gulu town where they had access to humanitarian aid, and educational facilities for their children. Their relocation to Gulu town was also an attempt to obtain a degree of anonymity, as they were experiencing stigma and attacks in their home villages because of their association with commanders who had inflicted terror on the civilian population. They thus experienced the challenge of living in silence, yet apart from other community members, given their past experiences of violent forced marriage and pregnancy. The project was an effort to provide a safe space in which to remember, to document their stories, and, later, to encourage their efforts to self-organize. As they gained confidence in the process they began to engage in advocacy with local officials to work towards acknowledgement of what had happened, and to press for reparation and justice with other groups of similarly affected women.

The group was formed by a volunteer to the project who spent 11 years in captivity in the LRA, and invited other long-term survivors to join over the course of a year. The group began with eight members and grew to 25 by the end. They met every Saturday at one of the women's homes in the outskirts of town, and under a mango tree. They engaged in a rotating grant and income generation activities first, and then would do storytelling as part of the Life History Project. The women were asked to each draw their life map and present it one at a time to the rest of the group. This took nearly a year. The group then met bi-monthly to discuss topics of interest, such as 'the identity of children' or 'marriages upon returning home'. At the end of the project the stories – which had been recorded and transcribed - were organized into personal history books received by each woman, including photos.

The women said it was the first time they had shared such stories with one another, and they were relieved to learn that they were not alone in their experiences in captivity. While in the LRA, they were separated from each other and forbidden to speak to one another. The personal history books had special meaning for the women, who wanted to keep them to one day explain to their children what had happened to them, where they were from, and how much they loved them. After a period of time, the women felt they should not stop at talking 'amongst themselves', but begin to engage communities that had been affected by LRA violence, to share stories of what they had suffered through and to learn what the communities in turn had endured. This would be a form of community reconciliation. The women began to travel in small groups to home villages to do this. The women also began to meet local government officials to talk about their particular experiences and seek acknowledgement and reparation.

## Methods

*Life maps:* The women were given papers, crayons, pencils, markers and asked to draw a map illustrating their life journeys right from pre-abduction, during abduction and post abduction. They drew symbols that had meanings in their lives for instance; some drew a container to signify thirst. Each woman later narrated stories of her life map to the entire group one at a time over a period of nearly a year. The women encouraged each other emotionally and psychologically.

*Place maps:* Just like the life maps, the women maps of the areas they lived while in captivity, these maps illustrate circumstances under which violence was perpetrated.

*Photography:* some of the women were given a digital camera which they used to take photos of things/objects that remind them of an important event that triggered either good or bad memories significant in their lives. We later met with them to discuss the photos they took and why they are important.

*Memory quilts:* a group of women were given papers and drawing materials. Each of them was asked to draw one significant event that changed their lives for the better or for worse and later pieced the quilts together. Volunteers narrated stories of what they draw on their quilts. There were instances where several quilts had related stories or similar encounters, many drew their abductions or how they watched a friend being killed.

*Body maps:* we invited a group of 6 women in a residential retreat. One volunteer lay down in a position she wanted and another woman helped in drawing the outline of her body then she using markers indicated marks of physical, emotional and psychological pain on the map, as well as sources of strength. She later shared stories of her map with either the researcher or the entire group. This tool was very important in enabling the women speak about sexual violence. They told stories of what they saw happen to other women than themselves.

*In-depth interviews:* this one-on-one interviews enabled the women to narrate their life histories and filled in the gaps of stories they told in the group for their personal history books.

Storytelling was also employed in the style of ‘wang-o’, an Acholi storytelling practice in communities. Women were given or chose specific themes (justice, reparation, children, for example) and then shared stories to learn from one another.

### **Products/outcome**

Documentation of the women’s stories has helped develop a new and unique perspective of the war in Uganda. More and more women wanted to form similar groups and, with the help of the original group, nine new storytelling groups formed. The Justice and Reconciliation Project recognized the need to support the project beyond the life of the original documentation project, and offered to mentor women leaders. This led to the formation of the Women’s Advocacy Network, with 200 survivors as members. A launch of the network was held in June 2012 with members of Government, the military and civil society in attendance to encourage the women to continue. The Justice and Reconciliation Project, recognizing the importance of documenting and advocating women’s experiences of war, formed the Gender Justice Unit in 2012.

## **C 7. PROCESS AND GROUP DYNAMICS: MEMORY WORKSHOPS**

The methods described above can be done individually, but also together in group based formats such as workshops that can last anywhere from one afternoon, to two consecutive days, to a series of shorter meetings over several weeks. A workshop consists of a series of activities that facilitate the evocation and elaboration of memories of one or more traumatic events.

The memory workshop is a collective event in which a group of people gather to remember and participate in certain activities focused on the exercise of remembering. As such, the process which is followed and the sequence of activities requires a design that takes into account who

the participants are (who to bring together), the social and cultural dynamics of the place, the time that is available for working together, the context of the conflict in which it is carried out, and the type of previous relationships that exist among participants and their emotional situation. Understandings of historical memory presented in section B and emotional wellbeing issues presented in section D can also be considered when designing activities.

### **Should one ensure that the groups are non contentious?**

*by Rita Manchanda, South Asian Forum for Human Rights, India*

If there are victims from both 'sides' then the risks involved are much greater in escalating inter community tensions and the management of confrontations and tensions could become much more challenging. For example, the tension between the Kashmiri Hindu women and the Kashmiri Muslim women was very difficult to manage. And yet one of the strengths was in the collective reconstruction that cut across the divides and created a different third frame of analysis and understanding. In the context of divided communities and the need to bridge the fault line, is there any subtle normative direction given in the workshops that emphasizes histories/experiences of co-existence and interdependence between divided communities?

We suggest structuring a workshop into two or three core activities in which participants are invited to remember or comment on specific aspects of their experiences.

The workshop can begin with an introduction of its purpose, a presentation of the work of the organization facilitating the workshop, and the establishment of agreements for interactions between participants and facilitators.

Critical to the development of the workshop and the creation of a safe and relational space for story telling is the inclusion of initial activities that facilitate introduction of participants, trust building, group

cohesion and the respect for differences in viewpoint and experiences. The section that follows and the Appendix provide examples of this.

Each memory building activity described here combines both a time for remembering or recounting individually as well as for collective reflection on the memories and what these memories suggest to participants (i.e. commonalities, differences, narrative threads, tensions).

This collectivization and reflection lead, in general, to new instances of memory activation, and to the construction of other narratives or stories, which are sometimes constructed from a collective “we” or sometimes from certain differences (such as generation, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, region, religion, language, caste, class, or physical ability).

We suggest that at first a memory workshop focus on the individual reconstruction of memory. The facilitator of the workshop can ask a series of questions that are meant to activate individual memories of certain traumatic events, or of a specific period of violence or transition in the region.

Starting with these memory “trigger” questions, participants articulate narratives that capture their memories. These narratives are of two types: visual and oral accounts.

It is important to include the visual because the memories are made up of both ideas and concepts, as well as feelings, images and perceptions (i.e. colors, shapes, smells, sounds). As such, the opportunity to express visually opens up the possibility of making visible emotional dimensions that do not necessarily pass through the rational or the verbal (Rodríguez, et al., 2006). The visual furthermore may overcome linguistic and literacy barriers.

In a second stage, participants can integrate the visual stories into a sort of collective narrative. The group, as a community that has formed and that exists for the time of the workshop, can ask: What do these collective memory narratives say about us as a group?



This movement to the formulation of questions that investigate the relationship between individual stories and the various collective narratives that are constructed in the workshop has a specific relevance. It allows for the exploration of both the exemplary capacity of memory to draw out elements in common amongst the participants, and the impacts that violent events and war have on people and on the social fabric.

In this second phase of the workshop, participants can undertake a more formal analysis of what they see in the visual narrative of the group and identify common narrative threads, differences and contrasts as well as events and emotions that mark shared experiences and memories.

The memories that are reconstructed in a memory workshop offer empirical data and stories, explanations, symbolizations, and interpretations. In this sense they can be analyzed and used in many ways.

That is to say, in a memory workshop there is a process of collective knowledge construction based on the systematic evidence that results from the methods used.

See Appendix 9 for a sample memory workshop agenda and Appendix 10 for a description of a closing activity.

### **C 7.1 WORKSHOP FACILITATION AND SEQUENCING**

In Colombia the sequence of activities in the memory workshops hosted by the Commission has been the following:<sup>17</sup>

*Introduction:* An informative introduction about the Commission, its mission and the reason for participating in the meeting and the type of work or collaboration that the Commission proposes to do in local communities, and their commitments and responsibilities regarding participants and to the material that is collected in the workshop.

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<sup>17</sup> A more detailed description and discussion of such workshops as held in Colombia can be found in Riaño 2008; 1999.

During the introduction, the aim is to create an environment of trust and respect through the development of basic agreements for interactions between participants and for the work of building historical memory (e.g. confidentiality, respect, not judging).

During the development of the basic agreements, it is important that the facilitators ensure that the participants understand the objectives and characteristics of the workshop, their rights as participants, and the limits to confidentiality in a group format, and the potential effects of recalling traumatic events.

It is important to mention and review these agreed guidelines in the workshop, and to emphasize confidentiality and the right of each participant to suspend or terminate their participation at any time.

*Thematic transition:* The subject of memory in its socio-political dimension is introduced through asking and discussing with participants the reasons why we remember and forget (as individuals and as a collective, community or society), and specifically why we remember when we seek to shed light on and bear witness to acts of violence, and to construct historical memory. The role and contribution of participants in the processes of constructing historical memory is explored.

In the thematic transition, the issue of memory in its psychosocial dimensions is discussed. The impact that the collective acts of remembering and forgetting have on the wellbeing of people is highlighted. A warning is given that this process requires the participants' emotional commitment.

*Remembering (Part one):* Memories are built of significant events of the violence from the perspective of the group, but with clear individual traces. The explicit vision is to construct historical memory in the context of the conflict and from the voices of local communities.

Tools such as maps, timelines, and image quilts are used to reconstruct a memory of what happened and its impact (past and present) and towards the "for what" established at the beginning of the workshop.

*The future:* This section explores the relationships that the participants establish between the past, the present, and their hopes for the future. In this activity the demands and ideas that participants have about their daily life and their hopes are explored, as are their ideas about reparations and their thoughts on what should be done so that the tragic events that affected them are not repeated.

*Remembering (Part two and second day):* This section explores specific aspects of the experiences and memories of the participants in more depth (time and detail). This is done in small groups (six people) which have a certain homogeneity among participants so as to develop more sensitive and specific topics, such as sexual or physical violence, resistance and organizing strategies, land and displacement, and the memories of young men and women.

*Closing:* To close the workshop participants and members of the Commission review the commitments that the Commission is making to the participants and their communities. There is then a discussion of what follows after the workshop, and a space is opened for the participants to express their recommendations for the work of constructing historical memory, for a review of their expectations for a future based on a collective agenda, and for the reiteration of their demands for reparations.

Group memory work should also have a *sequence* that takes into account, on the one hand, the need to ensure the construction of a climate of trust and safety and, on the other hand, the need to recognize the “emotional” process that may be experienced by participants.

In this sense, it is important to design a series of techniques to be implemented sequentially that are intended to create a certain environment and respond to certain emotional reactions.

It is therefore suggested that the workshop be planned with a layering of activities that promote a climate of trust such as the following agenda:

*Welcome activity:* Through icebreakers that are intended to inspire and to motivate people to be active participants.

*Group and confidence building activity:* This is an important part of the workshop. The use of certain group exercises can help people feel that they can rely on support and help during the activity and, at the same time, can support others. Everyone feels that they are involved, and are not simply listeners. These are exercises that seek to generate situations that make clear the need for the support of others, and to generate the certainty that support will be there when needed. Once these activities are carried out, the workshop can begin.

*Expression-reflection activity:* These activities are designed to address the thematic transition to political and psychosocial issues and to talk about remembering and planning for the future. They make use of the methods described above (maps, walks, biographies, quilts, etc.). One can also use skits, role play, story construction, and other activities.





▲ Group building activity – Gulu, Uganda. Justice and Reconciliation Project. 2011.  
Photo by Erin Baines

*Activities for group relaxation and well-being:* These activities are done when there is tiredness or tension in the group. They aim to relieve this and to make the group space less rigid. It is essential to plan a relaxation activity for the close, with the aim of creating dynamics that allow people to leave the event with a feeling of well-being (Chauca and Bustamante, 2004:30-34).

When preparing the invitation to the workshop it is necessary to ensure that it: (a) communicates to potential participants the purpose of the workshop, who sponsors it, and its extent. For example, in the Colombian context it is important that they understand that the Commission does research and documentation and does not deliver material reparations or take evidence with legal weight, (b) consider whether, based on local

dynamics, the group should be composed of people who know each other or not.

The choice of venue in which to conduct the workshop is very important. The location must be appropriate and safe to: (a) work initially with a group of twenty people, then (b) break into small groups (enough spaces for this work), and (c) allow for privacy and not be exposed to noise.

It is also worth selecting a place that does not represent risk to participants, and is not associated with dynamics in or specific viewpoints on the armed conflict, or with defined political positions.

